

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"

Number 15 – April 15, 2021



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TRANSCOM ENDORSES ESTABLISHMENT OF TANKER SECURITY FLEET

The Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command revealed to a Senate Committee this week that he supports the activation of a Tanker Security Program that would be available to support Department of Defense (DOD) needs.

TRANSCOM Commander General Stephen Lyons testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services on Tuesday to assist the Committee's review of Defense Authorization funding needs for Fiscal Year 2022.

The proposed Tanker Security Program would be a fleet of 10 commercial U.S.-flag petroleum product tankers that would be modeled after the Maritime Security Program. It would support our nation's long-term strategic defense needs and reduce the U.S. military's reliance on foreign-flag commercial vessels while also expanding the qualified mariner pool.

The Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provided the authority for the establishment of a Tanker Security program *contingent* on the results of an ongoing Mobility Capabilities and Requirements Study (MCRS) that is expected sometime this spring.

The MCRS is a critical DOD assessment of the number of tanker aircraft, airlift aircraft and sealift ships needed to meet future combatant commander requirements.

At the Committee hearing, Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI) asked the TRANSCOM Commander if the study is far enough along to have already determined the need for a tanker program. General Lyons responded in the affirmative, the first time TRANSCOM has publicly weighed in on the proposed program.

Asked if TRANSCOM believes the Program should be implemented, General Lyons responded, "Ma'am, we do. We've looked at this - a Congressionally directed study in concert with some other agencies - we do support it, and I appreciate the Congressional interest in this initiative here to create a Tanker Security Program. We think there's value in that. We think it's important that we have assured access to U.S.-flag tanker capacity in the event we have to surge the mobility enterprise and the liquid energy enterprise."

TRANSCOM's announced support for the Program is an absolutely critical step for the manifestation of the tanker fleet which is strongly supported by the M.E.B.A. and U.S.-flag shipping advocates and indicates that the forthcoming FY '22 DOD budget request will include the \$60 million authorization for the program.

In another item of interest from the hearing, the General discussed the Government's efforts to recapitalize aging sealift vessels. Gen. Lyons pointed out that 33 of the 50 least capable Roll-On/Roll-Off sealift ships are headed to the scrapyard within the next decade. TRANSCOM has been working with the Navy and Maritime Administration on plans to purchase newer used foreign commercial ships – subject to funding - that would take the place of the oldest vessels in the Ready Reserve Force fleet. In last year's NDAA, money was cleared up for the purchase of two such vessels. Gen. Lyons briefed the Committee on the status of those ships. He struck a positive note, saying that the plan is headed in the right direction although fruition on the first phase of the plan is about a year behind where he wanted it to be because of Government Accountability Office delays. Still, he said, the first two purchased foreign vessels could be delivered into the fleet by the end of this year.

SKINNY BUDGET & INDUSTRY IMPLICATIONS

On Friday, the White House released the first portion of its Fiscal Year 2022 budget request representing a broad outline of the Biden administration's priorities. This "skinny budget" serves as an indicator of the President's priorities and is the start of Congress's annual appropriations and budget process. The detailed budget is expected later this spring - typically it arrives later than usual during a Presidential transition year. All funding outlined in a President's budget must be approved by Congress. The budget appropriations process must be completed before October 1 to avert a Government shutdown at the start of the new Fiscal Year. Without approval of a spending plan by then, lawmakers could also keep the government running past the October 1 date with a stopgap measure that would keep current funding levels in place until a later date.

In regards to maritime in the skinny budget, the President's proposal calls for a "State-of-the-Art Training Vessel for the Next Generation of Merchant Mariners." The discretionary request asks for funding to purchase the fifth and final State maritime academy training vessel within the Maritime Administration. Such funding would support good-paying jobs in the domestic shipbuilding industry and provide an invaluable platform to train the next generation of U.S.-credentialed mariners. Should this final ship be approved by Congress, the five State maritime academies would receive state-of-the-art training vessels, retiring the current ships which have outlived their useful lives. The first vessel in the series will replace the 60-year old SUNY training ship EMPIRE STATE VI. The second will replace the 53-year old TS KENNEDY at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. The next two newbuilds would presumably replace vessels at Maine Maritime Academy and Texas A&M Maritime Academy, making the fifth vessel slotted for California Maritime Academy.

Overall, the budget request allocates \$25.6 billion for the Department of Transportation, which is a \$317 million or a 1.3% increase from the previous year. As you may recall, after the 2018 bipartisan budget deal between President Trump and Congress, the Appropriations Committees had additional money and began adding discretionary general fund appropriations on top of the mandatory funding for highway, transit and airport programs that are provided from trust fund accounts. However, the Biden budget would eliminate those general fund plus-ups for mandatory programs as those programs would receive more under the proposed American Jobs Plan (Biden Infrastructure Plan). From that standpoint, the FY '22 Biden DOT budget request is \$2.23 billion above enacted FY '21 levels.

TROTTEMBERG CONFIRMED AS DOT DEPUTY

Polly Trottenberg was confirmed by the U.S. Senate 82-15 this week as the new Deputy Secretary at the Department of Transportation. She will serve alongside DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg who has been on the job since early February.

M.E.B.A. has had an excellent working relationship with Trottenberg through the years when she served as DOT's Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy and Under-Secretary for Policy in the Obama administration and during her more recent service as New York City's DOT commissioner from 2014-2020. M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha, who has worked with Trottenberg in the past when he was Shop Steward for the Staten Island Ferry unit, said that the Union "is delighted to have Polly as the new Deputy Secretary. She is extremely competent and achievement-oriented, has an acute understanding of the issues, and will be a tenacious fighter on behalf of U.S.-flag shipping and transportation matters important to the industry and the M.E.B.A."

FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE ELECTED

A rank and file Financial Review Committee was selected at six Union halls during the April membership meetings this week. The six-person FRC is a democratic safeguard adopted by the M.E.B.A. in the mid-1990s to examine Union finances from the previous calendar year.

The FRC will assemble at M.E.B.A. Headquarters on Tuesday, April 27 to spend three days reviewing the Union's finances from the 2020 calendar year. The FRC is comprised of five members as well as one member who will serve as an alternate. The Committee will consist of the following six members: Marshall Townsend (Houston), Torey Zingales (NY/NJ), Christopher Nardone (Norfolk), Seth Massey (Oakland), Steve Walker (Seattle) and Charles Apudo (Tampa). Following their work, their completed report will be presented to the membership at next month's meetings.

The elected Union members will travel to M.E.B.A. Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Monday, April 26, 2021. The actual meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 in the Conference Room at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. It is anticipated that the business of the FRC will be completed by Thursday, April 29 with travel home the following day.

LABOR DISAPPOINTED BY AMAZON DEFEAT; ENCOURAGES PRO ACT SUPPORT

Organized labor expressed disappointment in the Bessemer, Alabama workers' failed union election vote last week but expressed optimism that there are better days ahead if working people have a level playing field.

"Organizing in America is no longer a fair fight," said AFL-CIO Communications Director Tim Schlittner. "Our labor laws are no longer an effective way to capture the will of American workers to form unions. The sentiment this reinforces is that there's an overdue and dramatic need for labor law reform in the United States."

The labor federation asserted that the valiant effort of workers to organize was hampered by Amazon union-busting techniques. AFL-CIO said Amazon "blatantly intimidated and threatened workers without facing consequences, including: Posting anti-union flyers and banners throughout the facility — even in bathroom stalls; Requiring weekly meetings to show anti-union propaganda; Shaming and documenting any worker who spoke up or countered propaganda; Implying it wouldn't bargain in good faith; and trying to force an in-person election during a pandemic.

The Federation called for support of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act that would help protect workers and hold corporations accountable for union busting.

ANOTHER POLL SHOWS APPROVAL FOR EMPOWERING WORKERS

According to a new poll overseen by *Politico* and the market research firm *Morning Consult*, 73% of U.S. voters “strongly” or “somewhat” support workers’ rights to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits and working conditions. 59% of Republicans and 89% of Democrats (among a subsample of 1,028) indicated their support on the question in the poll that was conducted earlier this month among 1,992 registered voters.

The AFL-CIO pointed to the new poll as another sign that the unions are experiencing a rise in popularity. “This is another example that unions are gaining popularity, but we know there is more work to do,” they said. “The recent union election in Bessemer, Alabama, shows that the deck is stacked against workers who try to organize. They again called for the passage of the worker legislation “Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act” that would to help hold big corporations like Amazon accountable.

Interestingly, the new poll also mentioned that unions may have a messaging problem as respondents were less receptive to worker issues when the term “labor union” was used in the poll question. When that term was used, respondents only offered their support by 54%, including 69% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans.

ALASKA REPORT ADDS TO CASE TO LIFT CDC CSO

The State of Alaska dispatched a copy of a study detailing the devastating economic impacts the “Last Frontier” has suffered because of the cessation of cruise ship activity since the pandemic began. The report lists a \$3 billion gross state product loss each year that cruising is kept at bay.

They say the recent extension of the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC) Framework for Conditional Sailing Order (CSO) through November 2021 is a point of contention and Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy argued that the agency should revisit that decision.

“The severe economic losses that are impacting our port and cruise communities has a multiplier impact that trickles throughout our entire economy; resulting in lost revenues, taxes, jobs and small business closures,” said Alaska Department of Revenue Commissioner Lucinda Mahoney. “The cruise industry is crucial to the state’s financial well-being.”

The CSO affects all cruise ships hoping to make U.S. port stops. Last week Norwegian Cruise Line put forward a plan to resume cruises this summer with new and extensive health and safety plans. The NCL-America vessel PRIDE OF AMERICA, crewed by M.E.B.A. officers, is one of the ships that would begin sailing again this summer. However, that plan is contingent on the CDC’s lifting of the CSO. The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), which represents 95% of the industry including M.E.B.A.-contracted NCL-America, also called on the CDC to lift the CSO arguing that the action would assist a controlled return to service by the industry.

CELEBRATORY SWEETS – UNION STYLE

With Easter behind us and Halloween so far away, the masses are desperately searching for a legitimate excuse to shove candy into their faces. Everyone needs a sweet treat from time to time! Recently got

your COVID vaccination? Reward time! Brought that ship into port? Reward time! Woke up today? Reward time! Don't worry about your figure – you look terrific!

The sugary favorites listed below are made by union workers including those at United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), the Bakery Confectionery Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM) and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). The knowledge that you are supporting union jobs and helping to build a stronger middle class should make those celebratory sweets taste that much better.

Almond Roca (BCTGM); Baby Ruth (BCTGM, IBT); Big Hunk (BCTGM); Butterfinger (BCTGM, IBT); Cadbury (BCTGM, UFCW); DOTS (BCTGM); Ghirardelli Chocolate (BCTGM); Hershey Original Chocolate Bar (BCTGM, UFCW); Hershey's Kisses (BCTGM, UFCW); Hot Tamales (BCTGM, IBT); Ice Breakers (BCTGM); Jelly Belly Jelly Beans (BCTGM); Jolly Ranchers (BCTGM, UFCW); Laffy Taffy (IBT, BCTGM); Look! (BCTGM); Mike and Ike (BCTGM, IBT); Payday (BCTGM); Red Vines (BCTGM); Rolo (BCTGM, UFCW, IBT); Russell Stover (BCTGM, UFCW); See's Candies (BCTGM); Sour Patch Kids (BCTGM); Sugar Babies (BCTGM); Sugar Daddy (BCTGM); Tootsie Pops (BCTGM); Zours (BCTGM).

MAY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – ONLINE OR IN-PERSON (*All times are local*)

Monday, May 3 – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300;

Tuesday, May 4 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, May 5 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, May 6 – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, May 7 – Honolulu@1100

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



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. Visit us on Facebook. 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.