

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



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MLA CALLS FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF AMERICAN MARINERS FROM PANDEMIC

The five-union Maritime Labor Alliance issued a statement urging Government agencies to enforce their powers to protect American mariners as the pandemic continues to threaten safe working conditions. The MLA is made up of the ARA, IBU, ILWU, M.E.B.A. and the MM&P.

The MLA statement noted that the pandemic has magnified health risks for thousands of international seafarers and held many mariners hostage because of some draconian crew change policies and travel restrictions preventing repatriation. "Too often seafarers are being abandoned by their employers and their governments, unable to leave their jobs, in grave risk for their health and unable to return home to their families," the statement said.

MLA called on relevant Government agencies to make every effort to protect and enhance mariner access to medical treatment, improve healthy working conditions, and enable smooth crew-change procedures and repatriation of U.S. mariners from foreign ports.

The statement has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website on the homepage located at www.mebaunion.org.

ITF LAUDS EFFORTS OF MARINERS DURING PANDEMIC

The invaluable contributions of mariners to keep the world's economy moving through adverse conditions was highlighted and recognized by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) in a recently-released statement. ITF Seafarers' Section chair Dave Heindel issued thanks to mariners and other transport workers whose dedication and ongoing efforts have helped limit the effects of the pandemic by preventing a complete standstill.

World seafarers and their families have continued to sacrifice as various world government lockdowns and restrictions have prevented crew changes and complicated health care for some.

The statement notes that after intense discussions, the international maritime community has secured a “roadmap” for governments to facilitate crew changes. “Consequently, on May 5, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) issued a 12-step plan...on how to “restart” crew changes so that seafarers can disembark, and fresh crews can be deployed. Unfortunately, this does not automatically mean that restrictions will be lifted immediately since each government must put in place processes and procedures for crew changes to happen, but it is a step in the right direction.”

As government look to reopen businesses and put people back to work, it is more important than ever to make sure we smooth conditions to allow world seafarers to continue delivering the goods to sustain our society.

The statement notes, “There are many heroes on the front lines of the pandemic, from health care workers and cleaners to those in the food industry and in every mode of transportation including seafarers. The ITF and our affiliates – your unions – will not let up the pressure until every seafarer is home safely and those seafarers that have patiently waited at home to relieve their colleagues are on board so that the world’s goods continue to get where they are needed thanks to all of you.”

FIGHT CONTINUES FOR U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING AS HOUSE REVEALS RELIEF BILL

The House Democratic leadership unveiled a \$3 trillion COVID-19 relief bill this week that addresses some concerns of transportation labor, but falls short in certain areas. The full House could vote on the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act as soon as tomorrow, though the bill appears to be a non-starter in the Republican-controlled Senate. The nearly 2,000 page bill reserves \$875 billion in general aid to state and local governments, increases hourly wages for frontline workers, and provides more than \$30 billion in transportation funding that includes a number of hard-fought provisions important to transportation labor.

In response to declining government and civilian cargo volumes because of COVID-19, M.E.B.A. and pro-U.S. shipping interests have been advocating that any new relief bill should include emergency relief funding for the Maritime Security Program to help ensure the nation’s sealift readiness. Unfortunately, the HEROES Act did not include emergency funding for the Program but does stipulate a waiver of the minimum 320-vessel operating day requirement so that participating vessels can continue to receive the existing stipend and fully employ their crews.

The HEROES Act also contain many provisions that would help protect and support transportation worker including an M.E.B.A.-supported provision that allows all maritime union vocational training facilities to be eligible for assistance under the Paycheck Protection Program and enables certain ferry boat and facility funding to be used for administrative and operating expenses related to coronavirus response. Among many other things, the House bill also provides relief and workplace protections for longshore and harbor workers who contract COVID-19.

Because Senate leadership has stated that it is not onboard with the House relief bill, any final economic relief package will likely be very different than the House version as timing of future negotiations remain unclear. M.E.B.A. and U.S. maritime industry advocates will continue working to promote relief provisions for U.S.-flag shipping.

On a related note, a recently-sent “Dear Colleague” letter seeking relief for the Maritime Security Program and its American crews has been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org).

The bipartisan letter was penned by Chairman Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Ranking Member Rob Wittman (R-VA) of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and sent to leaders in the House and Senate of both parties.

COAST GUARD GUIDANCE ON AFFIDAVITS FOR DUPLICATE MMCs, MED CERTS

The Coast Guard has issued a policy letter providing guidance on the affidavits required for applications for duplicate merchant mariner credential (MMC) and mariner medical certificates.

Mariners applying for a duplicate credential must submit an affidavit describing the circumstances of the loss. An affidavit serves as evidence that the applicant is affirming that the information provided is true and correct. The newly released policy letter is available on the National Maritime Center's website in the Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentialing policy area. It has also been posted on the M.E.B.A. website in the "Documents & Member Notices" section.

Mariners and other interested parties can contact the Mariner Credentialing Program Policy Division at (202) 372-2357 or MMCPolicy@uscg.mil with any questions or feedback.

NATIONAL MARITIME DAY OBSERVANCE WILL BE A YOUTUBE EVENT

The pomp and circumstance has been dialed back, but the show must go on. The National Maritime Day observance taking place in Washington D.C. on May 22 will be conducted as a YouTube broadcast.

In 1933, Congress selected May 22nd as National Maritime Day to honor mariners who have served our nation in times of peace and in war. The day is also a tribute to the maritime industry as a whole and its critical importance to our economy and national security. May 22nd marks the date in 1819 that the American steamship SAVANNAH left Savannah, Georgia, on what was the first trans-Atlantic voyage under steam power.

The annual event, observed nationwide, won't be celebrated in the typical fashion because of the pandemic, but the Department of Transportation announced a program format change allowing a Maritime Day tribute in an approach complementary to health concerns.

This year's National Maritime Day observance will take place on Friday, May 22, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. You will be able to access the ceremony on MarAd's YouTube site located at www.youtube.com/c/MaritimeAdministration1950. This year's theme is "Resilient Sealift for a Resilient Nation." For more information, you can visit the DOT Facebook page located at www.facebook.com/DOTMARAD.

Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao will speak as well as Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby and the Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command General Stephen Lyons. In addition, the observance will include a special message from Dave Yoho who sailed in WWII and has been an ardent spokesperson on behalf of the Fourth Arm of Defense.

SHIP WHISTLES WILL SOUND MAY 18-22 FOR NATIONAL MARITIME DAY

To mark the occasion of National Maritime Day this year, the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) announced that ships in harbors around the country will "sound off" all week long (May 18-22) at noon.

Ports with vessels in their harbors and at berth throughout the hemisphere are being encouraged to sound their horns or whistles four times at noon each day from May 18 to May 22. AAPA says that the noontime ship whistles that are part of “Sound Off for National Maritime Day,” recognize the dedication, sacrifice and professionalism of the port industry workforce in their collective efforts to slow the spread of coronavirus while ensuring a steady flow of vital goods and services. The AAPA represents more than 140 seaports.

In the U.S. alone, more than 652,000 maritime-industry professionals work every day to ensure that cargo and cruise and ferry travelers move efficiently through the nation’s ports. Through passenger and crew screenings, vessel quarantines and other protection measures, seaports are committed to ‘flattening the curve,’ both domestically and among their country’s critical trade partners around the world. AAPA President & CEO Chris Connor said, “When you hear ships and other vessels sounding their horns or whistles at noon each day from Monday, May 18th to National Maritime Day on May 22nd, please consider the role ports play in your life, your community and the economy.” He concluded, “Then, use the hashtags #NationalMaritimeDay, #SoundOff and #SeaportsDeliver to post your thoughts about ports on social media in observance of National Maritime Day.”

DOL LINK FOR GOVERNMENT WORKERS TO FILE COVID-19 CLAIMS

Federal employees who contract COVID-19 in the course of their on-the-job duties are entitled to workers' compensation coverage pursuant to the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA). The Department of Labor has created new procedures to specifically address COVID-19 claims. You can find out more information and see how to file a claim at the following link: <https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dfec/InfoFECACoverageCoronavirus.htm>

MEMBERS URGED TO STAY CURRENT

Members are strongly urged to ensure their dues status is secured through the end of the year to guarantee their participation in important Union business. Only members in good standing are permitted a voice at the monthly membership meetings. The By-Laws state that no member shall be entitled to any benefits of the Union or be considered in good standing unless his or her dues are paid in full for the current calendar quarter or paid in accordance with the dues check-off (DCO) system.

Relating to the M.E.B.A. election this year, the By-Laws state that in order for your ballot to count, a member must have their Fourth Quarter dues paid by November 15, 2020. All members are urged to square up their dues to the end of 2020 (or beyond) as soon as possible.

In addition, when members who pay by DCO take vacation or (in the case of the Government fleet) Leave without Pay (LWOP), there are lapses in payroll where dues aren’t automatically submitted. Those members can go to the M.E.B.A. payment portal, select their bargaining unit on the “Check Off Catch-Up” section and make sure they remain as a member in good standing. Finally, a “Vacation Pay” option is available on the portal. This is useful for port engineers and Union officials who can make these payments online. Many members and applicants think the portal is the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing and extend a needed monetary infusion to vital Union programs. You can access the portal by visiting the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org).

Questions about dues status can be forwarded to the M.E.B.A. Accounts Receivable Department at Headquarters (202-638-5355) to either Darlene Knott (dknott@mebaunion.org) or Keera Batiste (kbatiste@mebaunion.org). You can also use the M.E.B.A. Payment Portal to make online monetary transactions. Check out the site accessed from M.E.B.A.’s webpage at www.mebaunion.org.

APPLICANTS REMINDED OF REQUIREMENTS NEEDED FOR MEMBERSHIP

The M.E.B.A. Headquarters Membership Department sent each M.E.B.A. applicant a letter detailing outstanding requirements needed to be met in order to qualify for – and to be accepted into membership. Such letters are sent two times a year in the weeks preceding the release of the twice-a-year District Investigating Committee Report. DIC reports list qualified applicants who have fulfilled the obligations in their application packet (including sea service documentation and initiation fee) and are current on their service charges. The reports are put before members for a vote at the June and December meetings. Once members approve the report, listed applicants become members and the Membership Department informs them of their new status.

Qualified applicants who are trying to make membership must provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next DIC report. The DIC will meet before the June membership meeting to formalize their report. To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements. Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. M.E.B.A. Headquarters does not, and cannot, update an Applicant's record with sailing time/years of service unless that Applicant submits the required paperwork, i.e. discharges, sea service letters, documentation of employment, to HQ, by e-mail, fax, or mail or via your local Union hall. For further information you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

APPLICANTS/MEMBERS IN DUES ARREARS TO BE DROPPED

Members or applicants two or more years in arrears on their dues or service charges will be DROPPED from the membership or applicant rolls in June. The drop list issued by the District Investigating Committee (DIC) will be voted on by members at the membership meetings beginning on June 8th. Members/applicants on the DIC Drop List can rescue their membership and return to good standing if they address their arrearage in time. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters immediately to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing. Members and applicants can also make payments online, the quickest way to catch up. Visit the M.E.B.A. homepage at www.mebaunion.org.

JUNE MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

(Yet to be Determined if Meetings will be Held Online or at Union Halls)

Monday, June 8 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, June 9 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, June 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, June 11 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Monday, June 12 – Honolulu@1100.

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