

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES
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FATE OF M.E.B.A. GOVT. FLEET UNCERTAIN AS MSC, ARMY CORPS SUBMIT WAIVERS

Both the Military Sealift Command and the Army Corps of Engineers have submitted waiver requests to shield Civilian Mariners (CIVMARS) in their fleets from Executive Order 14251 that eliminates union protections from Defense Department workers. Citing "national security" concerns, the March 27th White House EO directs multiple federal agencies, including DOD, to terminate collective bargaining, void union contracts and discontinue grievance procedures with federal workers at dozens of federal agencies and bureaus.

CIVMARS in the MSC and Army Corps are represented by M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU. M.E.B.A. has over 500 dues paying members sailing in those fleets. Mariners sailing for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is part of the Commerce Department, are not subject to the March 27th Executive Order.

The MSC and Army Corps have expressed strong support for the role the unions play in operational preparedness and workforce continuity and the waivers were submitted to preserve union recognition. The outcome of both waiver requests remains highly uncertain at this point.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the DOD agency that provides finance and accounting services for the military, recently stopped processing union dues through voluntary payroll deductions. MSC and USACE were not a party to that decision. Even if a waiver is granted, the processing of union dues through voluntary payroll deductions is not expected to return as an option in the near future. As of now, 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. If that changes, and the waiver is not successful, the M.E.B.A. will provide further guidance to our Government Fleet members to include options for continued membership with the Union.

Government Fleet members should be sure to maintain their good standing with the Union directly via the member payment portal accessed at <https://meba.workingsystems.com>. The Membership Department at Headquarters can be contacted to assist if any portal challenges arise. You can call HQ at (202) 638-5355 or email membership@mebaunion.org. We will be emailing a PDF quick reference

guide on the use of the M.E.B.A. Payment Portal to impacted members who would like to set up automatic dues payments. You can also make a payment at any of the M.E.B.A. Union halls and offices. It is recommended that members complete payment through the fourth quarter to maintain continuity.

If there are any questions, affected members should reach out to M.E.B.A. Government Fleet Representative Craig Moran at the Norfolk Union hall at (757) 440-1820 or govtfleet@mebaunion.org. Assistant Government Fleet Representative Ola Lassley is available at the hall number or by email at Norfolkdispatcher@mebaunion.org.

COAST GUARD BOARDS UP MARINER CREDENTIAL SITE “HOMEPOR”

Mariners and shipping companies are being routed to alternative credentialing and verification processes in the wake of the termination of the Coast Guard’s HOMEPOR platform. The maritime industry has relied on the HOMEPOR portal to confirm employment qualification and credential validity for the last 20 years. It ceased operations this last Saturday. The Coast Guard stated that they “recognize that HOMEPOR has long been a trusted tool for mariners and the broader maritime community” but said they are “establishing temporary workarounds to ensure essential services remain accessible until we can identify the best permanent approach for each function.” Listed below are the primary mariner credentialing services affected by this closure and the alternate methods for service currently available:

- Merchant Mariner Application Status: To check on the status of an application for a merchant mariner credential or medical certificate, contact the National Maritime Center (NMC) at 1-888-427-5662, IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or via Live Chat. NMC customer service agents are available M-F, 8:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. eastern time zone. The NMC experiences its busiest times around midday. To avoid longer wait times, they recommend calling early in the morning when phone lines are less busy or using their Live Chat service, which will connect you with their support team during normal hours. If e-mailing for application status, include ‘Status’ in the subject line of your e-mail along with the mariner name(s) and mariner reference number(s) in the body of the e-mail. Note, processing times at the NMC will vary based on e-mail volume.
- Merchant Mariner Credential Verification: To verify the authenticity of a merchant mariner credential, e-mail IASKNMC@uscg.mil. To aid in providing a faster response, include ‘Credential Verification’ in the subject line of your e-mail along with mariner name(s) and mariner reference number(s) in the body of the e-mail. Note, processing times at the NMC will vary based on e-mail volume.
- Mariner Training and Assessment Data (MTAD): Course curricula and course certificate modification requests should be sent to NMCCourses@uscg.mil. Note: to prevent delays in mariner applications, course and program completions should be documented through the issuance of completion certificates. Completion certificate format and content should match that approved by the NMC during the approval process. For questions related to Mariner Training and Assessment, contact the NMC at (206) 815-6893.

GLOBAL SEAFARERS WIN KEY RIGHTS AT ILO MLC

A coalition of shipping industry stakeholders, labor representatives and government officials finalized an overhaul of the Maritime Labour Convention last week making major beneficial changes for global mariners. The MLC sets baseline requirements for seafarer welfare and working environments. The modifications were negotiated during recent discussions in Geneva under the International Labour Organization's framework.

The revisions were largely influenced by challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic when crewmembers around the world became stranded aboard their vessels. The International Chamber of Shipping played a crucial advocacy role, having previously championed seafarers' designation as essential workers during the pandemic to facilitate crew rotations, shore access and travel permissions.

Noteworthy among amendments adopted last week was the designation and recognition of seafarers as key workers "... to facilitate their safe movement when travelling in connection with their employment or work, including, but not limited to, access to shore leave, repatriation, crew changes and medical care ashore."

Another significant win for seafarers and shipowners was the inclusion in a mandatory Standard of the Code of the two sets of ILO/IMO Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the event of a marine casualty or detention of seafarers in connection with alleged crimes. Other amendments adopted included better protection around repatriation, shore leave, medical care, recruitment and placement, health and safety protection and the elimination of violence and harassment.

UNIONS SUE TO RESTORE LABOR MEDIATION AGENCY

The AFL-CIO and affiliated unions sued the Trump administration this week over its dismantling of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). FMCS has been a small but important independent federal agency integral to the federal government's labor relations infrastructure. Among the critical services FMCS provides is helping to resolve contract negotiations between workers and employers to protect both the economy and workers' rights. But recent DOGE cuts decimated the agency: 93% of FMCS staff were placed on leave, the mediation workforce was whittled down from the 80 to 100 needed for the agency's work to just five, and all of the field offices have been closed. The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler. "Without FMCS, there will be longer and drawn-out contract negotiations, as well as delays in implementing increased wages and improved benefits won through collective bargaining." AFSCME President Lee Saunders noted that "FMCS helps to mediate thousands of collective bargaining agreements and other disputes, ensuring workers are paid fairly while commerce and services continue to flow. The agency's meager \$55 million budget—which accounts for less than 0.0014% of the overall federal budget—generates more than \$500 million in annual savings for our economy."

The legal challenge was brought by the AFL-CIO, AFGE, AFSCME, AFT, IAM, SEIU and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and other affiliated unions that have worked with FMCS mediators in labor disputes with their members' employers. Many were actively engaged in collective bargaining negotiations with FMCS when the mediator was forced to abruptly leave or cancel the negotiations because they had been placed on leave. With only five mediators remaining at FMCS,

these unions and their members will be left in the lurch, working under expired contracts or no contracts, and strikes or lockouts are much more likely to occur.

NOAA CONTINUES EFFORT TO MODERNIZE FLEET

Efforts continue to modernize the aging National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fleet, as two new oceanographic-class research ships have reached construction milestones. M.E.B.A. represents engine officers aboard the 15 NOAA research vessels that conduct a variety of scientific missions.

M.E.B.A. is critical to NOAA's operational readiness and mariner supply. In addition to our Union encouraging mariners to have a career on NOAA vessels, the M.E.B.A. also provides Augmenting Engineers to NOAA through our contract with Keystone Ocean Services to ensure the agency's scientific missions can depart the dock when crewing difficulties do arise at the organization.

In March, the DISCOVERER was launched at Thoma-Sea in Houma, Louisiana. The 244-foot ship, now 68% complete, will support a wide variety of NOAA missions, to include exploring the deep sea, monitoring oceanographic conditions and studying marine life. The vessel's sister ship OCEANOGRAPHER was floated in fall 2024, also at Thoma-Sea, and construction is 76% complete. These new ships will operate with a crew and scientists of as many as 48 people. Both ships are expected to be completed in 2026. DISCOVERER and its sister ship, OCEANOGRAPHER, will incorporate the latest clean energy technologies, including vessel emission controls and high-efficiency diesel engines.

The average age of NOAA's 15-ship fleet is older than 30 years. By 2030, six of those ships will likely reach the end of their service life — the operational period of a ship. Two additional charting and mapping vessels, SURVEYOR and NAVIGATOR, are also being designed and built for NOAA.

USACE, USMMA ALLIANCE TO FIX UP KINGS POINT CAMPUS

The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) New York District and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) have entered into a long-term agreement for the revitalization and modernization of USMMA's campus located in Kings Point, New York. The initial 10-year agreement was signed on April 11th.

“Merchant marine cadets have answered the call to serve our country, and it's our duty to deliver an institution worthy of their sacrifice,” said DOT Secretary Sean Duffy. “Our mariners are critical to President Trump's agenda to make American shipbuilding great again, and more importantly protecting our national security.”

“The health of the maritime industry is of vital national security and economic interest, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proud to lend our team's expertise to these revitalization efforts at USMMA,” said Brig. Gen. John Lloyd, USACE North Atlantic Division commander and division engineer. “The future mariner leaders who come through this campus will be charged with protecting our nation's critical interests, and it is imperative their education is supported by world-class facilities and infrastructure equipped for the modern learning environment.”

ANOTHER MSC VESSEL CHRISTENED

The sixth new Navajo-class towing, salvage & rescue vessel bound for the Military Sealift Command, USNS BILLY FRANK JR. was christened recently at Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. This vessel is part of a 10-ship program replacing aging ocean tugs and rescue vessels. The vessel's namesake was a Nisqually tribal member, Korean War veteran, and recipient of prestigious awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The ship will perform fleet assistance, intelligence, oil spill response, and humanitarian missions.

The BILLY FRANK JR. is one of five Navajo ships Austal is building, with five others from Bollinger Shipyards. These 263-foot vessels can accommodate 65 personnel, transport vehicles on a 6,000-square-foot deck, and reach speeds of 15 knots with a range exceeding 8,100 nautical miles.

UNION PLUS SWEEPSTAKES & SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

M.E.B.A. members, retirees and their families - as well as members of affiliated M.E.B.A. unions - are eligible to take part in the 2025 Union Plus "Explore America the Beautiful" Sweepstakes and Social Media Challenges, that could net you fabulous prizes. Explore 2025 features three sweepstakes and four social media challenges throughout the year to help raise awareness about travel benefits that are exclusively available to union members and their families. M.E.B.A. is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving Union Plus programs ranging from life insurance to financing children's education.

The first sweepstakes "Explore America's Iconic Beaches" wraps up tomorrow and the next one "Explore Iconic American Cities" begins on May 6. The Iconic Beaches Sweepstakes will award a \$5,000 cash prize AND a 3 to 5-night stay worth up to \$2,000 at a property available through the Union Plus Hotel Discounts Program. There is no purchase necessary. The sweepstakes is not open to the general public.

This next week, the first of the four Social Media challenges begins. On Monday April 21 through April 25, you can participate in the "Explore America's Great Highways + Byways Contest." Union members can enter by commenting on the Union Plus Instagram or Facebook contest post with the name of an iconic U.S. highway or byway they'd like to drive along with a hotel they'd like to use as a pitstop. Easy! There will be a sweepstakes or challenge all year long! For official rules and the online form to enter visit www.unionplus.org/explore.

GET YOUR SPOT FOR THIS SUMMER'S CAA REUNION

The entire M.E.B.A. membership, active and retired, and especially Calhoon graduates, are invited to the Calhoon Alumni Association (CAA) Reunion scheduled for June 27-29 at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. The weekend will also include a celebration of the M.E.B.A.'s 150th anniversary. The Union is 150 years old as of February 23 and there will be much rejoicing. Information, event fees, and registration forms are NOW on the CMES website located at www.mebaschool.org. Look for the CAA page link. The weekend kicks off with the traditional Golf Tournament on Friday, June 27 at 1000. There will be an evening muster at the Calhoon Saloon later that evening. The party on the Manor House Lawn will take place all day Saturday, June 28. This is a great family event that you should be sure to sign up for. Direct any questions to caa@mebaschool.org and check out the School website to get the complete lowdown. Take this opportunity to spread the word throughout the M.E.B.A. world as well as to past Calhoon School cadets, instructors, shipmates, friends, and families.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CLOSING; GOOD FRIDAY, PATRIOTS' DAY

Union halls and offices will be closed tomorrow (4/18) for Good Friday. Officials and some staffers can still be reached by cellphone and email during the lead-in to Easter weekend.

The M.E.B.A. Union hall in Boston will be closed on Monday, April 21 for Patriots' Day. Patriots' Day is a state holiday in Massachusetts, Maine, Connecticut and North Dakota. It is observed on the third Monday in April in those states and commemorates the Revolutionary War battles of Lexington, Concord and Menotomy. The Boston Marathon takes place every year on Patriots' Day. The observance should not be confused with Patriot Day, which is held on September 11 in remembrance of the terrorist attacks in 2001. All other M.E.B.A. offices and halls will be open during their normal operating hours on Monday.

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

Monday, May 5 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, May 6 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, May 7 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, May 8 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, May 9 – **Honolulu@1100**

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



***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. Website: 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 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. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org