

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*“On Watch in Peace and War since 1875”*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
*The Official Union Newsletter – “The Word to the Wise”*  
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## **CHEVRON MEMBERS RATIFY NEW AGREEMENT**

Members sailing in the Chevron fleet have ratified a recently negotiated three-year contract with the company that immediately provides wage increases retroactive to April 1, 2023.

The agreement that runs until March 31, 2026, beefs up wages, broadens bonuses for extended assignments and makes improvements in other areas including reliefs, holidays and vacation.

The new Memorandum of Agreement was put to an online ratification vote last week. 100% of eligible Chevron fleet members participated in the vote and the MOA was ratified by a decisive margin.

The bargaining team for negotiations included Executive V.P. Claudia Cimini, Oakland Patrolman Max Alper and rank-and-file members Jerry Hiles, Steven Truelove, Jeff Jones and Chris Coombs.

Chevron is an “open shop” bargaining unit. Contract talks began in March and negotiators engaged vessel crew - both M.E.B.A. and non-union – to gauge opinions and preferences for agreement terms. Those not already represented by the Union were informed about the benefits of membership. M.E.B.A. officials were pleased with the response, and the Union dramatically increased its rate of non-union Chevron mariners making application for membership. The new applicants came to understand that the strength of an effective and enforceable contract is wielded by the solidarity and commitment of a union.

In the U.S.-flag Chevron fleet, M.E.B.A. represents the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Engineers, Second and Third Mates as well as the Junior First Officers. Vessels represented include the TEXAS VOYAGER, CALIFORNIA VOYAGER, MISSISSIPPI VOYAGER and FLORIDA VOYAGER.

## **M.E.B.A.’s VOKAC, BARKER, PASHA TO BE HONORED AT UPCOMING AOTOS AWARDS**

The United Seamen’s Service, sponsor of the prestigious annual Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) Awards has chosen to honor M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac as well as the heads of two of our contracted companies – Interlake’s Mark W. Barker and the Pasha Group’s George Pasha IV. This will be the 54<sup>th</sup> presentation of the maritime industry lifetime achievement awards and each

recipient will receive the traditional silver statuette of Christopher Columbus – the first Admiral of the Ocean Sea. As is the annual tradition, the United Seamen’s Service, will also honor U.S. mariners involved in rescues at sea. Those awards will be announced at a later date. The AOTOS honors will be awarded at a gala dinner and dance on Friday, December 1, 2023, at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel.

For more than half a century, each year United Seamen's Service has presented the AOTOS Award, widely regarded as the most prestigious accolade in the maritime sector. This honor acknowledges exceptional contributions made by individuals and organizations towards the advancement of American seafarers and the United States' maritime industry.

The USS press release announcing the honors stated, “As the District and National President of the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.), the premier maritime labor union for the officers of the United States Merchant Marine, Adam Vokac is dedicated to protecting the union’s membership, a large and diverse mix of engineers and deck officers, experienced and skilled in all aspects of the maritime workforce. Prior to his current role, which he has had since 2021, Mr. Vokac also served as Executive Vice President for seven years as well as a union representative at the Port of Honolulu. Mr. Vokac has a long history of vigorously fighting to maintain and strengthen contracts as well as look for opportunities to increase membership. Understanding the balance of keeping positive relationships with employers while simultaneously pushing back to preserve hard fought gains, Mr. Vokac has earned the respect of both union members and management. Consistently looking to the future, Mr. Vokac is committed to modernizing the M.E.B.A. while maintaining the union’s core principles and building on its track record of readiness, safety and loyalty. Mr. Vokac has been a long-time dedicated supporter of the maritime industry. Upon graduating as valedictorian from the United States Merchant Marine Academy at King’s Point in 2000, he went to the nearest M.E.B.A. hall and joined the union that same day. His dedication to the maritime industry is demonstrated by his commitment to the M.E.B.A., his extensive shipping career and his fervent support of the laws and programs that keep the industry strong.”

### **COAST GUARD EXTENDS RELAXED QA RULES FOR ANOTHER 5 YEARS**

The Coast Guard’s Office of Merchant Mariner Credentialing has issued another extension allowing mariners to use assessments of competence completed by a qualified mariner who is not a Coast Guard-approved Qualified Assessor (QA). The previous extension would have ended on December 31, 2023. In the newly released “Change 4” to Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 19-14, Policy on Qualified Assessors, the extension will continue until December 31, 2028. These assessments must be submitted to the Coast Guard as part of a complete application no later than June 30, 2029. Qualified military personnel need not be approved QAs and may continue to sign assessments after December 31, 2028.

The full notice is available on the M.E.B.A. website in the “Documents and Member Notices” section.

The Coast Guard noted that the additional extension was granted because they are aware of the limited number of approved QAs, resulting in hardship for mariners trying to complete STCW assessments after December 31, 2023.

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

### **UAW VIDEO TALKS ABOUT BIG THREE BROKEN PROMISES**

The UAW has released “Broken Promises,” a new video that reveals the deep roots of the union’s ongoing strike against the Big Three automakers. The video, narrated by UAW President Shawn Fain, describes the deal made during the Great Recession when the auto industry was on the brink of collapse. Do a search for it on YouTube or visit it directly at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dl\\_paqNnmw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dl_paqNnmw). As Fain notes, “The deal was, UAW members take some short-term cuts for the long-term survival of Ford, General Motors and Chrysler.” Those short-term cuts have lasted 15 years. Autoworkers hired after 2007 have been denied the pensions and retiree healthcare coverage won by generations of UAW members before them. The starting wages of post-2007 workers were slashed, and it now takes eight years for a full-time UAW member to reach top pay. The majority of UAW members at Ford, General Motors and Stellantis are currently stuck in this second tier. The Big Three made a quarter-trillion dollars in North American profits over the last ten years. They made \$21 billion in total profits in just the first six months of this year. The UAW launched its “Stand Up Strike” against all three automakers when the contracts expired on Sept. 14, and 25,000 UAW members are now on strike at 43 Big Three facilities in 21 states. You can visit <https://uaw.org/standwithus> to see a full list and map of the facilities on strike.

### **NEW MARAD NOTICE ON GPS INTERFERENCE, AIS SPOOFING**

The Maritime Administration has issued another Maritime Security Communication with Industry (MSCI) (No. 2023-013) to highlight continued instances of worldwide GPS interference involving increasingly sophisticated malicious Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) spoofing techniques. Such interference can result in lost or inaccurate GPS signals affecting bridge navigation, GPS-based timing, and communications equipment (include satellite communications equipment). The Advisory also warns that AIS systems are open, unencrypted, and unprotected. As such, AIS signals can be spoofed, resulting in incorrect or missing AIS data.

They note that the U.S. Coast Guard Navigation Center (NAVCEN) webpage, <https://navcen.uscg.gov/gps-problem-report-status> contains a chronological list of recently reported GPS problems. GPS interference may also be caused by planned testing or training activities. Further information on planned outages can be found at <https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/gps-service-interruptions>, and will also be published in the Notice to Mariners.

For more information about U.S. Maritime Alerts and Advisories, including subscription details, please visit <https://www.maritime.dot.gov/msci>.

### **HALLS, OFFICES CLOSED ON MONDAY TO HONOR COLUMBUS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed on Monday Oct. 9 in observance of Columbus Day and the original Admiral of the Ocean Seas - Christopher Columbus. Columbus has been described as a visionary who opened up the New World and conversely as a greedy imperialist who engaged in slave trading, genocide and stealing Indian land.

His celebrated 1492 voyage brought the 41-year old Columbus to the Canary Islands, Bahamas and Cuba among other stops. It wasn't until his third voyage in 1498 that he made it to the American mainland at the mouth of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. His interesting grasp of geography led him to believe that he had landed in the East Indies – and the Native Americans he encountered were since known as “Indians.” He never set foot in North America.

It is generally accepted that Cristoforo Colombo was an Italian from Genoa. Columbus's travels are a source of pride to the Italian community which embraces the federal holiday that became official in all 50 states in 1971. Much of the romanticism of the Columbus voyages was perpetuated by author Washington Irving who catalogued the explorations in a series of books which were a mixture of history and fiction. One of the myths that continues to be believed today due to Irving's work, is that Columbus set out on his voyage to disprove the theory that the world was flat by accomplishing his mission without falling off the edge of the world. Irving's books have certainly helped blur the lines in understanding what is fact or fiction in the life of this complex man.

Columbus became more religiously devout in his later years claiming to be privy to heavenly voices and believing that his explorations were part of a fulfilled divine prophecy that served as another step on the way to the Last Judgment. He died in Spain in May of 1506 at the age 55 of a heart attack supposedly induced by Reiter's Syndrome. Brought on by bacterial infection, Reiter's causes arthritis throughout the body and urinary tract disturbance. Enjoy your Columbus Day on Monday!

**NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS** *(All times are local)*

Monday, October 2 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, October 3 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, October 4 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, October 5 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, October 6 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.  
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline  
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***

*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated 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). For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*