

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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ORDER LEADS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS ON PUBLIC VESSELS

Two weeks ago, the President issued an Executive Order (13998), that among other things, calls for masks to be worn by travelers on all "public maritime vessels, including ferries" to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19. Soon after, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began implementing provisions of the order by requiring the wearing of masks "by all travelers into, within, or out of the U.S., e.g., on airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares." The mask requirement also applies to travelers in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and seaports; train, bus, and subway stations; and any other areas that provide transportation. Transportation operators must require all persons onboard to wear masks when boarding, disembarking, and for the duration of travel. Operators of transportation hubs must require all persons to wear a mask when entering or on the premises of a transportation hub.

The Coast Guard, which is charged with enforcing CDC quarantine orders, issued Marine Safety Information Bulletin 02-21 this week. Owners, operators, and vessel crews that fail to implement the mask wearing order may be subject to civil or criminal penalties from the CDC. Vessels that have not implemented the mask requirement may be issued a Captain of the Port (COTP) order directing the vessel's movement and operations; repeated failure to impose the mask mandate could result in civil penalties and/or criminal action. The full text of the MSIB is available on the M.E.B.A. website in the "Documents & Member Notices" section.

BIDEN FLUSHES ANTI-UNION PARTISANS FROM LABOR PANEL

President Biden continues to root out high-ranking anti-union partisans in the Government appointed by the former Administration. This week, the President fixed on the Federal Service Impasses Panel (FSIP), which helps resolve disputes between federal agencies and unions representing federal employees. In a blow against federal union busting, the President forced out all 10 Panel members appointed by former President Trump. When he took office four years ago, President Trump discharged the entire panel and appointed anti-worker replacements. In the Trump administration, the Panel routinely helped empower management, remove worker safeguards, and hamstring labor's ability to negotiate while putting obstacles in the way of federal unions seeking fair and equitable contracts. Shortly before the pandemic, the Panel rolled back the Social Security Administration's teleworking program that had helped improve employee efficiency. It also stripped away rules requiring the agency to inform employees about worker rights.

The day he took office, President Biden fired National Labor Relations Board General Counsel Peter Robb, a former management-side attorney who worked against pro-worker policies on the Board. Robb, who was ten-months shy of his term-expiration, was the first Board Counsel forced out by a President since 1950. NLRB member Lauren McFerran, a Democrat, who has vociferously criticized some of the egregious anti-worker Board decisions during the last administration, was tapped to lead the NLRB, taking over from Republican Chairman John Ring, who had served in that capacity since 2018.

Biden, who vowed to be the most pro-union President, is next expected to address the anti-labor nest at the Federal Labor Relations Authority. Trump appointees in that agency have worked against federal union collective bargaining rights. Biden has already elevated the agency's lone Democrat to serve as the Chair, but still needs to fill several vacancies to continue reversing the board's anti-union focus.

As part of a flurry of Executive Orders (EOs) issued in the first days of his Presidency, Biden reversed three notorious EOs issued by President Trump in 2018 that peeled back federal employee workplace rights. National Treasury Employees Union National President Tony Reardon said that in this current Administration, "Agencies are no longer under orders to strip long-held rights from contracts, run roughshod over employees and unilaterally impose workplace policies that disrespect their service to our country."

PRO ACT REINTRODUCED

The Protecting the Right to Organize Act, better known as the PRO Act, was reintroduced by House and Senate Democrats this week. The bill was passed in the Democrat-controlled House last year with bipartisan support but made no headway in the Republican-controlled Senate. The PRO Act would revamp labor laws to beef-up collective bargaining rights and otherwise strengthen the hand of workers while weakening so-called right-to-work laws. It would impose penalties on employers who interfere with worker rights to form a union and eliminate many obstacles companies use to prevent workers from having a real voice on the job. The chances of final passage remain unclear with a 50-50 Senate and a narrow Democratic majority in the House.

FMC STRESSES NEED TO PRIORITIZE VACCINATION OF MARINER WORKFORCE

A pair of Federal Maritime Commissioners are appealing to the Administration and high-ranking officials to stress the importance of getting our maritime workforce vaccinated early on in the process. FMC Commissioners Carl Bentzel and Daniel Maffei penned a letter highlighting the urgency of getting our essential maritime workforce prioritized for vaccinations in order to minimize workplace disruptions, given their vital importance to the economy and national security.

"A large-scale workforce disruption from COVID-19 would be disastrous for the immediate and long-term fluidity of the supply chain and delivery of goods to Americans," they wrote. "The sacrifices, resilience, and selflessness of those who work in the maritime industry have kept our supply chain functioning and our economy connected, and will serve as a foundation as we look to recover as a country in 2021. For this to happen, we must provide immediate vaccinations to the maritime workforce."

REFER TO PLANS WEBSITE WHEN CONSIDERING M.E.B.A. CLINIC VISIT

As you may know, the M.E.B.A. Benefit Plans has implemented a series of safety precautions to protect the membership and staff during the ongoing pandemic. Among other things, there is a change in protocol for members visiting M.E.B.A. clinics due to State orders relating to COVID-19.

Members who are considering clinic visits should make sure they keep up with the latest news and information from the M.E.B.A. Benefit Plans by visiting their website at www.mebaplans.org. The latest updates are posted towards the top of the page.

BUTTIGIEG CONFIRMED AS NEW DOT SECRETARY

Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg was sworn-in, and is on-the-job, following his confirmation by the full Senate earlier this week in an 86-13 vote. Transportation labor and maritime interests signaled their approval for the new Secretary and pledged to work with him for continued industry progress.

The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), which includes the M.E.B.A., congratulated Secretary Buttigieg and said the new Secretary “understands the critical role working people play in keeping America moving and our economy strong. The fact that he will prioritize the health, wellbeing, and safety of frontline transportation workers, as well as investments in the systems they build, operate, and maintain, gives us hope that we can conquer the COVID-19 crisis and build a better future for working people across transportation.”

During his Senate Commerce Committee confirmation hearing, Buttigieg announced his support for the Jones Act echoing President Biden’s strong stated backing of the important statute. The President recently issued a “Buy American” Executive Order, directing federal agencies to closely adhere to domestic preference rules including compliance of the Jones Act.

On the heels of the Order, the DOT also issued a statement in support of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920. “The Department of Transportation is a strong supporter of Buy American,” the DOT statement said. “In addition, we will also ensure that the President’s strong support of the Jones Act is realized so that only U.S.-flag vessels carry cargo between U.S. ports. With these goals in mind, the Department stands ready to help President Biden create good-paying, union jobs, and strengthen the middle class.”

CONFIRMATION HEARING FOR DOL NOMINEE

Earlier today, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a confirmation hearing for Boston Mayor Marty Walsh to serve as the next Secretary of Labor. Walsh’s nomination is expected to be approved by the Committee, followed by a full Senate vote for a likely final confirmation. If confirmed by the Senate, Walsh will be the first union member to serve as Labor Secretary in more than 40 years.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, “As a longtime union member, Walsh knows that collective bargaining is essential to building back better by combating inequality, beating COVID-19, and expanding opportunities for immigrants, women and people of color. He will have the ear of the White House, the Cabinet and Congress as we work to increase union density and create a stronger, fairer America. From the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council to the Massachusetts State House to the mayor’s office to his own personal journey with overcoming addiction, Marty

Walsh has always been a fighter who understands the power of working people standing together for a better life.”

FORMER AFL-CIO LEADER JOHN SWEENEY DIES AT 86

Five-term AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, who retired in 2009, has died at the age of 86. He was first elected president in 1995 after proving his leadership skills in the top spot at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) where membership almost doubled during his 15 years of leadership. Sweeney first joined organized labor as part of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers, before joining the SEIU and serving as a Local 32b (NYC) representative in 1961. He later became President of the Local, headed up two citywide strikes of apartment maintenance workers, and made many gains for his membership.

Current AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka who succeeded Sweeney in 2009 said, “John Sweeney was a legend, plain and simple. He was guided into unionism by his Catholic faith, and not a single day passed by when he didn’t put the needs of working people first. John viewed his leadership as a spiritual calling, a divine act of solidarity in a world plagued by distance and division...As president, John was a great leader and true innovator, driving the labor movement forward. We stand on that foundation today as we take on the challenges of inequality, systemic racism and much more.”

President Joe Biden also lauded the life of John Sweeney in a statement issued this week. “Time and again over the many years of our friendship, I saw how lifting up the rights, voices, and dignity of working Americans was more than a job to him. It was a sacred mission. It was a calling. The work he led, from the factory floors of the garment workers early in his career to the highest corridors of power as a national labor leader, embodied the vital role that unions play in delivering greater wages and benefits for working people — union and non-union alike.”

REGISTRATION FOR MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS CONTINUES

M.E.B.A. Members, Applicants and Retirees can register up until 24 hours before the start of next week’s online M.E.B.A. monthly membership meeting. A mass email detailing the registration process was sent to members, applicants and retirees with email addresses on file with M.E.B.A. Headquarters. If we do not have your personal email address on file at HQ and you would like to be on the list, please let us know at membership@mebaunion.org. That notice is also available on the M.E.B.A. website in the “Documents & Member Notices” Section.

ONLINE FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (*All times are local*)

[Registration ends 24 hrs. before each meeting – see M.E.B.A. website notice]

Monday, February 8 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, February 9 – CMES@1430 (**CMES Meeting will be conducted in-person**); Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, February 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, February 11 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, February 12 – Lincoln’s Birthday - (*All Halls Closed*)

Monday, February 15 – Presidents Day - (*All Halls Closed*)

Tuesday, February 16 – Honolulu@1100.

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