

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*



## M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

*The Official Union Newsletter*



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### **JOINT SUBCOMMITTEES GET MOBILITY/TRANSPORTATION UPDATE FROM MARITIME LOGISTICS AGENCIES**

Joint subcommittees under the House Armed Services Committee received testimony from two government logistics agency leaders about mobility and transportation command posture at a hearing on Capitol Hill earlier today. General Darren McDew, Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command and Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby discussed the importance of the U.S. commercial shipping fleet and its integral role in supporting our nation in times of peace and in war. They are particularly concerned that the U.S. fleet receive bolstered support to ensure that the mariner pool is augmented to a level that will guarantee the U.S. can continue to be able to project its power in any future contingency. Both TRANSCOM and MarAd have grave concerns that a sealift operation cannot be sustained beyond the initial surge because of the shortage of qualified mariners.

Both men called for support to government programs that supply cargo to internationally trading U.S.-flag ships – to help maintain its viability and retain the vital pool of mariners necessary for any overseas deployment. General McDew also called for continued and better enforcement of cargo preference statutes and both witnesses expressed unvarnished support for the Jones Act. Many members of both subcommittees (Subcommittee on Readiness as well as the Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces) also noted their support for the Jones Act. Some in attendance pointed out that they were concerned with the President's budget that requests only \$214 million for the Maritime Security Program instead of the authorized \$300 million level. Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI) had concerns with the make-up of the MSP fleet and its effect on competitiveness with vessels outside the program. Subcommittee members asked questions about the recapitalization of the Ready Reserve Force, an initiative all agreed is imperative to enable the requisite support to our fighting forces.

Rear Admiral Buzby made note that he hopes to resurrect the moribund National Maritime Strategy (NMS), a multi-faceted plan fronted by past Maritime Administrator Chip Jaenichen to raise the profile of – and help revitalize the U.S. maritime industry. The plan was trapped in limbo within the purview of the Office of Management and Budget and finally disappeared from view with the 2016 Presidential election and change of administration. Rear Admiral Buzby said the draft strategy had been in his inbox when he took over the MarAd job and attested that his plan is "to get it across the finish line." He said the NMS would be going out to the industry for input in the near future.

## **OUIS MEETING IN PANAMA**

As part of the Officers Union of International Seamen (OUIS), M.E.B.A. and MM&P representatives took part in productive meetings in Panama last week for the organization's annual board meeting. The OUIS is a cooperation created with the MM&P in 1994 that helps lift standards and wages for mariners serving onboard flag-of-convenience vessels.

M.E.B.A.'s Gulf Coast V.P. Erin Bertram serves as Chairperson on the OUIS Board. Other M.E.B.A. board members on the OUIS include Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan and Norfolk Branch Agent Tracy Burke. MM&P's OUIS representatives include Secretary-Treasurer Steve Werse, Atlantic V.P. Don Josberger and Gov't Affairs/Gulf Ports V.P. Klaus Luhta. M.E.B.A. President Marshall Ainley and MM&P Don Marcus were guests of the OUIS.

In addition to OUIS business, the M.E.B.A. contingent toured areas of the Panama Canal and, along with the ILWU and MM&P, had a constructive dialog with affiliated Panamanian unions. They included ILWU affiliate UPCP (the Canal Pilots), MM&P affiliate UCOC (Canal Masters & Mates) and M.E.B.A. affiliate UIM (Canal Engineers). The Panamanian unions have had a plethora of Canal safety concerns that were roundly discussed and the six unions worked on strategy. OUIS Chairperson Erin Bertram also addressed a gathering of female cadets at the Universidad Maritima Internacional – the maritime academy in Panama City.

The OUIS participates in the work of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and is part of the Nautilus Federation. Nautilus represents international mariners and shipping professionals with the objective of raising the voice of officer issues such as criminalization. M.E.B.A. is also an affiliate of Nautilus.

## **BACK TO SCHOOL – W.V. EDUCATORS GET PAY RAISE AFTER LABOR ACTION**

School is back in session in West Virginia after teachers stayed strong in solidarity during a nine-day strike that led to long-overdue pay raises. By walking out, educators brought a spotlight to the state's advocacy of a deteriorated education system that underpays teachers and hampers health insurance benefits and student learning conditions. The strike began in late February when the frustrations of teachers erupted after the Governor signed an inadequate piece of legislation calling for a meager pay raise that wouldn't have even covered cost of living increases. Teachers descended on the State Capitol in Charleston and schools were forced to close when educators across the state stayed unified on their principles. State Senator Richard Ojeda, said the strike was "a fight for the soul and spirit of West Virginia that started hundreds of years ago." According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Oklahoma, Mississippi and South Dakota join West Virginia as the worst in the nation for teacher pay.

On Tuesday, Governor Jim Justice signed a bill into law securing 5% pay raises for all state employees including the state's 37,000 educators. He also agreed to set up a task force which would look into the state health insurance program.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said, "You have a story here, a modern-day story, of labor solidarity on an issue that is irrefutable. That for teachers to stay in our profession, for bus drivers and support staff to stay and do this work, we need a livable wage, and we need the conditions in schools that we can help kids thrive."

"Make no mistake," she noted. "The attacks on working people aren't just happening in the classroom or on the job, they're happening in the Supreme Court and in the state legislatures around the country."

But teachers and support personnel in West Virginia showed that, as corporate and right-wing interests try to thwart our voice even more, we will rise up. If you push us to the brink, we will fight for ourselves, our families and our students. We want to teach. We want to do this job, and we proved it during this strike. This isn't the end of the battle; teachers are still not paid well enough, and they still don't have enough resources. But in West Virginia, lawmakers were put on notice that they needed to act in the best interests of kids and workers, not for special interests. And if they didn't learn that lesson through this strike, workers will make sure they do in November."

### **MMC & MEDICAL CERTIFICATE HARMONIZATION**

The National Maritime Center/Coast Guard has announced that mariners will now be allowed to request harmonized expiration dates of their Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) and Medical Certificate. CG-MMC Policy Letter 01-18 provides detailed guidelines for those mariners who wish to harmonize the expiration dates of their original or renewed MMC and Medical Certificate.

For further information, contact the NMC call center via e-mail to [IASKNMC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKNMC@uscg.mil), via online chat, or via phone at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

### **WEBINAR TO ILLUMINATE NEW MEDICAL CERTIFICATION CHANGES**

The Coast Guard/National Maritime Center has set up a webinar to help illuminate upcoming changes in the merchant mariner medical certification. It will also present an opportunity to interface with NMC Commanding Officer Capt. Kirsten Martin and Medical Evaluations Division Chief Dr. Laura Torres-Reyes.

The webinar will take place Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup> from 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., EST. Just before the appointed hour, visit [www.webmeeting.att.com](http://www.webmeeting.att.com). When directed, insert meeting number 8773361839 and participant code 2695056. Enter your name and (in parentheses) your agency/organization, for example, "John Q. Mariner/ (M.E.B.A.)" This is how your name will display in the webinar chat box. Sign in as a "Participant."

Log in simultaneously by conference line or use the conference line alone, if preferred, to hear the audio. The phone conference number is 877-336-1839. The phone conference access code is 2695056#. When prompted, join the conference as a "Participant."

### **TARIFF TALK DOMINATES NAFTA RENEGOTIATION**

President Trump's proposal to jack up tariffs on steel and aluminum imports dominated the latest round of talks with Mexico and Canada to rework the 24-year old North American Free Trade Agreement. The AFL-CIO issued recent statements both badmouthing NAFTA as currently constituted and favoring the plan to raise tariffs. Federation President Richard Trumka called NAFTA "a disaster for working people" and called for its fix. Trumka was part of a labor contingent that visited the White House before talks began where they stressed that a new NAFTA deal "must create fair and balanced trade in North America." The labor leaders, including Leo Gerard (USW), James Hoffa (IBT), Robert Martinez Jr. (IAM), Christopher Shelton (CWA) and Dennis Williams (UAW) said that "real solutions for any new trade deal must dramatically improve workers' rights and raise wages and living standards in all three countries."

AFL-CIO believes Trump's plan to impose tariffs of 25 percent on steel imports and 10 percent on aluminum imports is a step in the right direction. Trumka noted, "For years, we have called attention to the predatory practices of some steel exporting countries. Such practices hurt working people and

cheat companies that produce in the U.S. We applaud the administration's efforts today to fix this problem.” He continued saying that “this is a great first step toward addressing trade cheating, and we will continue to work with the administration on rewriting trade rules to benefit working people.”

### **NCL REACHES HURRICANE RELIEF FUNDRAISING GOAL**

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd., parent company of M.E.B.A.-contracted NCL-America announced it met its goal of raising \$2.5 million for the “Hope Starts Here” hurricane relief program. In less than four months, the program received more than \$1.25 million in donations which the company matched to extend relief to five hard-hit Caribbean nations.

The Hope Starts Here hurricane relief program launched in late September 2017 when the company partnered with relief organization All Hands and Hearts to help provide immediate relief in Key West and reconstruct schools and critical infrastructure in affected islands in the Caribbean including Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, St. Maarten and Tortola. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings has a longstanding relationship with the Caribbean, where its ships have been visiting for more than 50 years, and is focused on providing both immediate and long-term assistance to the region.

### **SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans’ website – [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org) (Forms & Documents, Vacation Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans’ site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or [vacation@mebaplans.org](mailto:vacation@mebaplans.org) for more info.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

Monday, April 2 – [Boston@1200](mailto:Boston@1200);

Tuesday, April 3 – [CMES@1430](mailto:CMES@1430); [Charleston@1400](mailto:Charleston@1400); [Houston@1315](mailto:Houston@1315); [Oakland@1230](mailto:Oakland@1230); [Seattle \(Fife\)@1300](mailto:Seattle(Fife)@1300);

Wednesday, April 4 – [Jacksonville@1300](mailto:Jacksonville@1300); [New Orleans@1315](mailto:NewOrleans@1315);

Thursday, April 5 – [L.A.@1230](mailto:L.A.@1230); [NY/NJ@1300](mailto:NY/NJ@1300); [Norfolk@1300](mailto:Norfolk@1300); [Tampa@1300](mailto:Tampa@1300);

Friday, April 6 – [Honolulu@1100](mailto:Honolulu@1100).

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*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org). Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org)*