

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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NEW M.E.B.A. WORK ON RESEARCH VESSELS WITH FLORIDA INSTITUTE

The Union is pleased to announce that it has secured new work for our membership aboard a fleet of research vessels operating off the coast of Florida. Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) operates three large research vessels - the R/V WEATHERBIRD II (115'), the R/V W.T. HOGARTH (78'), and the R/V WESTERN FLYER – that are deployed on scientific missions to study and protect the oceans.

Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith secured this new opportunity following a lead provided by a member. The Union utilized an agreement with existing M.E.B.A. contracted company Blue Point Engineering to solidify this third-party work with FIO. The agreement covers full M.E.B.A. Pension, Medical and Training benefits, as well as MPB & 401k.

Member Carianne Sconzo is already sailing with FIO as an Assistant Engineer aboard the R/V WESTERN FLYER and the Union expects continued opportunities for our membership within the fleet.

This new agreement is a continuation of the M.E.B.A. Administration's efforts to further diversify work opportunities for our highly-skilled membership both at sea and ashore.

SEATTLE TIMES CALLS FOR COMPETITIVE PAY FOR WSF MARINERS

The largest newspaper in the Pacific Northwest is trumpeting the need for competitive pay for Washington State Ferry engineers and oilers to help revitalize the beleaguered ferry system. The Editorial Board of the *Seattle Times* says that the system's pay disparity has whittled away the once-hefty pool of experienced and qualified mariners that was already stretched thin by a recent wave of retirements, many during the COVID era.

The Board's August 19th editorial said that "In a job that already calls for seven-day, 12-hour shifts, engineers, oilers and wipers racked up 81,000 hours of burnout-inducing overtime in 2023 — money that would be better spent on higher wages to attract a greater workforce. The state shouldn't skimp on crews that caretake a corroding fleet with a combined \$270 million in backlogged maintenance."

M.E.B.A. continues the fight to rectify the WSF's two-tiered wage system that undervalues our mariners and has directly led to staffing shortages and service disruptions that have undermined the reliability of the fleet for the millions that depend on smooth sailings.

The Editorial Board warned that the State cannot afford to cut corners on crew wages in these evolving times especially with a global shortage of skilled mariners. They note, "Recalibrating the salary scale would improve morale, attract critical talent to the ranks and staunch the number of canceled sailings each year. Ensuring competitive pay, including for those working below decks in America's largest ferry system, is one of many necessary steps to restore what is now a broken marine highway."

M.E.B.A. ELECTION ISSUE AVAILABLE

Members, applicants and pensioners should be receiving the special election edition of the *Marine Officer* that was mailed out late last week to their address on record with M.E.B.A. Headquarters. The issue was also sent to each of the M.E.B.A. Union halls and offices.

The magazine contains campaign statements of candidates running for office in this year's M.E.B.A. District election. Candidate statements presented in the issue appear unedited from the candidate's original submission. The issue also contains other key information relevant to the election. Ballots for the District election will be mailed by September 3 to all members at their address of record on file with Headquarters.

Completed ballots should be returned to the depository by November 30th. Ballots not received in the depository when they are collected on December 2, 2024, according to the By-Laws, will be disqualified and not counted. The Impartial Administrator and an elected rank-and-file tallying committee will collect the ballots and tabulate them on that day. In order for your ballot to count, you must be in good standing by November 15, 2024, with dues paid in accordance with the M.E.B.A. By-Laws, through the end of the year where applicable. All members and potential nominees are urged to pay their dues to the end of 2024 (or beyond) as soon as possible.

THE "BIG U" FACES SEPTEMBER 12 EVICTION

The SS UNITED STATES must vacate its pier on the Delaware River in Philadelphia by September 12, a federal judge ruled this week. The iconic vessel, retired in 1969, has been rusting away for decades, as the conservancy overseeing the Big U since 2009 continues to seek options to repurpose the vessel.

M.E.B.A. officers filled both engine rooms of the great ship during the Big U's heyday in the 1950s and '60s. Several times, the Big U was weeks away from the scrapyards before a last second arrangement bought her additional time. The SS UNITED STATES is considered one of the greatest ocean liners ever built and still holds the "Blue Riband" westbound trans-Atlantic speed record. The conservancy says that should an agreement be reached to find the next temporary or permanent home for the vessel, a good faith extension on the September 12 deadline could be reached. They have fought for a solution that would preserve the great vessel for future generations and are less enthused by offers to scrap it or turn the ship into an artificial underwater reef. However, they are running out of time for a lifeline.

The conservancy said they have “raised funds to cover the current expenses and potential tow costs, and...continues to work tirelessly to ensure that America’s Flagship is not lost to history.”

BILL TO GET RUINED BALTIMORE BRIDGE PERPETRATOR TO PAY UP

A pair of Congressmen have pushed forward a bill to make foreign vessel owners more responsible for damage caused on U.S. shores. Specifically, the “Justice for Victims of Foreign Vessel Accidents Act” (H.R. 9348), was introduced to retroactively compel the owners of the M/V DALI, the vessel that destroyed Baltimore’s Francis Scott Key bridge, to shoulder a greater financial burden for the victims and the loss of the bridge. Following the March 2024 disaster, the DALI’s Singapore-based owner filed to limit their total liability for the bridge collapse and recovery effort to just \$43.7 million. This legislation would increase the liability to almost \$1 billion for that incident.

The new bill, forwarded by Reps. John Garamendi (D-CA-08) and Hank Johnson (D-GA-04), would increase the liability for all foreign-flagged vessels to up to 10 times the dollar value of the vessel and its cargo, minus expenses. It would maintain the current liability threshold for U.S.-flagged vessels.

If passed, the bill would go into effect retroactively to March 25, 2024 – one day before the Baltimore bridge was struck.

NMC TIPS FOR SPEEDIER CUSTOMER SERVICE

The National Maritime Center (NMC) issued a list of tips for mariners to get quick Customer Service Center (CSC) response, as the process is often protracted: 1. **Call Early in the Morning:** The CSC experiences its busiest times around midday. To avoid longer wait times, they recommend calling early in the morning when phone lines are less busy. The CSC is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. The NMC phone number is 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662). 2. **Use Live Chat:** [Live Chat](#) is a faster alternative to calling. This service connects you with our support team quickly and efficiently. Additionally, the Chatbot can assist with many inquiries, providing immediate answers without the need to wait for a representative. 3. **Check Your Application Status Online:** Save time by using the [Check Your Status](#) tool on their website. This feature allows you to verify the status of your application instantly, without needing to call in. 4. **Credential Verification Tool:** If you need to verify the validity of your credential, use the online [Credential Verification Tool](#). This quick and easy-to-use resource provides immediate confirmation of your credential’s status. 5. **Email for Status and Questions:** If you are unable to reach them by phone, you can also e-mail for a status update or questions at IASKNMC@uscg.mil. Be sure to include your full name, mariner reference number, and any relevant details to help avoid delays in processing your request. Note, processing times at the NMC vary based on e-mail volume.

FINISHED WITH ENGINES: MARITIME ADVOCATE BILL PASCRELL

14-term New Jersey Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr. (D-NJ-9), maritime industry supporter, died this week at the age of 87. He had been hospitalized of late with a respiratory illness. Rep. Pascrell was a staunch advocate of organized labor and was a reliable vote in favor of programs and statutes that help strengthen the U.S.-flag shipping industry such as the Maritime Security Program and Jones Act. President Biden said Pascrell was “a beloved bridge-builder and champion for working-class people. Bill fought relentlessly to ensure their voices and needs were at the center of policymaking.”

At one of his visits to M.E.B.A. Headquarters the no-nonsense straight-shooter expressed disappointment that so little of our cargo is flying under the U.S.-flag. He declared, “I believe in ‘Made in America’, I believe in ‘Buy American’ and I believe in ‘Shipping American.’”

Rep. Pascrell had been running for a 15th term. Because the office vacancy occurred before an August 27 deadline, state election law will allow Democratic County Committee members to select a new nominee to appear on the general election ballot in November.

RETIRED WSF WORKHORSE VESSELS PURCHASED

Two former Washington State Ferries (WSF) vessels that navigated the Puget Sound for over five decades are being readied to head out to South America following their sale. The WSF announced that the ferries ELWHA and KLAHOWYA were purchased by a businessman for \$100,000 each with the buyer intent on transporting the ferries to a “clean, green steel mill facility” in Ecuador, where they will be recycled. WSF confirmed that both vessels are certified as free of hazardous materials. The vessels were docked at the Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility on Bainbridge Island. Originally scheduled for this last Monday, their departure was delayed due to a malfunction in the towing equipment. As of now, no new towing schedule has been set. The ELWHA primarily operated on the Anacortes/Friday Harbor/Sidney, British Columbia route until its retirement in April 2020. The KLAHOWYA mainly served the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth route before transitioning to the San Juan Islands interisland route in 2014. It was retired in July 2017.

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

Monday, September 2 – Labor Day – ALL HALLS CLOSED

Tuesday, September 3 – Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Wednesday, September 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org

Thursday, September 5 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, September 6 – Honolulu@1100

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***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. 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