

## Productive Convention Further Stabilizes District within National M.E.B.A. Structure

Elected Delegates gathered at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School on March 20<sup>th</sup> to conduct M.E.B.A.'s 112<sup>th</sup> National Convention and fulfill the Union's constitutional requirements.

The National M.E.B.A. is an administrative umbrella organization that was restructured in the 1960s to house M.E.B.A. Districts. It has no paid employees and holds no contracts. As members know, there is currently only one District under the National M.E.B.A. which is District No. 1-PCD, M.E.B.A. The District holds and controls all the assets of the M.E.B.A. membership whereas the National holds the charter with the AFL-CIO. At the District No. 1 elections that concluded in December, members voted for 15 Delegates to participate in the Convention. Those 15 Delegates gathered in the Luebbe Conference Room at the School for a productive all-day discussion of both National and District business. Outgoing National Executive Committee Member Phillip Sistrunk joined Delegates for the first half of the Convention.

When the M.E.B.A.'s District system came into force in the 1960s, a "Constitution for Districts" was created as part of the M.E.B.A. Constitution – with directives and guidelines for the multiple Districts within the National M.E.B.A. But since 1999, the National M.E.B.A. governing body and its Conventions are comprised solely of District No. 1 members. The District is governed by its own By-Laws, but is also



*Delegates elected a new National Executive Committee (NEC) at the National M.E.B.A. Convention. Marshall Ainley, at right, was re-elected as National M.E.B.A. President. Bill Van Loo (next to Marshall) will continue in his role as National Secretary-Treasurer. Adam Vokac (center) begins his second term as National Vice President. The Constitution provides for two National Executive Committee members to round out the five-member NEC. Jason Callahan and Erin Bertram join the NEC as Members. The new NEC is shown here being sworn into office.*

beholden to the National Constitution and the Constitution for Districts.

National officers were also elected at the Convention and the new National Executive Committee will resemble the District Executive Committee. Marshall Ainley was re-elected as National President and Bill Van Loo will continue to

serve as National Secretary-Treasurer. Adam Vokac was re-appointed as National Vice President and Erin Bertram and Jason Callahan round out the five-person National Executive Committee as NEC Members. Although much of the business of the day focused on the National M.E.B.A. and the “ritualistic” agenda of the National Convention, a segment in the Order of Business laid out in the Constitution is dedicated to District affairs. This afforded Delegates the opportunity to hear reports delivered by the District Executive Committee, discuss day-to-day Union business and also included an address from M.E.B.A. Legislative Director Matt Dwyer who briefed Delegates on the legislative and political landscape in these interesting times. Chuck Eser, Director of the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School, addressed the Convention with a summary of training and ongoing initiatives such as the Cadet Internship Program, STCW certifications and cost savings at the School. Attorney Jim Rosenberg, who has performed occasional work for the M.E.B.A., gave an overview of applicable labor law and briefly talked about the unusual structure of the M.E.B.A. He noted that all unions he has worked for are guided by Constitutions that continue to evolve in response to modern times to provide more functionality. Delegates made several such amendments to the M.E.B.A. Constitution through the Resolution process that is spelled out in the governing documents.

A Resolution was agreed upon making several overdue and much needed changes to the National M.E.B.A. Constitution in the nature of housekeeping. The substance of the Constitution was not altered but changes to make the document more uniform were made and archaic references (some that dated back to the 1930s) were clarified.

With only one District under the National umbrella, Delegates – through the resolution process – aligned the terms of National M.E.B.A. officers with the four-year terms of District officers. In addition, they put the staging of National M.E.B.A. Conventions on a four-year schedule to better synchronize it with the new four-year election schedule of the District. In addition, Delegates designated the third Tuesday in March of each Convention year as the day of the week for the event (rather than Monday) to take into account costs and travel considerations.

Another important amendment passed by Delegates irons out an anomaly within the Constitution that enabled a person other than the District President to serve as the National President. This provision serves a purpose within a multiple District system but is not as functional in practice and creates a problematic layer of bureaucracy with only a single District within the National structure. Delegates at Monday’s Convention stipulated that the election process for the National President will stand as written for a multiple District system, but will be simplified when a lone District exists within the National M.E.B.A. Therefore, District No. 1 members will be

electing a District/National President during the District elections. The remaining four National Executive Committee members will be elected by Delegates at subsequent National Conventions including the position of Executive Vice President that was formerly a DEC-appointed position. Again, the system reverts to the old process if a second District joins the National M.E.B.A.

Finally, in true Convention form, a non-binding resolution was passed noting the conclusion of the District and National elections and calling on all M.E.B.A. members “to forego acrimony within our ranks and stand shoulder-to-shoulder to work for a common cause – making progress for our Union and seeking a prosperous future for the members of the M.E.B.A.”



*Thanks to all 15 Delegates elected by the District membership to serve in the 112th National M.E.B.A. Convention: They include (l-r) Nils Djusberg, Mark Collins, NEC Member Jason Callahan, Craig LaChance, Mark S. Gallagher, NEC Member Erin Bertram, John McElhone, National President Marshall Ainley, Tracy Burke, National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo, National Vice President Adam Vokac, Adam Smith, George Poor, Jeff Duncan and Rich Doherty.*

The next National M.E.B.A. Convention will take place on March 16, 2021 – a Tuesday.