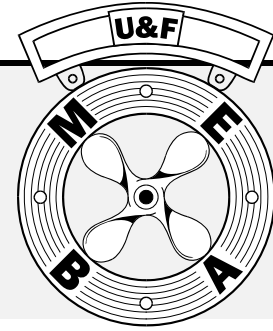


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

MARCH 2020



House Passes Comprehensive Reforms to Outdated Labor Laws

On February 6th, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2474, the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, which includes key reforms that would make it easier for workers to form a union and collectively bargain without employer interference or intimidation. Specifically, the PRO Act would impose civil penalties on employers who illegally interfere with the rights of workers to join or form a union while establishing a fair process for the negotiation of a first contract that would bring needed stability to workplaces newly represented by a union. The PRO Act also prevents employers from misclassifying employees as independent contractors or supervisors under existing loopholes, which prevent workers from enjoying the benefits of collective bargaining. These changes would modernize the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) by eliminating several roadblocks that prevent today's workers from the fundamental workplace right to collectively bargain. The legislation is seen as a top priority from the labor movement despite strong opposition from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, an influential industry lobbying association representing employers. Despite bipartisan support in the House, the PRO Act is not expected to receive a vote in the Republican-led Senate and opposition from the White House.

White House 2021 Budget Requests Full MSP Funding, Cuts to Food Aid Cargoes

This year, President Trump's Budget Request to Congress for Fiscal Year 2021 calls for full funding of the Maritime Security Program (\$314 million) and calls for additional funding for the government-owned Ready Reserve Force (RRF) Program to procure used commercial vessels that could replace two of the older vessels in the Program, where the average fleet is 44 years old. Unfortunately, the Administration's proposed budget would also eliminate the PL-480 Food-for-Peace and the Food-for-Progress programs entirely, which provide an important source of cargo for U.S.-flag vessels. Both programs are covered by existing U.S.-flag cargo preference shipping requirements which mandate that at least 50 percent of these cargoes be transported on U.S.-flag commercial vessels. Over the next few weeks, Congress will hold hearings on the proposals in the Administration's budget. The M.E.B.A. will continue working with its key allies on Capitol Hill to maintain full appropriations for the Maritime Security Program and oppose any cuts to food aid programs, as a divided Congress negotiates its spending priorities with the Trump Administration amidst a contentious presidential election year.