

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//ITF Condemns Canal Authority Sanctions against Safety-Concerned Mariners//CG Bill Stalls Over Ballast Discharge Standards//Cleveland to Host Informational Membership Meeting//Final Voyage: Tom Trundy//Migratory Bird Act Won't be Used to Prosecute Spills//IMO Adopts Climate Change Strategy for Shipping//MLL's Hanley Honored by Marine Society//Get Your Docs in Order before Hall Visits//

ITF CONDEMNS CANAL AUTHORITY SANCTIONS ON TUGBOAT CAPTAINS

The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) is taking heat over their issuance of sanctions against tugboat captains who have serious on-the-job safety concerns. The ACP announced the sanctions involving removal or warnings issued to protesting tug captains who refused to escort vessels through the Neopanamax Locks because of personnel shortages. The Union of Canal Tugboat Captains and Deck Officers said the ACP decision "to eliminate a tugboat [crewmember] from the bow endangers the safety of customers, workers and the Canal's own facilities." This is compounded by concerns they raised about excessive overtime required of tugboat Captains, leading to fatigue. The same concerns were also raised by the National Transport Safety Board (NTSB) after they found that a recent collision was caused by fatigue stemming from excessive working hours.

The ACP has continued to ignore Canal unions, including M.E.B.A. affiliate Union de Ingenieros Marinos (UIM), which have pointed out serious concerns about Panama Canal Authority cost-saving shortcuts that compromise worker safety. The unions have also pointed out a series of unaddressed deficiencies with boats and equipment that encumber safe operation on the recently expanded channel. They have been increasingly exasperated by the Authority's refusal to engage in dialogue on such matters. UIM's Vladimir Small said, "The Authority should consult with its workers who have the experience in the field and not make [unilateral] decisions from an air conditioned office."

The ACP is still looking into the tugboat captain protest and says it will consider additional sanctions that could include dismissal.

The International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF) condemned the ACP's action and said they are "astonished and disappointed" the ACP has taken such an adversarial position against workers who only want to ensure safe operations on the Canal. "The move...to reduce manning on the tugboats and thereby reducing the Canal's costs...is too simplistic and only gives a short-term financial gain while the most important element appears to be overlooked or ignored, namely safety of the workers and the safe transit of the vessels," said ITF's Nick Bramley. The Federation urged ACP to withdraw the sanctions and enter into a constructive dialogue with the unions.

CG BILL TRIPS UP IN SENATE OVER UNIFORM BALLAST DISCHARGE STANDARDS

The Coast Guard Authorization bill was dealt a setback on Wednesday when it failed to advance through a Senate procedural vote based on a provision advancing a national standard for vessel ballast-water discharges. A bill provision would replace the current patchwork of separate – sometimes conflicting – [Coast Guard/Environmental Protection Agency & applicable State] regulations on commercial vessel ballast water discharges with a uniform set of regulations.

Opponents say the provision would water down standards by removing EPA oversight in favor of the Coast Guard and superseding discharge standards set up by the various states. Conservation groups in particular believe the national standard would more easily enable the further introduction of invasive species and destroy ecosystems.

Great Lakes shipping favors the new standard. “This bill is a real win-win for the Lakes,” said James Weakley, President of the Lake Carriers’ Association, the trade group representing U.S.-flag vessel operators on the Great Lakes. “It is equally concerned with safeguarding our environment and fostering waterborne commerce, the most efficient mode of transportation for dry-bulk cargos.” An LCA statement said the bill would heighten regulation of ballast water discharges. “Vessels [would be] governed by stricter and more uniform regulations and the bill retains the requirement that oceangoing vessels exchange their ballast before entering the Lakes even after they install ballast water treatment systems.”

The bill fell 4 votes short of advancement in the upper chamber. Senate leaders are considering whether to resubmit the Coast Guard funding bill without the ballast water provision.

CLEVELAND HALL WILL HOST MAY INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Members in the Cleveland area should plan on attending the May 4th informational membership meeting at the hall. Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan will be in town and will chair. Previous meetings in Cleveland have drawn good numbers and produced lively and productive discussion. The May 4 meeting will kick off at 12:30 on that day so plan to attend if possible. The Cleveland, OH hall address is 1250 Old River Rd. on the 3rd Floor.

FINAL VOYAGE: TOM TRUNDY, FORMER M.E.B.A. REP. IN CLEVELAND

M.E.B.A.’s Tom Trundy made his final voyage on Friday, April 6th at the age of 53. Tom was appointed as the Union’s Great Lakes Representative when the M.E.B.A. reestablished its Cleveland hall in February of 2004. He served in that position until the end of 2006 when he resumed shipping. He was an active member who had participated in the Houston membership meeting three days before his death. He was a resident of Baytown, TX.



Born in Bangor, ME, Tom was a graduate of Maine Maritime Academy, where he earned his degree in marine engineering. He loved life and people, and was always happy to sit and chat. He had one of those personalities that filled a room. He would go to “deer camp” in the fall with his friends and loved to cook and brought food to the Union hall when he was in port.

Tom is survived by his wife, Yolanda; children Tara, Benjamin, Stephanie, Ashlee, Christin and Xavier; his parents; brothers Michael and Matthew; sister

Kristen as well as nephews, Thomas and Brendon; and nieces Elena, Ashley and Lexie. Online condolences can be shared with his family at www.chandlerfunerals.com.

MIGRATORY BIRD ACT WON'T BE USED IN OIL SPILL AFTERMATH

Under a new Interior Department interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, federal agencies will no longer pursue criminal enforcement of Act violations relating to most oil spills or other catastrophic events. The hundred year old MBTA was designed to protect birds from harm resulting from human activity other than what is allowed by permit or regulated hunting. But increasingly, in recent decades, it has been used to add another layer of punishment against companies responsible for chemical and oil spills resulting in bird deaths, such as the EXXON VALDEZ spill in 1989 and the more recent Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010 off the Louisiana coast.

The Interior Department's new guidance specifies that "the take" — or, killing — of birds is not banned by the law "when the underlying purpose of that activity is not to take birds." Ironically, 2018 had been named as the "Year of the Bird" in honor of the centennial of the Act.

IMO ADOPTS CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY FOR SHIPPING

Nations meeting at the United Nations International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London adopted an initial strategy on phasing out international shipping greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Their initial strategy envisages reducing total annual GHG emissions by at least 50% by 2050 while pursuing efforts towards phasing them out entirely. The meeting was attended by more than 100 IMO member states.

The initial strategy includes additional short-, mid- and long-term measures along with possible timelines and their impacts on member states. The strategy also identifies barriers and supportive measures including capacity building, technical cooperation and research and development.

IMO has already adopted global mandatory measures to address reduction of GHG emissions from ships. They are also executing global technical cooperation projects to support the capacity of member states to implement and support energy efficiency in the shipping sector.

MLL'S HANLEY HONORED BY MARINE SOCIETY

Congratulations to Maersk Line, Ltd. Labor Relations & Fleet Management V.P. Ed Hanley who was honored this week by the Marine Society of the City of New York. Ed accepted a lifetime achievement award at a New York City ceremony on Monday attended by M.E.B.A. and American Maritime Congress representatives. The Marine Society was chartered in 1770 as a charitable and educational organization that serves as a "watchdog" for U.S. shipping interests.

Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby also spoke at Monday's event in remarks lauding the U.S. Merchant Marine while warning of potential challenges for national security due to the erosion of the mariner pool.

GET YOUR DOCUMENTS IN ORDER BEFORE HALL VISITS

Members are encouraged to have their documents in order before showing up at their Union hall. Those who have recently upgraded their license should make sure their STCW reflects the upgrade. Your license, passport and other important documents should be valid for at least six months from

the time you begin working aboard ship. Your drug-free certificates have to be valid at least until the day you join your ship.

If flying with your documents on the way to a hall, double-check that you haven't left any essential documents at home and make sure to keep your docs with you in your carry-on luggage. The primary documents you'll need include your License, STCW, MMD (with VSO or VPDS endorment), TWIC, Passport, USCG Medical Certificate, Annual M.E.B.A. physical card, Drug-free certificate, Group Card, Dues Receipt and proof of Return-to-Work Date. Permanent or relief employees should get their company clearance to the hall ahead of time.

Remember, a member or applicant cannot be dispatched for a job requiring STCW credentials if the Coast Guard Medical Certificate is due to expire prior to the completion of the job called. Members are encouraged to have their paperwork for the USCG Medical Certificate completed and to submit it for renewal at every annual physical in order to avoid an issue at job call. Certain jobs require proof of Horizon or Maersk qualifications, benzene or your shot records. Mariners are reminded to keep their vaccination records with them when sailing – especially when shipping onboard MSC-contracted vessels. If unsure what is required, it is a good idea to check with an M.E.B.A. clinic. If you have questions about your documents, direct them to your local hall.

SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – www.mebaplans.org (Forms & Documents, Vacation Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans' site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or vacation@mebaplans.org for more info.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Informational Meeting in Cleveland – Friday, May 4@1230.

Monday, May 7 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, May 8 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, May 9 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, May 10 – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, May 11 – Honolulu@1100.

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The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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 contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org