

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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UNION BARGAINS MEMBER PROTECTIONS, INCENTIVES AS COMPANIES BEGIN INSTITUTING VACCINE MANDATES

As shipping companies tighten procedures and protocols to guard against work-stopping COVID outbreaks, the Union is working with our contracted-companies to protect our members while rewarding them for their proactivity and contributing to the success of this effort.

Despite a challenge by the Seafarers International Union, an arbitrator recently upheld a shipping company's right to unilaterally impose vaccine mandates. The Arbitrator's ruling was issued last month on behalf of the American Maritime Association (AMA), a multi-employer bargaining unit that consists of Crowley Maritime, 'Horizon Lines' (Matson Navigation), Intrepid Personnel, Maersk Line Ltd., North Star Shipping OSG Ship Management (including Alaska Tanker Company), Sunrise Operations and Tote Services. In addition, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recently updated guidance reiterating that federal law does not prevent a private employer from requiring its employees to be vaccinated.

As shipping companies begin to institute 100% vaccine requirements, the M.E.B.A. has been working to make sure members are properly incentivized to support the effort, while also ensuring the execution of these mandates don't encroach on specific circumstances of our mariner force.

Matson Navigation recently announced that it is requiring its mariners to be inoculated and that COVID-19 vaccinations will be considered part of a member's fitness for duty, as of October 1, 2021. The Union entered into a Letter of Understanding with Matson that codifies the implementation while also setting up protections of members' rights. The agreement also secures \$500 incentives, through October 15, 2021, for prospective Matson crew and port engineers to get vaccinated – including compensation for those who have already received the vaccine.

As of October 1st, only fully vaccinated members can be dispatched to a Matson vessel as crew or port relief, or dispatched to a Matson port engineer position. Vaccinations will also be required for port agents or Union officials boarding Matson vessels for Union business.

The LOU will allow members who are aboard a Matson vessel on October 1, 2021 to complete their assignments regardless of vaccination status. Members currently on a Matson vessel will be allowed time off in port during their work day to go to a COVID-19 vaccination appointment.

For the immediate future, and as allowable, the M.E.B.A. plans to call Matson jobs in advance to allow any unvaccinated individuals seeking the work to meet the vaccination requirements before boarding.

The M.E.B.A. has already secured agreements with several other shipping companies and continues discussions with additional employers to ensure the smooth application of these safety mandates while also representing the sincere concerns of our affected membership.

AFL-CIO MARCHES ON; SHULER TAKES HELM, REDMOND TAPPED AS #2

Liz Shuler will build upon the legacy of Richard Trumka and advance the labor movement forward as the AFL-CIO's new President. The Federation's Executive Council elected the longtime Secretary-Treasurer to take over for Trumka following his unexpected death earlier this month. The 51-year old Shuler becomes the first woman and the youngest person to lead the AFL-CIO.

The Executive Council also elected United Steelworkers (USW) International Vice President Fred Redmond to succeed Shuler as Secretary-Treasurer, the first African American to hold the "number two" office. Tefere Gebre will continue as Executive Vice President, rounding out the most diverse team of officers ever to lead the AFL-CIO. "I am humbled, honored and ready to guide this federation forward," President Shuler said after her election. "I believe in my bones the labor movement is the single greatest organized force for progress. This is a moment for us to lead societal transformations—to leverage our power to bring women and people of color from the margins to the center—at work, in our unions and in our economy, and to be the center of gravity for incubating new ideas that will unleash unprecedented union growth."

Transportation Trades Dept. (AFL-CIO) President Greg Regan & TTD Secretary-Treasurer Shari Semelsberger issued a statement saying, "Today's historic election comes during an unprecedented time in history. Working families are still bearing the brunt of a global public health and economic crisis. The introduction of new technologies, combined with the explosive rise of anti-worker business models, threatens to change the nature of work itself...Shuler and Redmond bring to the table proven leadership, grit, determination, and a deep understanding of the unique and complex needs of today's working families. They will also usher in a new era in the American labor movement – one in which the experience and diversity of our leaders reflect the diverse backgrounds and skillsets of American workers."

Shuler's father was a power lineman and longtime member of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 125. Liz joined the Local 125 as an organizer and an early victory against Enron Corp. helped reinforce her passion to fight for worker progress even in the face of overwhelming odds. Her work on a string of successful initiatives, assisted her ascension within the IBEW and eventually led to her election as AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer in 2009. In that position, she also served chief financial officer, turning deficits into surpluses and steering the federation through multiple fiscal crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to her stewardship of the federation's finances, Shuler led the AFL-CIO's initiatives on the future of work, retirement security, the clean energy economy, public safety reform, workforce development, and empowering women and young workers. She is committed to busting myths about labor, leveraging the labor movement's diversity for innovative approaches to social justice and making the benefits of a union voice on the job available to working people everywhere. Redmond has been a USW member since 1973, working at Reynolds Metals Co. in Chicago. He served as shop steward and eventually vice president, then three terms as local president.

The terms of the three executive officers run through June 2022, when delegates to the AFL-CIO Convention in Philadelphia will elect leaders for new four-year terms.

NMC: PROCESSING TIME LAGS FOR MMC APPLICATIONS

The National Maritime Center (NMC) issued a notice informing seafarers of current Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) and medical certificate processing delays and offering suggestions on how to best navigate the lag. They list several suggestions to streamline application processing:

- Apply 90 days in advance: Consider applying early and submitting your MMC and/or medical certificate application at least 90 days in advance of when you would anticipate needing a credential.
- Ensure your application package is complete: Fifty percent of all application submissions result in needing additional information. Take the time and ensure yours is complete before sending it to the Coast Guard. Verify the file you send to us electronically is also complete, paying particular attention to any double-sided documents in your package. Did you scan both sides? Checklist guides are available on the NMC website to assist you.
- PDF only: Submit your MMC and/or medical certificate applications electronically in PDF format only. DO NOT submit pictures of your documentation taken with a smart phone or in other digital formats (jpeg, .png, etc.). These will not be accepted. NOTE: The new size limit for electronic application submissions is 35 MB, so it is no longer necessary to submit multiple smaller files. Also, you will not receive an auto-generated response acknowledging receipt of your application. The NMC is currently unable to provide this service. Duplicate submissions of your application package are not necessary.
- Include your height, weight, and gender: When applying for an MMC only (no medical certificate application/physical included), please be sure to include your height, weight, and gender in your application submission. These data points are needed to produce your MMC and are currently not requested on the CG-719B application form. A future revision to this form will include these data fields.

Applications are typically processed on a ‘first in, first out’ basis. After review of the initial submission date, the NMC will consider expediting cases when it is critical to vessel operations or an applicant’s employment. To request expedited service, contact the customer service center at IASKMMC@uscg.mil.

Expiration Date Reminder: Under 46 USC Section 7507, MMCs may only be extended for up to 1 year from their date of expiration. MMCs with national endorsements only, which expired between March 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021, are extended until the EARLIER of: 1). October 31, 2021, or 2). One year after the initial expiration date of the credential (i.e., 1 year after the expiration date printed on the credential). Don’t wait until the last minute! Despite the extensions provided via Marine Safety Information Bulletin 08-20, you should submit your application once you have met the requirements. Remember, an MMC can be renewed at any time and may be post-dated up to 8 months.

The NMC Customer Service Center is available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday for your questions. Mariners can reach their call center at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662) and IASKNMC@uscg.mil.

COAST GUARD EXTENDS RELAXED QA RULES FOR TWO MORE YEARS

The Coast Guard has extended the period it will allow STCW assessments to be signed by a Qualified Assessor that hasn't been approved by the Coast Guard but meets the requirements specified in NVIC 19-14. The Coast Guard understands that the limited number of approved QAs may present a hardship on mariners trying to complete STCW assessments by the mandated date of December 31, 2021. The date has therefore been extended until December 31, 2023. The full notice has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website in the Documents & Member Notices section.

NEW STATE DEPT. GUIDANCE WILL HELP EXPEDITE MARINER PASSPORT RENEWAL

The State Department's Passport Services division has issued new guidance that will assist mariners who have expiring passports to renew their documents in an expeditious manner. The new provisions allow mariners to mail in their applications and typically have them processed within a week. The full notice has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website in the Documents & Member Notices section. You can contact the National Passport Information Center at (877) 487-2778.

M.E.B.A. VESSEL IN HAITI FOR EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

International relief is pouring into Haiti following a devastating 7.2-magnitude earthquake that struck the country on Aug. 14th. The M.E.B.A.-crewed USNS BURLINGTON, a spearhead-class expeditionary fast transport ship, operated by Military Sealift Command, is one of the U.S. vessels supporting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations off the coast of Haiti. The BURLINGTON was working in tandem with the Navy vessel USS BILLINGS in support of efforts led by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). BURLINGTON utilized its ScanEagle unmanned aerial system (UAS) to obtain aerial images of the destruction on the ground which helped relief planners determine where supplies are needed, what airfields can be used, and what roadways are accessible. The vessels joined other U.S. Southern Command components and U.S. Coast Guard ships already on station, in addition to allies and partners from the Netherlands, France, and United Kingdom.

The Military Sealift Command Hospital ship USNS COMFORT assisted Haiti on a humanitarian mission in 2010 following another devastating earthquake, but so far there has been no word if it will reprise its earlier mission. In other related news, MSC-Atlantic presented USNS COMFORT civilian mariners with Armed Forces Civilian Service Medals related to their COVID relief service in New York Harbor in April 2020.

OMSA JONES ACT ENFORCEMENT NETS FIRST VIOLATOR

Shortly after launching a new Jones Act enforcement program, the Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) has scooped up its first violator. OMSA, which represents entities that own and operate marine service vessels, recently chartered a vessel, known as the JONES ACT ENFORCER, to help keep the offshore service industry honest by collecting video and photographic evidence of violators. But it was a social media tip that led OMSA to track down a Chinese-built, Vanuatu-flagged vessel called the EPIC HEDRON that was transporting merchandise between points off the coast of Louisiana in violation of the Jones Act. OMSA issued a report detailing how the EPIC HEDRON, a derrick barge with a history of safety violations, routinely failed to utilize its Automatic Identification System (AIS) and flouted the Jones Act by transporting oil platform components throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

“The EPIC HEDRON has racked up a shocking number of violations, and in each case, it seems they were told ‘just don’t do it again,’ said OMSA President Aaron Smith. “If that were a U.S.-flagged vessel, the U.S. Coast Guard would have prevented it from leaving the dock and the crew might even face criminal penalties. Foreign-flagged vessels should play by the same rules.”

LANDLOCKED SAN MARINO IS LATEST FOC REGISTRY

Tiny, landlocked San Marino on the Italian peninsula has set up a commercial flag registry – an announcement made soon after the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) added seven new countries to its list of Flags of Convenience. FOC nations register ships with no genuine link to their country which often has a direct relationship to the unsafe operation of vessels, illegal activities and exploitation of crews. The concept of an FOC is to skirt regulations and taxes and to provide lax enforcement.

The San Marino Ship Register (SMSR) noted that the new registry will allow them to “offer fast registration procedures and quick response times, digital online applications, electronic certificates, reduced paperwork, and global access thanks to a register which is fully online.” Though he noted that the SMSR forwarded positive rhetoric about being a responsible ship registry, ITF Seafarers’ Section chair David Heindel said, “The ITF and our network of inspectors globally will be watching the San Marino registry with bated breath. We hope that San Marino lives up to its promises to protect seafarers and guarantee their fundamental rights.”

JAMIE BUTLER FRISBEE GOLF TOURNAMENT IS SUNDAY, SEPT. 19

The M.E.B.A. family is invited to take part in a Disc Golf Tournament at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School to benefit the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF). The M.M.M.M.F. Invitational Jamie Butler Memorial Disc Golf Tournament will take place on Sunday, September 19th (at 1300). Jamie was a 1983 CMES cadet school graduate who shipped as an M.E.B.A. Chief Engineer for years and served as the Baltimore hall dispatcher before he sailed into the sunset late last year at the age of 59. The Disc Golf Invitational will be open only to Members, Applicants, Retirees, staff and employers. The \$25 entry fee will benefit the 4MF and the Memorial Park. As you know, the Memorial was created to honor fallen seafarers who have delivered the goods and answered the call of this country since 1775. The tournament winner will have his or her name engraved on the M.M.M.M.F. Maritime Heritage Cup proudly displayed at the CMES Lounge. You can contact 4MF Chairman Bill Van Loo for additional information. He can be reached at bvanloo@bvlworks.org

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, September 6 – Labor Day – *All Halls Closed*

Tuesday, September 7 – Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle-Fife@1300;

Wednesday, September 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online Headquarters “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – You can register for the 9/8 HQ meeting at mebahq@mebaunion.org – provide your details)

Thursday, September 9 – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, September 10 – Honolulu@1100

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