

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



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MARITIME CHAMPION ELIJAH CUMMINGS HAS DIED

U.S.-flag shipping lost a champion early this morning as Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) died at Gilchrist Hospice Care in Baltimore. He was 68. His office said the 12-term Congressman passed away due to "complications concerning longstanding health challenges." Rep. Cummings had endured several surgeries since 2017 including an aortic valve repair which led to a serious infection. His mobility had been limited at times but he was thought to be "on the mend."

Congressman Cummings was a long-time friend and strong supporter of the M.E.B.A. and the U.S. maritime industry. As a Member of Congress since 1996, Rep. Cummings championed maritime and labor friendly legislation and was a particularly strong advocate of the Jones Act, increasing U.S. cargo preference requirements, and shared a deep commitment to help strengthen the U.S. Merchant Marine. He visited M.E.B.A. Headquarters once again earlier this year and was still a forceful advocate for our industry. Rep. Cummings' Congressional seat will remain vacant until his successor is chosen following an abbreviated primary and special election in the coming months.

Rep. Cummings was the recipient of the International Propeller Club's 2013 Salute to Congress Award that recognizes a Member demonstrating consistent support for the maritime industry and the U.S. flag Merchant Marine. When he accepted his award at a D.C. reception that year, his typically soaring oratory was on display as he proclaimed, "A subject that is near and dear to me is the Jones Act. Let me be very clear, the Jones Act must remain the compass by which we steer our maritime policy. The requirements of the Jones Act have been waived too often in recent years for what appears to be the convenience of all parties other than our Jones Act fleet. We are involved in the maritime community now and if we don't guard our progress there will be none. It's our watch."

UAW MEMBERS TO CONSIDER TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH GM

Striking General Motors employees represented by the United Auto Workers will put a newly-reached tentative agreement to a ratification vote following a breakthrough by negotiators this week.

Over 46,000 UAW members had been walking the picket lines for over a month as they seek a fair contract from GM. Reports indicate the tentative four-year agreement increases wages, provides a path to permanent employment for temporary workers, preserves health benefits and adds job security language, among other provisions. The tentative agreement will be put before the UAW membership for a ratification vote in a process that begins on Saturday and is expected to conclude on October 25th. Workers remain on strike until the conclusion of the process.

CHICAGO EDUCATORS ARE ON STRIKE

Over 30,000 Chicago school system employees represented by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and SEIU Local 73 are walking the picket line today after 10 months of frustrating, fruitless talks with the State of Illinois. Over 500 public schools have emptied out affecting some 350,000 students, though needy students will still have access to school meals.

CTU represents about 25,000 educators, paraprofessionals and clinicians. SEIU Local 73 represents about 7,000 special education classroom assistants, bus aides, custodians and school security officers. 2,500 more Local 73 members working in the Chicago Parks District would likely have been part of the strike but a tentative agreement reached earlier this week will keep them on the job. Striking workers are looking for better pay and benefits, smaller class sizes and full staffing, among other provisions sought.

Chicago class sizes are among the largest in the state and 40+ kindergartners are typically sandwiched into classrooms. Few Chicago Public School students have access to social workers or nurses. One in four schools has a librarian – 1 in 10 for Black-majority schools. That's an embarrassment. It makes it worse that the Chicago Mayor is distorting the nature of the negotiations and characterizing the educators as 'greedy.'

"We have not achieved what we need to bring justice and high quality schools to the children and teachers of Chicago," stated CTU President Jesse Sharkey. "We need to have the tools we need to do the job at our schools. We need pay and benefits that will give us dignity and respect. We are on strike until we can do better."

HELP THE WWII VETERANS GOLD MEDAL BILL GO ALL THE WAY

Though a bill to honor World War II merchant mariners with a Congressional gold medal was passed by the full House in September, not much has happened in the Senate to get it over the finish line and passed into law.

H.R. 550, a bill sponsored by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK), was able to amass over 290 co-sponsors, which allowed it to advance to the House Floor for a vote where it passed. The measure would authorize a Congressional Gold Medal, of appropriate design, to collectively honor World War II merchant mariners. It would be displayed in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York. Duplicates would then be struck and made available to the public.

Comparable legislation must still be addressed in the Senate before this long overdue tribute to our Fourth Arm of Defense becomes law. The Senate has a companion bill (S. 133), which was introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). So far, S. 133 has 36 co-sponsors attached to it. If your Senators have not yet added their names to the list of co-sponsors, you are urged to remind them of the crucial role mariners played in our country's winning effort in WWII. You can visit this link to view the list of co-sponsors to S. 133: www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/133/cosponsors

You can call your Senator via the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and/or navigate to a Navy League weblink that will let you send a ready-made letter to your Members of Congress urging support for the Gold Medal bill honoring our Fourth Arm of Defense. Go to www.votervoice.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/59995/Respond

**LETTERS TO APPLICANTS HAVE MAILED;
DETAILS REQUIREMENTS NEEDED TO MAKE MEMBERSHIP**

The M.E.B.A. Headquarters Membership Department has sent each M.E.B.A. applicant a letter that details the outstanding requirements needed to be met in order to qualify for – and to be accepted into membership. The individualized letters were mailed on October 1 and appear in a business-size window envelope with the M.E.B.A. Headquarters return address.

Such letters are sent two times a year in the weeks preceding the release of the twice-a-year District Investigating Committee Report. The June and December 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 the 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 next meet in November shortly before the release of their December 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.

GREAT LAKES TRADE IS BUSTLING

The latest Lake Carriers' Association (LCA) cargo figures for the most-recently tabulated month indicate that U.S.-flag Great Lakes freighters moved 10.8 million tons of cargo in August, a 7.8 percent increase compared to a year ago. The August float was also 7 percent above the month's 5-year average. LCA, represents 13 companies that operate vessels on the Great Lakes including M.E.B.A.-contracted Interlake Steamship Company. Year-to-date U.S.-flag cargo movement stands at 54.5 million tons, an increase of 12.6 percent compared to the same point in 2018.

From its September report, LCA says that shipments of iron ore from U.S. ports on the Great Lakes totaled 5.8 million tons, a decrease of 1.8 percent compared to a year ago. However, shipments outperformed the month's 5-year average by 1.8 percent. Year-to-date the iron ore trade stands at 38.6 million tons, a decrease of less than 1 percent compared to the same point in 2018. Through September, iron ore loadings are 4.8 percent ahead of their 5-year average for the first three quarters.

Shipments of limestone on the Great Lakes totaled nearly 4.1 million tons in September, an increase of 12.4 percent compared to a year ago. Limestone cargos also bettered the month's 5-year average by 20.3 percent.

PIRACY FALLOFF FROM LAST YEAR'S LEVEL; GULF OF GUINEA REMAINS A HOTSPOT

The International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) latest statistics reveal that fewer incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships have been reported through 2019's third quarter than the first nine months of 2018. 119 incidents have been reported so far this year, compared to 156 incidents for the same period in 2018. This year's incidents include 95 vessels boarded, 10 vessels fired upon, 10 attempted attacks, and four vessels hijacked. The number of crew taken hostage through the first nine months has declined from 112 in 2018 to 49 in 2019. While the overall number of incidents has dropped, incidents involving guns and knives remain consistent. There have been 24 knife-related and 35 gun-related incidents reported in 2019, compared to 25 and 37 for the first nine months of 2018. Though Indonesia reported a decline in overall piracy, the Gulf of Guinea remains a high risk area. The region accounts for 86% of crew taken hostage and nearly 82% of crew kidnappings globally.

"Although incidents are down, the Gulf of Guinea continues to be a concern for piracy and armed robbery-related activities with kidnappings of crew members increasing in both scale and frequency," said Pottengal Mukundan, IMB Director. "It is important that shipmasters and owners continue to report all actual, attempted, and suspected incidents to ensure that an accurate picture of these attacks emerge and action is taken against these criminals before the incidents further escalate."

Meanwhile, Somalia had no piracy-related incidents recorded for the first nine months of 2019. Although no incidents were reported, Somali pirates continue to possess the capacity to carry out attacks in the Somali basin and wider Indian Ocean.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, November 4 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, November 5 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, November 6 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, November 7 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Friday, November 8 – 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.