

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



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LAWMAKERS' JONES ACT DEFENSE STAVES OFF WAIVER

An 11th hour intervention at the White House by a group of Republican lawmakers appears to have drowned out the drumbeat towards the possible issuance of a Jones Act waiver that had become a real possibility this week. News reports indicated that President Trump had been leaning toward exempting Puerto Rico from the Jones Act following the territory's request for a 10-year waiver. Puerto Rico's Governor requested the waiver as part of the island's renewable energy push and their desire to utilize foreign-flag carriers for the shipment of American Liquefied Natural Gas.

Bloomberg News reported last week that the President was swayed by key advisors and certain oil and gas industry executives, to strongly consider issuing "some type of waiver" as part of the request. The media was awash this week with misleading anti-Jones Act opinion pieces regurgitated by the usual suspects such as the CATO Institute, the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation.

The Jones Act has strong support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, but Republican Senators believed a GOP-only meeting with the President on the eve of his decision would prove the best avenue toward making their case. The pro-Jones Act coalition of lawmakers that met with the President and key White House officials yesterday included Sens. Dan Sullivan (R-AK), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), John Kennedy (R-LA), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and Congressman Steve Scalise (R-LA). White House officials attending the Roosevelt Room meeting with the President, among others, included Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, National Security Adviser John Bolton and National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow as well as strong pro-Jones Act advocates such as Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Trade Policy Adviser Peter Navarro.

Lawmakers and others made the case against a Jones Act exemption which can only be granted when "necessary in the interest of national defense." Sen. Cassidy and the contingent of lawmakers strongly warned against the waiver telling the President that, "The Jones Act is essential to preserve our domestic shipping industry and protect our national and economic security." Shortly after the meeting, several lawmakers in attendance confirmed that the President had backed off the idea of granting a waiver while giving his assurance that the integrity of the Jones Act would be maintained.

An unnecessary, long-term Jones Act waiver would lead to the surrender of U.S.-flagged and –crewed coastwise trade to our foreign counterparts while critically undermining our national and economic security. Without the Jones Act and other programs such as the Maritime Security Program and U.S. cargo preference requirements, qualified American mariners will eventually disappear and the carriage of critical national-interest cargo will be forfeited to foreign mariners and overseas interests. That is why the preservation of the Jones Act and other statutes and programs, which help maintain the U.S.-flag fleet have been the focus of M.E.B.A.’s Political Action Fund.

The P.A.F. is able to utilize its limited resources to educate lawmakers and push back against misguided attempts to eliminate the Jones Act. Members, Applicants and Retirees are encouraged to support the P.A.F. to provide the ammunition it needs to fight for a thriving U.S.-flag industry – instead of one that is simply maintaining a pulse. For your job, and for the future of U.S.-flag shipping, please make a contribution to the P.A.F. today. You can stop by a local union hall or visit the M.E.B.A. website to sign up for regular contributions. From the “Members” tab on the M.E.B.A. Homepage (www.mebaunion.org) select “Political Action Fund.”

REP. CEDRIC RICHMOND SALUTED FOR SUPPORT OF U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING

Congressman Cedric Richmond (D-LA), longtime supporter of U.S.-flag shipping and the American maritime workforce, was honored with the prestigious “Salute to Congress” award at a DC area event last night. The annual honor is reserved for a Member of Congress who demonstrates consistent support for the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine and American maritime industry.

Rep. Richmond is a tireless Jones Act and Maritime Security Program advocate who continues to champion “Ship American” initiatives and has been a reliably strong voice on behalf of our industry. M.E.B.A. officials and staffers, along with the American Maritime Congress and other U.S. shipping advocates proudly attended last night’s affair that took place at Arlington, VA’s Army Navy Club. The event was hosted by the International Propeller Club.

Congressman Richmond serves on the House Committees on Homeland Security and the Judiciary. Importantly, he is also the Chairman of the Congressional Maritime Caucus.

FOUR MORE FRIENDS OF SEAFARERS INDUCTED AT SIH EVENT

M.E.B.A. was in attendance last week at the annual “Setting the Course” event in New York City where the Seafarers International House (SIH) welcomed four new honorees to its inner circle.

The SIH is a charitable organization that provides seafarers and travelers with pastoral care, hospitality, social assistance and advocacy. Their annual “Outstanding Friend of Seafarers” award is usually doled out to two honorees a year, though this year’s honors were extended to four worthy recipients. The prestigious award is bestowed upon individuals who have made advances on behalf of the maritime community and who are dedicated to the welfare of seafarers. M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo, along with Keystone’s Phil Fisher were last year’s recipients. M.E.B.A. President Marshall Ainley previously received the award.

This year, shipping company honorees included Maersk Line President/CEO Bill Woodhour and International Seaways President/CEO Lois Zabrocky. A pair of hardworking Seafarers International Union (SIU) representatives who rarely bask in the limelight were deservedly singled out by the SIH for their longtime service to mariners. Kate Hunt heads up SIU’s Government Services Division. She got her start in the industry with the National Maritime Union in the late 1970s and has also served as

the National Director of the SIU-affiliated United Industrial Workers (UIW). SIU's East Coast International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Coordinator Ricky Esopa was also honored. Like Kate Hunt, Ricky also began fighting for mariners in the old NMU. He continues to battle against unfair practices and substandard shipping, and his work helps raise the standards of mariners worldwide. Congratulations!

ITF DECRIES RISE OF CONFINED SPACE TRAGEDIES

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) noted that workers need a minimum of two things from the air in their workplace: that it's safe to breathe and that it doesn't explode and kill them. Since January 2018, 16 dockers and 12 seafarers have died from asphyxiation or explosions in confined spaces – or from falls after passing out due to bad air. That's a shocking spike in deaths in confined spaces, a workplace hazard long familiar to the shipping industry. To put the recent deaths in perspective, there have been a total of 145 in the past 20 years, and alarmingly 28 in the past 16 months.

ITF said that companies that choose to save a dollar rather than train and equip workers to labor safely in confined spaces or invest in an onboard safety culture where workers are free to take the time they need to vent cargo holds, ensure sufficient good air or question a risk they are facing. Maritime workers are generally aware of the risks associated with entry into confined spaces, but they may not be aware of the details and extent of the varied dangers posed by forest products, coal, iron ore, grains, gases and other cargo.

ITF noted that it is not enough for a worker to rely on opening the hatches for 30 minutes and hoping for the best, or to do the best they can to protect themselves on their own. It is not enough for workers to take all available precautions but sometimes still be caught without sufficient protection by pockets of gases and lack of oxygen. And it is absolutely not enough that workers are left to cope with an inhumane industry by doing what humans have always done for one other: risk their own lives to save their fallen colleagues.

Last November, two dockers died while unloading logs from the hold of a bulker in Montevideo, likely after exposure to an unexpected fumigant they were not told about. A crew member saw them in distress and entered the hold wearing a face mask, determined to rescue them. During his efforts, his mask was reportedly removed, and he passed out, eventually landing in hospital in an induced coma. A third docker required medical help before the tragic incident was over.

ITF said that shipowners have a duty of care for their crew and dockers employed to carry out their cargo operations. Education and procedures are not optional. The negligence of shipowners who disregard standard procedures and cost workers their lives must be met with a punishment proportionate to the lives lost.

The ITF Dockers' and ITF Seafarers' sections will be at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) working with shipowners to ensure that the regulations governing confined space stand up and are strong enough to protect all maritime workers.

SURVEY LINKS SENT TO M.E.B.A. WSF MEMBERS/APPLICANTS

Members and applicants sailing in the Washington State Ferry system were sent reminder emails today to encourage them to participate in the ongoing online survey concerning a number of important

issues. The Union is asking over 400 M.E.B.A. members and applicants in the WSF to deliver their input during a 30-day online survey concerning representation issues.

Last year, WSF members voted down a proposed dues increase that would have changed the unit's dues structure from a fixed annual cost to a percent of their base wage. The change was sought to reinforce the Union's ability to provide sustainable future representation. Though members failed to back that particular proposal, many indicated a willingness to support a more serviceable dues system if structured differently. The survey affords the opportunity for the M.E.B.A. to help capture member and applicant opinions on how the Union can maximize its functionality and better serve the membership.

The survey began on Monday, April 22 and continues until 0900 (Pacific Time) on May 23rd. Survey links were sent to members and applicants in the WSF at their email addresses on file at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. Members and applicants sailing for WSF who did not receive an email should contact M.E.B.A. Headquarters and supply a Membership Database Update Form with the Union to ensure that their correct information is on file. Further information can be sought from M.E.B.A.'s WSF Rep. Eric Winge at ewinge@mebaunion.org, Marco Cannistraro at Headquarters can also be contacted about the online survey at marco@mebaunion.org or (202) 257-2825.

MAKE SURE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IS ON FILE!!!

Members and applicants should ensure that Headquarters has your e-mail address along with your other contact information. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website (www.mebaunion.org) located in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Email addresses are also collected at membership meetings on the sign-in sheet, but *members must write clearly* as many addresses are typically scribbled illegibly.

Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you should not assume that info forwarded to Plans is updated in the Union database and vice versa.

LABOR HAILS PROGRESS ON NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PACKAGE

“Infrastructure Week” got off to a promising start when Democratic leaders had a surprisingly productive meeting with the White House leading to tacit agreement on a broad \$2 trillion outline for a necessary rebuild of the nation's roads, bridges and transit systems. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer left the White House on Tuesday sounding a positive note about their meeting with the President that could signal the first step in a bipartisan deal.

A long-promised infrastructure plan has been waved around by the President since he was on the campaign trail and there have been several stops and starts, but a tangible plan has yet to manifest itself. The AFL-CIO noted that the entire labor movement supports a federal infrastructure package “that fixes our nation's crumbling roads, bridges and transit systems, respects prevailing wage, and puts union men and women on job sites across the country.” They noted that “every \$1 invested in infrastructure generates \$3.70 in economic growth. When we invest in infrastructure, we create jobs, increase productivity, and make our neighborhoods stronger and safer.”

But observers were skeptical that the latest announcement would lead toward a tangible infrastructure package since it will require a monumental effort to bridge the partisan gap between the parties regarding the specifics of the plan and the mechanics of the massive package's funding.

AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Dept. President Larry Willis was pleased by the positive signal sent by the White House meeting and said that the focus must now shift to funding. "We have long called for an increase in federal user fees to stabilize the Highway Trust Fund so we can rebuild our nation's neglected highways, bridges, and transit systems. Real federal dollars must also be committed to ensure our seaports, rail networks, and aviation system can support a 21st-century economy and compete on the world stage."

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, May 6 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, May 7 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, May 8 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, May 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, May 10 – **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. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org