MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)
"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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REACTION TO NEW 90-DAY JONES ACT WAIVER

The U.S.-flag shipping industry expressed its distress over the Trump administration's latest Jones Act waiver which sidelines American mariners for another 90-days, while giving inroads to foreign shipping interests to take our jobs. The Jones Act is an all-American statute: American cargo moving between American ports should be carried by American ships, built in American shipyards and crewed by American mariners. It is about keeping America's domestic commerce in American hands and preserving the maritime capacity the nation needs in times of crisis.

The initial waiver began on March 17 and was extended through August 16. The latest extension will last until November 14. However, American maritime was slightly relieved that the latest waiver is a narrower version that will require case-by-case review and approval by the Pentagon and Maritime Administration. In addition, the new waiver is aimed primarily at energy-related cargoes and certain agricultural commodities, rather than opening the door broadly to all 659 commodity categories covered by the original waiver.

The ongoing waiver has allowed foreign-built, foreign-flagged and foreign-crewed vessels, including Russian and Chinese ships, to carry cargoes that otherwise would have been moved by the U.S.-flag fleet. In addition, the waiver tells the next generation of American mariners that the jobs they're training for will be given to foreign ships and mariners. Shipping companies and shipyards make long-term investment decisions based on whether there will be a dependable domestic market. If the government can suddenly open that market to foreign competitors for months at a time, it introduces uncertainty into the business case for building American ships, maintaining American vessels and employing American mariners. Industry analysts have specifically warned that the unprecedented waiver creates uncertainty and can discourage billions of dollars in U.S. shipbuilding investment.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac said the decision to issue yet another waiver, "is nothing more than doubling down on a failed policy." He pointed out that, "This waiver was sold to the American people as a relief measure at the pump. Months later, gas prices remain higher than they were six months ago all while domestic oil refiners rake in record profits."

"Even worse," he continued, "an Administration that promised to put American workers first is allowing foreign-flag vessels and foreign mariners sail American waters, profiting at the expense of our members, our industry, and our nation. Iran shouldn't dictate what ships sail through the Strait of

Hormuz, and they certainly shouldn't be dictating what ships carry domestic cargo up the Mississippi River."

"Enough is enough," he said. "American mariners, vessel operators, and shipyards will keep paying the price for this unjustified and illegal waiver as long as it exists. We call on President Trump to end it now — and for good."

The American Maritime Partnership (AMP) expressed a small measure of relief that the latest waiver stipulates a case-by-case review. But AMP President Jennifer Carpenter couldn't mask her disappointment that a third waiver is being foisted upon American shipping for reasons that haven't been borne out. She said, "the waiver has not lowered fuel prices for American consumers and has been used to increase oil traders' margins, not meet military needs."

She urged the Administration "to conduct a rigorous review of the national defense justification for each and every waiver request and to carefully assess the availability of U.S. vessels before allowing a foreign vessel to move cargo between U.S. ports." AMP also highlighted "the importance of ensuring that any foreign vessel granted a waiver to meet a genuine national defense need for which a U.S. vessel is not available complies fully with all other applicable U.S. law, including tax, immigration, labor, etc. This is essential to putting American workers and taxpayers first."

Shipbuilders Council of America (SCA) President Matthew Paxton issued a cautious statement saying that "the Administration is taking a key step forward by adopting a limited Jones Act waiver process - one that strictly verifies domestic ship availability and restricts eligible cargo to prevent foreign exploitation. But he noted that, "broad Jones Act waivers stifle the long-term capital investments essential to our commercial shipbuilding markets, maritime fleet, and domestic supply chains. As the U.S. shipyard industrial base works alongside the Trump Administration to spark a generational revitalization of our maritime sector, any future waivers during this 90-day period must be strictly justified on a national security basis to safeguard this historic progress."

But after months of waivers that have done nothing to lower fuel prices while exposing U.S.-flag shipping to foreign competition, the answer is not a better waiver. A genuinely America First maritime policy should not merely make foreign competition harder to qualify for — it should make American shipping the priority.

HANWHA OFFERS UP TO $1.2B FOR AUSTAL USA

Hanwha Defense USA has submitted a preliminary, non-binding offer to acquire Austal USA's American-based shipyards and support operations for an estimated $1.05 billion to $1.20 billion. The offer includes Austal's facilities in Mobile, Alabama, but excludes Austal's Australian operations and its strategic shipbuilding agreement with the Australian government.

The bid comes as Austal projects a $175 million loss at Austal USA, largely tied to contract issues involving legacy Navy programs. Austal says the loss reflects a non-cash accounting provision and that its U.S. Navy nuclear submarine module work remains profitable. Austal has given Hanwha four weeks to conduct due diligence and engage with the Navy, Coast Guard and Department of War.

The move follows Hanwha's 2024 purchase of Philly Shipyard, which builds commercial and government vessels, including the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV). Austal USA, based in Mobile, Alabama, builds steel and aluminum ships for the Navy and Coast Guard. Hanwha previously attempted to acquire all of Austal in 2024 but withdrew its bid after regulatory concerns.

STEEL CUTTING FOR WSF HYBRID-ELECTRIC FERRY, AGREEMENT ON THIRD BOAT

Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc. (ESG) and Washington State Ferries marked the start of construction on three new 160-vehicle hybrid-electric ferries at a steel cutting ceremony in Florida. As part of the bid terms, Eastern will deliver the first boat in 2030, the second boat in 2031, and the third boat in 2032.

Steve Nevey, WSF Deputy Secretary of Transportation said the new ferries "will help us restore the reliability and resilience our customers depend on while building a cleaner, more modern fleet for the future."

But M.E.B.A. has pointed out that ongoing reliability problems are driven less by a shortage of vessels and more by a critical lack of licensed marine engineers. While the Union is pleased that the next generation of ferries is being built, chronic underinvestment in engine room wages has left the system short-staffed and facing a looming retirement cliff. Without closing the wage gap for marine engineers, the state risks sidelining its billion-dollar ferry investments, since even the newest and greenest vessels cannot operate without the skilled crews needed to run, maintain, and safely repair them. Closing the wage gap would cost a fraction of the more than $1 billion Washington is spending on new ferries, yet would pay outsized dividends in reliability. Ferry service is a backbone of Washington's transportation network and a major driver of tourism and local economies, and reliable operations are only possible if the skilled engineers who keep the fleet running are paid wages that reflect their indispensable role.

$4 MILLION PAID TO JUMP THE LINE AT THE PANAMA CANAL

A Vancouver-based container ship owner paid close to $4 million to secure priority passage for its ship through the Panama Canal, highlighting the growing cost of congestion as the Iran war disrupts major shipping routes. The canal's auction system allows vessels to bypass the regular queue, which has stretched to about 10 days for some large ships.

The Singapore-flagged SEASPAN BENEFACTOR operates in the Asia-U.S. East Coast service and had sailed from South Korea before heading for the Canal. The surge in demand comes as vessels avoid the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, forcing more traffic through the Panama Canal. Maintenance work and restrictions on large-vessel transits are adding to the bottleneck. The Panama Canal Authority acknowledged that auction prices have climbed sharply as global trade patterns shift, with some recent bids exceeding $1 million. The reported $4 million payment represents the highest price yet for a shortcut through the Canal.

LAST CHANCE TO ENTER UNIONS POWER AMERICA SWEEPSTAKES

Union members can enter the "Unions Power America" Sweepstakes for a chance to win various prizes and can earn bonus entries by completing additional activities with Union Plus. ***The Sweepstakes runs until August 19*** and members are vying for $150,000 in total cash prizes including two grand prizes of $40,000 along with a 3-5 day hotel stay at a fabulous far-flung vacation spot. The First Prize winner will receive $20,000 in cash and two Second Prize winners will nab a cool $5,000. 40 Third Prize winners will come away with a lean and mean $1,000 each. Winners will be announced on Labor Day, September 7th in which there will be additional live event prizes handed out. You can enter at unionplus.org/unionspoweramerica

Union Plus programs, which are available to M.E.B.A. members, applicants, retirees and our affiliates, provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services. The M.E.B.A. is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to auto services discounts.

NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR ENGINEERS ON NEW MLL SHIPS

As mentioned in past newsletters, Maersk Line, Limited (MLL) is planning to swap out M.E.B.A.-crewed ships in its U.S.-flag fleet with newer replacement vessels in the coming months, with the first as soon as September. MLL is expected to rotate in up to three SAN Class vessels. Engineers seeking assignments aboard these vessels will be required to complete the one-week High Voltage training course. MLL also plans to rotate in six AEGIR Class vessels. Engineers interested in serving aboard these vessels must possess the following to become eligible for an IGF endorsement:

•IGF (International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels) Basic and Advanced Simulator-based Training

•Thirty (30) days of observation time on an IGF operating vessel

•Witness one live bunkering

In addition, the AEGIR Class vessels are scheduled to carry Electro-Technical Officers (ETOs). M.E.B.A. officers are strongly encouraged to obtain the ETO endorsement on their USCG license to qualify for these positions.

It is important to note that as of today, the MAERSK CHAMPLAIN (TANGIER MAERSK, Nov 15th turnover) is the only AEGIR Class vessel that is expected to continue to run on Methanol while under the U.S. flag. This is primarily for engine warranty purposes. The other 5 vessels of this class will have their Methanol systems blanked off and any remaining Methanol fuel onboard removed prior to flag-in. These vessels will be operating on conventional fuels. At some point in the future, they may also operate on Methanol or Ethanol, but it is not expected in the near term.

CUSTOMIZED M.E.B.A. FOOTBALL & BASEBALL JERSEYS

For the first time, customizable M.E.B.A. football jerseys are available for order. ***The Union will accept orders for the football jersey until August 28, 2026 and we are giving members another chance to order the M.E.B.A. baseball jerseys during this time.***

The jerseys can be customized on the back with a stitched name (of reasonable length) and number. Net proceeds generated go to the Good & Welfare Fund. All orders must be submitted (and paid for) by Friday, August 28, 2026. The information and order form are available at each of the Union halls and a pdf copy is also available from the M.E.B.A. website on the homepage.

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

Monday, September 7 – ***Labor Day – Halls Closed***

Tuesday, September 8 – **Boston**@1200; **CMES**@1430; **Charleston**@1400; **Houston**@1315; **Oakland**@1230; **Portland, Maine**@1200; **Seattle (Fife)**@1300.

Wednesday, September 9 – **Jacksonville**@1300; **New Orleans**@1315; **Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@**1300 **(No Voting) – Register by emailing** mebahq@mebaunion.org

Thursday, September 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@**1230; **NY/NJ@**1300; **Norfolk@**1300; **Tampa@**1300.

Friday, September 11 – **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 Calhoon 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