

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
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**In this issue – Executive Order Seeks Maritime Revitalization//CIVMAR Dues Payments Halted, Waiver Sought//Contract Talks at HQ//U.S. Ditches IMO Ship Emission Talks/Port Fee Plan Could Be Scaled Back//M.E.B.A. on the Hill for Sail-In//UIM in ITF-PMA Talks//CMES Course Openings//**

## **TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDER AIMS TO BOOST AMERICAN MARITIME SECTOR**

In a move to strengthen U.S. maritime capabilities, President Trump signed an Executive Order yesterday that aims to revitalize shipbuilding and the American maritime workforce to enhance national security and economic growth. The Executive Order, branded “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance,” establishes a framework of administrative measures focused primarily on developing strategic reports. These assessments are intended to serve as the foundation for future policy implementation and legislative proposals, with the overarching goal of strengthening the U.S. merchant fleet and revitalizing domestic shipbuilding capabilities. The Order mandates a “Maritime Action Plan” to be delivered within 210 days, spearheaded by National Security Adviser Michael Waltz in collaboration with relevant agencies. Several preliminary reports are due within 90 days, focusing on:

- Current maritime programs and potential improvements
- Addressing maritime workforce challenges through education and training; and
- Coordinating with allies to align trade policies and reduce dependence on adversaries.

A separate report on the “Maritime Industrial Base” is required within 180 days to identify critical supply chain components and recommend strategic investments. The administration will seek legislative support to establish a “Maritime Security Trust Fund” and “Shipbuilding Financial Incentives Program” to expand the U.S.-flag commercial fleet. The order also calls for stricter enforcement of Harbor Maintenance Fees to prevent cargo diversions through neighboring countries, creation of “Maritime Prosperity Zones,” and immediate funding for urgent maintenance at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha applauded the EO and called it “a vital first step in driving both public and private investment toward a meaningful pathway to revitalize US shipbuilding and position the US as a global leader in maritime policy.”

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy praised the administration’s leadership and said, “we have a once in a generation opportunity to fix it and create a new wave of maritime jobs. We will ensure the United States remains the premier maritime power and an economic powerhouse. And to the young Americans from all over the country who are interested in a maritime career – know that this

administration has your back and believes you are a worthwhile investment in the prosperity of America.”

### **DOD CIVMAR DUES PAYMENTS HALTED; NO WORD ON EXEMPTION**

The Trump administration has abruptly stopped processing federal workers’ union dues through voluntary payroll deductions at agencies affected by a recent Executive Order. The March 27<sup>th</sup> EO directs multiple federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, to terminate collective bargaining with federal unions. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provided directives instructing agencies to eliminate union rights, void union contracts, and discontinue grievance procedures.

The Order invokes a seldom-used provision of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act to exempt certain agencies from federal labor law, claiming “national security” concerns. In total, the order removes union representation rights from approximately two-thirds of the federal workforce. Civilian Mariners in the Military Sealift Command and Army Corps of Engineers fleets, falling under DOD, are represented by M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU. M.E.B.A. has over 500 dues paying members sailing in the Government Fleet.

M.E.B.A. is hopeful that MSC secures a waiver to exempt the CIVMAR unions from the EO; we do not want the mariner shortage that MSC is experiencing to worsen in this critical time for our nation’s security. There will be heightened demand for mariners as the Administration rolls out the EO “Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance” and it is important MSC maintains its readiness.

M.E.B.A. will provide guidance to our Government Fleet members should the exemption from the EO fail to materialize. That guidance will include options for affected members for their continued membership with the Union. Until the Union receives official notification otherwise, the M.E.B.A. remains the recognized union for Engineering Officers in the MSC and Army Corps and there has been no change to the status of their contract protections. Because the Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) unilaterally stopped dues deductions, we recommend Government Fleet members maintain their good standing with the Union directly via the member payment portal accessed from the M.E.B.A. website located at [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org). If there are any questions, affected members should reach out to M.E.B.A. Government Fleet Rep Craig Moran at the Norfolk Union hall.

### **CONTINUED CONTRACT TALKS AT M.E.B.A. HQ**

2025 is a busy year for collective bargaining with our employers as M.E.B.A. is negotiating a series of Master Agreements and reopeners throughout the year. M.E.B.A. bargaining teams were at our Headquarters this week in Washington DC making progress in talks with two of our shipping companies.

On Wednesday, M.E.B.A. hosted another round of bargaining with Interlake Steamship Co. as the 12-year contract with the company heads toward its June 30<sup>th</sup> expiration. M.E.B.A. mates, engineers and stewards sail on 11 Interlake vessels on the Great Lakes. This was the second bargaining session between the parties. The meeting’s focus on Benefit issues was headed up by M.E.B.A. Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan and included participation from Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith, Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway and HQ Contracts Rep. Mark Gallagher. The M.E.B.A. rank-and-file team assisting talks will rejoin negotiators when talks shift back to Traverse City, Mich. later this month.

On Thursday, M.E.B.A. negotiators were back at the table, this time with Hapag/Crowley as we make steps toward a new agreement on a wage and benefit reopener covering the “Express Class” vessels. Recently, those U.S.-flag M.E.B.A.-crewed vessels that had been sailing in the Trans-Atlantic AL3 service were redeployed to the West Coast to a new Trans-Pacific service. Those ships include the DELAWARE EXPRESS, COLORADO EXPRESS, HUDSON EXPRESS, MISSOURI EXPRESS, and POTOMAC EXPRESS.

Our Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith is heading up talks with assistance from Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway. Rank-and-file member Jon Munz, who sails as a 1<sup>st</sup> A/E on the POTOMAC EXPRESS, was part of the talks earlier today.

### **US PULLS OUT OF IMO SHIP EMISSION TALKS**

International Maritime Organization member states are encouraging ongoing support for shipping decarbonization efforts following the Trump administration’s decision to abandon negotiations this week at the IMO’s Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC). Maritime regulators gathered in London to negotiate strategies for curbing greenhouse gas emissions from global shipping operations, which contribute approximately 3% of worldwide carbon output. The discussions are exploring various regulatory options, including a worldwide standard for marine fuels and market-based mechanisms such as a potential carbon pricing system or emissions trading framework that has been under consideration for some time.

But in a communication to the committee, the U.S. characterized the climate talks as a wealth redistribution scheme disguised as environmental action. The administration also dismissed proposals advocating for what it described as “hypothetical expensive and unproven fuels” to achieve the maritime industry’s net zero goals by mid-century. American officials went further by warning of potential retaliation against any nation that implements emission-related charges on US shipping vessels.

### **PORT FEE PLAN FOR CHINESE SHIPS COULD BE SCALED BACK, USTR CHIEF TELLS CONGRESS**

United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer pointed out that proposed fees on Chinese-built vessels may be less extensive than initially outlined. Speaking to the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday, Greer indicated the agency likely won’t implement all their proposed measures or make fees cumulative to help stimulate American shipbuilding amid China’s maritime dominance. The USTR had proposed new fees on vessels entering U.S. ports, including charges of up to \$1 million per entry for Chinese-operated ships and \$1.5 million per call for ships built in China, regardless of the carrier’s nationality. The proposal stipulated that additional fees would be imposed on carriers based on the percentage of their new ship orders fulfilled by Chinese yards.

Following extensive feedback from industry stakeholders and public hearings in March, it was noted that implementation could be delayed until November. The agency is carefully reviewing input to ensure they create “the right incentives to bring shipbuilding here without impacting our economy.” The proposal has divided industries, with U.S. steelmakers and unions, including the M.E.B.A., supporting the measures while farmers, energy producers, and port operators warn of potential business failures and supply chain disruptions. Critics have highlighted vague language in the February proposal, noting fees could potentially reach \$3.5 million per port call in some scenarios.

## **M.E.B.A. HITS THE HILL FOR ANNUAL SAIL-IN**

U.S.-flag shipping interests were out on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. on Tuesday as the industry conducted its annual Maritime Congressional “Sail-In.” A cross-section of maritime industry representatives, including unions, companies and other organizations helped broadcast the importance of U.S. shipping and solicit support for crucial statutes and programs during over 130 House and Senate Congressional meetings – on both sides of the aisle.

M.E.B.A. and AMC officials and staffers were spread out among the Sail-In groups. In cases where the Member of Congress or Senator could not attend a meeting because of a vote or other conflict, a top aide – usually a defense or transportation specialist – would sit in for the lawmaker asking questions and taking copious notes.

Maritime Congressional Sail-Ins help solidify support with lawmakers and remind Congress about the importance of our industry to the economy and national security. M.E.B.A. officials participating yesterday included Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha, Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan, Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway, Boston Rep. Brian Flynn, as well as several M.E.B.A. staffers including our Government Affairs Director Erick Siahhaan. The American Maritime Congress was represented by President Fair Kim and Government Affairs Manager Caitlyn Tierney.

Some of the issues discussed with lawmakers included the Presidential Executive Order on Shipbuilding, the SHIPS Act, moving the PL-480 Food Aid program to USDA, and support for the USMMA, as well as other M.E.B.A.-led initiatives including shipper tax incentives and exempting mariners from federal income-tax. Members were also asked to sign onto a letter pledging funding support for the Maritime Security Program.

As always, you are urged to write a letter or to email your Senators and Representatives to ask them to do the right thing for our industry.

## **M.E.B.A. AFFILIATE IN ITF-ASSISTED AGREEMENT TO SUPPORT SEAFARERS IN PANAMA**

M.E.B.A. affiliate Union de Ingenieros Marinos (UIM), which represents Panama Canal engineers, was part of an agreement with the Panama Maritime Authority reaffirming their commitment to support seafarers. The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) secured the cooperation agreement with the PMA, the Government agency overseeing Panama’s maritime industry. The ITF-PMA agreement enhances cooperation between the two parties in order to benefit seafarers onboard Panama-flagged vessels, based on the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC) 2006, as amended. The agreement’s key objectives include sharing best practices, providing support and sharing information on issues concerning seafarers – including abandonment, unpaid wages and the introduction of new technology, including alternative fuels and digitalization. Additionally, both parties will seek to work together to increase the number of Panama-registered vessels covered by ITF-approved agreements.

The UIM is part of the ITF through their affiliation with the M.E.B.A. UIM’s Vladimir Small Ortiz, along with retired UIM member Bernardo Campo, were at the meeting with ITF Inspectorate Coordinator Steve Trowsdale, as well as the PMA. Trowsdale noted, “There’s no doubt that the ITF and the PMA share the same vision of working together to protect and support seafarers. And we look forward to working together more closely to enhance the welfare and rights of those who work at sea.”

## **OPENINGS FOR UPCOMING DAMAGE CONTROL/CBRN & BST REVALIDATION COURSES AT CMES**

There is still space available for the May 12-16 Damage Control/Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) class at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School.

In addition, there are additional openings for the School's June 9–11 edition of its Basic Safety Training Revalidation course.

Applications for these courses can be sent via the CMES website ([www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org)), faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to [applications@mebaschool.org](mailto:applications@mebaschool.org)

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

Friday, April 11 – [Honolulu@1100](mailto:Honolulu@1100)

Monday, May 5 – [Boston@1200](mailto:Boston@1200); [Seattle \(Fife\)@1300](mailto:Seattle(Fife)@1300).

Tuesday, May 6 – [CMES@1430](mailto:CMES@1430); [Charleston@1400](mailto:Charleston@1400); [Houston@1315](mailto:Houston@1315); [Oakland@1230](mailto:Oakland@1230).

Wednesday, May 7 – [Jacksonville@1300](mailto:Jacksonville@1300); [New Orleans@1315](mailto:NewOrleans@1315); **Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, May 8 – [L.A. \(San Pedro\)@1230](mailto:L.A.(SanPedro)@1230); [NY/NJ@1300](mailto:NY/NJ@1300); [Norfolk@1300](mailto:Norfolk@1300); [Tampa@1300](mailto:Tampa@1300).

Friday, May 9 – [Honolulu@1100](mailto: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). Website: [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.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. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org). M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org)*