

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"

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NEW EMPLOYER, NEW JOBS – AGREEMENT INKED WITH "CURRENT MARITIME"

The Union has brought in another new employer to further diversify opportunities for our membership after M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac inked an agreement late last week with Current Maritime L.L.C. An upstart marine repair company with room to grow, Current Maritime specializes in upgrading automation and control systems, and have performed considerable work refurbishing control rooms on Watson-class LMSRs and other vessels. The company will be bringing our members and applicants in as permanent project engineers and for rotary-style work at wages and benefits in line with Union standards. The company has signed onto all of the M.E.B.A. Plans in the agreement that stretches out through 2032.

The M.E.B.A. will work with Current Maritime as various opportunities arise to inform members and let them know when resumes are required for long-term work. Rotary-style work will be posted on the job board at the Union halls.

This new work is part of ongoing M.E.B.A. efforts to pursue new initiatives and job opportunities for our highly-skilled membership both at sea and ashore. Recently and in past months, the Union has brought in new jobs with marine repair company Philadelphia Ship Services (PSS), facilities operation and maintenance company Eco-Alpha; marine and industrial repair company BluePoint Engineering LLC, and vessel/facility maintenance and repair company MAN Energy Solutions (MAN).

The MOU has been sent to each of the Union halls and is available for inspection by members and applicants in good standing.

PASSENGER VESSELS MAKE PLANS TO SAIL AGAIN AS CDC ISSUES NEXT-PHASE GUIDANCE

Norwegian Cruise Lines and other passenger vessel lines are looking to get their cruise ships back on regular itineraries this summer, contingent on the lifting of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) "Framework for Conditional Sailing Order" (CSO).

Late last week, the CDC issued the next phase of its CSO guidance which requires cruise lines to establish agreements at ports where they intend to operate, implement routine testing of crew, and develop plans incorporating vaccination strategies to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of COVID-19 by crew and passengers.

Cruise vessels making U.S. port visits have been docked for over a year after the onset of the pandemic which hit the industry particularly hard.

NCL hopes that its vessels will resume sailing by July 4 and already has an exhaustive plan in place that will ensure safety is paramount while providing an exhilarating cruise experience. That plan involves 100% vaccinations for crew and passengers, initial reduced capacities that increase each month, and other extensive COVID-19 safety measures.

Operated by NCL-America, the M.E.B.A.-crewed PRIDE OF AMERICA is the lone large U.S.-flag passenger vessel and also the only cruise ship operating exclusively between the Hawaiian Islands.

In a letter, NCL-A parent company Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings said, it “trusts and is optimistic the CDC will agree that mandatory vaccination requirements eliminate the need for the CSO and therefore requests for the lifting of the order for Norwegian’s vessels, allowing them to cruise from U.S. ports starting July 4.”

The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), which represents 95% of the industry including M.E.B.A.-contracted NCL-America, joined the call to lift the CSO this month arguing that such a move will assist the controlled return to service by the industry.

The latest CDC guidance, they say, seems “to reflect a zero-risk objective rather than the mitigation approach to COVID that is the basis for every other US sector of our society. The effect of these new mandates is that nearly half a million Americans-- from longshoremen and ground transportation operators to hotel, restaurant, and retail workers, travel agents, and tens of thousands of businesses that service cruise ships, are continuing to financially suffer with no reasonable timeline provided for the safe return of cruising.”

VOTES BEING TALLIED FOR AMAZON ORGANIZING EFFORT

The fate of the union organizing drive for more than 6,000 Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama will be revealed within days as a lengthy tallying procedure winds down. Employees there are looking for more respectful working terms including higher pay and more effective breaks to help ease them through grueling workdays. The implications of the vote are huge as Amazon has diligently kept workers under their corporate thumb through the years as part of their business model. That strategy did not pay dividends for Amazon workers who were especially hard-hit by COVID in the early months of the pandemic. Some employees noted that the company was slow to protect its workers with safety gear in those initial months and fell short in their communication efforts. The company has been more effective in suppressing employee efforts to unionize. In 2014, workers at a Delaware warehouse tried to organize in an ultimately unsuccessful bid.

The AFL-CIO has cited poll numbers that show that Americans support unionization efforts at Amazon by a large margin (77%).

“In every corner of the country, working people are crying out for change,” said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. “We aren’t just bearing the brunt of this pandemic. For decades, we’ve been bled dry by a rigged, corporate-first economy. Amazon workers in Bessemer are tearing down that system, and America is standing with them.”

“This is what solidarity looks like,” said Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), the union that is looking to represent the Amazon workers. “America is standing shoulder to shoulder with Amazon workers in Bessemer. People across the country and of all backgrounds recognize the systematic injustice that Amazon is inflicting on its own workers. This fight is universal—it’s a struggle for the fundamental rights and dignities that all working people deserve.”

APPLICANTS REMINDED OF REQUIREMENTS NEEDED FOR MEMBERSHIP

The M.E.B.A. Headquarters Membership Department has sent each M.E.B.A. applicant a letter detailing outstanding requirements needed to be met in order to qualify for – and to be accepted into membership. Such letters are sent two times a year in the weeks preceding the release of the twice-a-year District Investigating Committee Report. DIC reports contain a list of qualified applicants who have fulfilled the obligations in their application packet (including sea service documentation and initiation fee) and are current on their service charges. The reports are put before members for a vote at the June and December meetings. Once members approve the report, listed applicants become members and the Membership Department informs them of their new status.

Qualified applicants who are trying to make membership must provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next DIC report. The DIC will meet before the June membership meeting to formalize their report. To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements. Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. M.E.B.A. Headquarters does not, and cannot, update an Applicant’s record with sailing time/years of service unless that Applicant submits the required paperwork, i.e. discharges, sea service letters, documentation of employment, to HQ, by e-mail, fax, or mail or via your local Union hall. For further information you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

In addition, the DIC report will include a list of members or applicants that have been in dues or service charge arrears for two or more years. Once the membership votes on the report, those members and applicants will be DROPPED from the rolls. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing.

TAKE THIS (ANONYMOUS) SURVEY ON MARINER MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

The COVID-19 Working Group of the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS), a Federal interagency, is asking mariners to complete an anonymous survey concerning mariner mental health needs during the pandemic. The CMTS helps assess the adequacy of the marine transportation system and makes Federal policy recommendations.

They encourage mariners from all segments of the U.S. maritime industry to take ten minutes to anonymously complete the “Mariner Mental Health Needs during COVID-19” online survey accessed at <https://redcap.link/mariners>

The confidential survey asks mariners a variety of questions about COVID-19, mental health, and their experiences and feelings when aboard a vessel during the challenges of this worldwide pandemic. No mariner identification data will be collected. Survey participation from a significant portion of the mariners in each industry segment is critical to understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their mental health. The survey began on January 22 and runs through May 31, 2021.

Results from the survey will be shared with federal agencies, vessel owners/operators, mariner unions, maritime training institutions, seafarer welfare organizations and MTS stakeholders to facilitate development of effective solutions that benefit our mariners’ mental well-being.

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

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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 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.