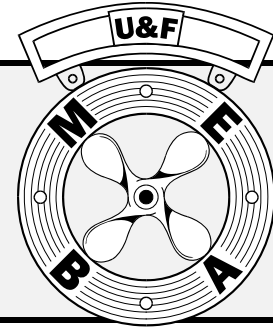

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

NOVEMBER 2020



Congressional Leaders & White House Fail to Strike Deal on COVID-19 Economic Relief Package before Election Day

COVID-19 economic relief negotiations have come to an impasse over differences between the two political parties over the total dollar amount and various policy issues. Congress has failed to pass a second round of relief funds despite the ongoing economic crisis and growing numbers of COVID-19 cases throughout the country. Since the \$3.4 trillion CARES Act was enacted in March, the House and Senate have passed various bills but have been unable to come to bipartisan agreement. President Trump has vowed to sign a coronavirus relief package after the election, but Democrats say many differences remain before a stimulus deal is reached. Members will recall on October 1st, the House passed a \$2.2 trillion relief bill, which would have authorized the Maritime Administration (MARAD) to make an additional payment to each of the 60 vessels participating in the Maritime Security Program, using previously unspent funds, to assist carriers and crews to respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

New White House Executive Order Aims to Eliminate Workplace Protections for Thousands of Federal Employees

On October 21, President Trump issued an Executive Order (EO) that would create a new excepted service classification of federal employees. Called "Schedule F," it would apply to any career federal employee whose job is in any way connected to federal policy from mid to high-grade general schedule positions identified as 'confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating'. As written, the Executive Order would affect thousands of employees in the federal workforce by allowing them to be treated by federal agencies as 'at-will' employees, thereby stripping due process rights and employment protections guaranteed to the civil service. The new Executive Order also directs the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) to examine whether "Schedule F" employees should be removed from bargaining units, and in effect, prohibited from being represented by a union. The White House has argued the EO is a necessary reform to ensure that federal officials can more efficiently remove "poor performers". In response, the National Treasury Employees Union have since filed a lawsuit while House Democrats have introduced legislation to rescind and block the Order from going into effect.
