

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **MARAD'S BUZBY DELIVERS PROGRESS REPORT ON NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGY**

Earlier today, Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby told a House Subcommittee that his agency is still working on the the long-awaited National Maritime Strategy (NMS) and that the mariner workforce will be a "grand part" of the forthcoming strategy. "The training of that workforce, the qualifications of that workforce, the sustainment of that workforce - both for the domestic fleet and for the international fleet – those are all key parts of the strategy and will need to be part of any strategy we put forward," he testified.

The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, part of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, heard from Adm. Buzby in a morning hearing that also included witnesses briefing Members about the Coast Guard's icebreaker acquisition program.

As envisioned, the NMS would offer a path forward to improve the competitiveness of the U.S.-flag fleet to meet the nation's economic and defense needs. The Strategy was originally expected in 2015 but the multi-faceted plan eventually became trapped in limbo at the Office of Management and Budget. It finally disappeared from view with the 2016 Presidential election and change of administration. When Admiral Buzby took over MarAd, he told Congress that he planned to resurrect the moribund plan and "get it across the finish line."

The FY 2019 National Defense Authorization Act extended the deadline for NMS submission to February 2020. Admiral Buzby said his agency is using the additional time to further collaborate with public and private stakeholders to ensure all voices are heard and to better refine NMS goals.

Regarding icebreakers, Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) said the problem could be solved in the next two weeks if Congress is prudent in its allocation of the money it will earmark as the chambers work on funding bills before the conclusion of this session of Congress. He pointed out that Senate appropriators plan to include \$750 million for the first of the needed polar security cutters. However, he noted that the House doesn't have a comparable provision

in their bill but but could possibly appropriate \$5 billion “on a goddamned wall that won’t do a thing to protect America...”

“The problem is us,” said Rep. Garamendi. “The money is there, the question is where are we gonna spend it?”

Regarding the need to jumpstart U.S. shipping, Rep. Garamendi referred to witness testimony that correlated the downturn of U.S. shipping with the decline of cargoes. He took the opportunity to promote his bill, the “Energizing American Shipbuilding Act,” that would require a percentage of exported American crude oil and LNG to travel on U.S.-built and U.S.-flag ships. He admitted the legislation wouldn’t pass this year but will be introduced in the next session of Congress and should be embraced. He blamed OMB for stalling the issuance of the NMS and called for OMB Director Mick Mulvaney to be subpoenaed before Congress to answer tough questions about it.

A witness for the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) cited concerns that the continued erosion of the U.S.-flag fleet and shrinking pool of qualified American mariners threatens the nation’s ability to meet national defense needs. This last summer, GAO urged the Department of Transportation to expeditiously finalize the NMS.

### **MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND UPCOMING DECEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Members are strongly urged to attend one of the thirteen December membership meetings taking place next week (Dec. 3-7).

As a Union committed to democratic precepts and safeguards, membership meetings are a great way for members, applicants and retirees to stay involved, get informed, and deliver input to help advance the business of the Union. There is another full agenda including a pair of ratification votes on the tentative agreements reached with American President Lines covering deep sea engineers as well as port engineers. In addition, members will vote to approve qualified applicants into membership and drop members and applicants two or more years in arrears. There will also be discussion of the Shipping Rules referendum, WSF vote and other important business that would benefit from a healthy attendance. Finally, there will be holiday parties following six membership meetings – those being held in Boston, Charleston, Jacksonville, New York/New Jersey, Norfolk and Tampa. Take a look at the upcoming December meeting schedule that appears at the bottom of this issue and see what fits for you!

### **DUES MUST BE CURRENT TO PARTICIPATE IN UPCOMING ONLINE REFERENDUM**

Members should make sure their dues are current so they can participate in the upcoming District-wide Online Referendum. Members have until midnight on December 17<sup>th</sup> to be current on their dues in order to be eligible to participate. As the M.E.B.A. By-Laws state, “No member's ballot shall be counted unless he is in good standing as of 15 days immediately preceding the closing of the balloting.” The online referendum will begin this Saturday morning (December 1) and run until December 31<sup>st</sup>.

This will be a one-question referendum to consider a possible change to the Shipping Rules to permit a new Group III Applicant to remain on the Port Relief List for one year from the date of their first registration. The Rule change is designed to extend the window for new applicants to seek viable shipping opportunities as they begin their seafaring careers.

## **GROUP SHIPPING CARD/APPLICANT & MEMBERSHIP BOOK PICKUP LIST AT HALLS**

Each of the M.E.B.A. Union halls has posted a list of Group Shipping Cards in their possession that have not yet been picked up by a Member or Applicant. Halls also post a list of unclaimed Membership and Applicant Books in their possession. The list is posted on each hall's bulletin board or in another prominent location.

It is the Member or Applicant's responsibility to ensure that their status and shipping documents are in order and up-to-date. Group Shipping Cards and Applicant/Membership Books are mailed back to the Union hall where they were processed unless an alternate hall was specified in the request form for receipt of the Card or Book.

## **LAKES COMPANIES ENTHUSED BY PLANS TO BUILD NEW SOO LOCKS**

Great Lakes shipping companies are in celebration mode after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced it would proceed with plans to build a desperately needed Soo Lock.

A second Poe-sized lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan is closer to reality following the Corps' allocation of \$32 million for design and construction of the project which could take up to a decade. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder has committed another \$52 million to the project which will be additionally funded through annual appropriations.

"This is the moment we have been waiting for more than 30 years," said Jim Weakley, President of the Lake Carriers' Association. "The announcement by the Army Corps' that the construction program for the new lock at the Soo will officially begin is the direct result of the tireless efforts of so many people and organizations banding together to update one of the most critical pieces of American infrastructure. It is a great day for Michigan, the Great Lakes region, and the entire nation. We are elated." LCA, represents 13 companies that operate vessels on the Great Lakes including M.E.B.A.-contracted Interlake Steamship Company.

The funds will be used for design work and to resume construction that began in 2009 and quickly stalled. Construction projects slated to initiate the new lock work include deepening the upstream channel to accommodate modern Great Lakes' vessels and construction of the upstream approach walls. LCA says construction of a new lock will provide resiliency to the existing Poe Lock, opened in 1969, which now carries over 90 percent of all cargoes. The Soo Locks are crucial to the American manufacturing supply chain. According to a recent study on the economic impacts of vessel traffic moving through the existing locks, over 123,000 jobs are reliant on the locks which in turn supports \$22.5 billion in economic activity. A Department of Homeland Security study determined that a six month outage of the Poe, one of two operational locks, would result in 11 million unemployed Americans.

## **CG REAUTHORIZATION BILL SET FOR SIGNATURE**

Congress passed a new Coast Guard Reauthorization bill that has been put before the President for his expected signature.

In addition to funding Coast Guard operations and maintenance at \$700 million above Fiscal Year 2018 levels, the legislation also authorizes funding for oceangoing heavy icebreakers and reauthorizes and updates the authorities of the Federal Maritime Commission as well as National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) hydrographic services. The authorized funding for agencies and provisions in the bill are subject to the appropriations process which will take place in the new Congress next year.

In addition, the Coast Guard bill contains the latest incarnation of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA), which is designed to consolidate ballast water regulatory authority and will eliminate some of the conflicting discharge regulations that impede the operation of commercial vessels. The newly passed bill also makes changes to several Coast Guard working committees including the Merchant Mariner Medical Advisory Committee (MEDMAC) which will include a more prominent oversight role for merchant mariners on the Committee.

### **SHIPPING PUB FAIRPLAY ENDS 135 YEAR RUN**

Industry trade magazine *Fairplay* is ending circulation after a 135 year run. It is also ceasing its online publication and website. The decision was made following a reorganization of the maritime media unit of Fairplay's parent, IHS Markit. "Despite investment and concerted efforts to build an online community and maritime events, we have been unable to generate growing circulation, subscription, and event revenues," IHS spokesperson Stuart Strachan said. "Not unlike many print-based brands, we haven't gained sufficient traction with these efforts."

The final edition of *Fairplay* will be published on December 6.

### **UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO WITH HQ**

Be sure to inform Headquarters if you have changed your contact information. There is an address change form on our website to help expedite the process. It can be found at [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org) under the "Members" tab or in the "Documents & Notices" section. Alternatively, you can send your updated information to the Membership Dept. at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org). Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you must also forward a signed change of address form to the Plans Office if you wish to update your information with them.

### **VACATION BENEFITS - 2018 YEAR-END CLOSING**

***Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.***

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2018 in the Outports and the Plan Office is Monday, December 17, 2018.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2018 will be made on 12/18/2018 and the funds will be deposited into your bank account on 12/20/2018.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/17/18 at 5:00 PM will be paid on 1/2/2019.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2018 must file before this deadline. Remember, Tuesday December 25, 2018 and Tuesday January 1, 2019 are holidays and the Outports and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify your specific Outport holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

***Split Your Vacation Payments between 2018 and 2019***

You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2018 and a second in 2019. The 12/17/2018 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner MUST be a continuous vacation period. Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111 if you have any questions.

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, December 3 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, December 4 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, December 5 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, December 6 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, December 7 – **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)*