MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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M.E.B.A. BRINGS MARINER PERSPECTIVE TO NUCLEAR SHIPPING INITIATIVE

Governments, international regulators and maritime industry representatives, including the M.E.B.A., gathered in Washington D.C. this week to launch ATLAS, an initiative aimed at developing a framework for the commercial use of nuclear technology at sea. Spearheaded by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), ATLAS - Atomic Technologies Licensed for Applications at Sea – is focused primarily on two potential applications: floating nuclear power plants and nuclear-powered commercial vessels.

The effort comes as interest grows in nuclear energy as a possible way to reduce fuel consumption, emissions and long-term operating costs in the maritime sector. The State Department, Maritime Administration, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, IAEA and ABS, were just a handful of the more than 600 participants at the event. The two-day forum represented the first globally coordinated effort to bring the nuclear and maritime sectors together to address the regulatory, technical and safety challenges associated with maritime nuclear power.

Turning that interest into actual commercial operations, however, will be a major undertaking. Before nuclear-powered ships or floating reactors can be deployed on a meaningful scale, regulators and industry will have to resolve complex questions involving safety oversight, licensing, liability, governance and commercial viability. Whether it can produce a workable international framework remains to be seen, but closer coordination between the nuclear and maritime communities will be essential if nuclear power is to move from concept to commercial reality at sea.

A maritime workforce panel on Tuesday morning brought together leaders from academia, organized labor and the naval architecture community to examine how the industry can prepare for a new era of maritime nuclear technology. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac was the lone representative for maritime labor at the conference and played a central role in the discussion. He offered the perspective of the maritime workforce emphasizing the importance of ensuring that American mariners are prepared to operate increasingly advanced vessels and technologies.

Vokac highlighted the challenges facing mariners while underscoring the need for sustained investment in training, recruitment and modernization. He discussed how M.E.B.A. is working to prepare its members for the technological changes ahead and to ensure that skilled U.S. mariners remain at the forefront of emerging maritime opportunities. Along with others on the panel - Maine

Maritime Academy President Craig Johnson and Phil Malone from the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (SNAME) - Vokac stressed the significant workforce opportunities that could emerge as nuclear technology moves closer to commercial maritime applications.

President Vokac also reminded attendees about our Union's history aboard this country's only commercial nuclear vessel. M.E.B.A. is among the few to have experience with nuclear-powered merchant ships as the Union crewed the N/S SAVANNAH, part of President Dwight Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" program. The vessel operated in the 1960s and has been out of service since 1973, but the Union still performs supervisory, oversight and maintenance functions on the ship that are needed for its continued preservation. Member Adam Blackwell, a Chief Mate, currently serves aboard the ship in Baltimore, MD.

Back in May, MarAd announced an initiative to explore the use of small modular nuclear reactors (SMRs) in commercial shipping, a step meant to usher in the construction of nuclear-powered commercial vessels in American shipyards. MarAd sought input from the industry on how SMRs could improve vessel efficiency, eliminate most fuel costs, strengthen national security, and support the revitalization of the U.S. maritime industrial base. Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel said the initiative is aimed at creating the market and regulatory conditions needed to attract private investment and scale the technology. Recently, the Port of Long Beach signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with MarAd to help bring cutting-edge SMR technology into active testing.

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), representing over 80 major public ports submitted comments to the docket strongly supporting the development of SMRs for ports. They argued that SMRs deployed at ports could provide reliable, dedicated baseload power as electricity demand rises, allowing ports to maintain operations during grid disruptions, natural disasters and other emergencies. They urged MarAd and other federal agencies to support SMRs through technology-neutral funding, clear safety standards, streamlined permitting, and policies enabling ports to sell excess power while incorporating microgrids, storage and grid upgrades.

MSP SHIP EVACUATED AFTER MECHANICAL FAILURE

The crew of the U.S.-flagged cargo ship SLNC YORK, one of the vessels serving in the Maritime Security Program, was evacuated last week after the vessel began taking on water in the Pacific Ocean. The ship is operated by Schuyler Line Navigation Company and was sailing between Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Naha, Okinawa. A catastrophic failure in the propulsion assembly appears to have sheared the shaft and displaced its mechanical seal, allowing water to enter the vessel and cause flooding. The vessel was stabilized and communications systems were maintained.

All SIU and AMO members crewing the 2010-built vessel were safely transferred to a Chinese-flagged ship nearby and were transported to South Korea for repatriation. The cause of the water ingress remains under investigation, but it is a great relief that all crew members are safe, uninjured and accounted for.

OSG CEO PUSHES BACK ON MISLEADING EDITORIAL
THAT BLAMES JONES ACT FOR HIGH CALIFORNIA GAS PRICES

Overseas Shipholding Group CEO Samuel Norton pushed back against a *Wall Street Journal* editorial that attributed part of California's high gasoline prices to the Jones Act and argued that a temporary waiver of the law has helped lower fuel costs. In a letter to the editor responding to the Journal's Aug.

15 editorial, “Keeping Up with the Jones Act Waiver,” Norton said the editorial’s framing was misleading and overstated the role of the Jones Act in California’s energy costs.

The *WSJ* editorial pointed to a roughly 25-cent-per-gallon narrowing of the gap between California gasoline prices and the national average following the waiver, suggesting that the Jones Act had contributed significantly to the state’s higher prices. Norton disputed that interpretation. “…the .25-cent shift appears to me to reflect gasoline prices rising faster outside California, not any meaningful reduction in California, not any meaningful reduction in California shipping costs,” Norton wrote. He noted that California gasoline prices remain about 20% above their levels before the Iran war.

Norton also challenged the argument that the Jones Act was preventing California from obtaining competitively priced fuel. Based on calculations, shipping gasoline from South Korea to Los Angeles currently costs about 12.5 cents per gallon — roughly 25% less than transporting gasoline from Houston, even aboard foreign-flag vessels operating under the waiver. If transportation costs alone determined California’s fuel supply, Norton argued, the state’s demand would likely be met primarily by Asian exporters regardless of whether the Jones Act waiver was in place.

He acknowledged that the war in Iran has disrupted normal energy supply chains and said even staunch supporters of the Jones Act recognize that waivers can be appropriate when genuine shortages occur and the U.S.-flag fleet cannot meet demand. But Norton said California’s elevated gasoline prices are being driven primarily by the state’s regulatory policies and temporary constraints on Asian exports — not by the Jones Act. He also warned that extending the waivers primarily benefits oil refiners and distributors seeking cheaper transportation options while weakening the U.S. maritime industry. More broadly, Norton raised concerns about foreign operators gaining access to domestic routes under the waivers without what he described as an adequate enforcement regime to ensure compliance with U.S. laws. He specifically cited Chinese and Russian operators. “A policy that enriches an already prosperous oil industry while weakening the domestic maritime industry is a bad bargain,” Norton concluded.

USTRANSCOM AWARDS SEALIFT CHARTER CONTRACT TO SEVEN COMPANIES
The U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) awarded its new Joint Global Sealift Charter contract to seven commercial shipping companies, including several that have M.E.B.A. agreements. The five-year contract is designed to give Military Sealift Command faster and more flexible access to commercial sealift capacity for moving military vehicles, equipment and other cargo around the world.

“The Joint Global Sealift Charter strengthens our ability to respond rapidly to the needs of the joint force by giving MSC access to ready, reliable commercial sealift capacity when and where it’s needed,” said Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, MSC Commander. “Our partnership with the U.S. maritime industry is essential to maintaining a flexible and resilient sealift capability in peace, crisis, and conflict.”

Rather than issuing a full solicitation for each requirement, USTRANSCOM can now award short-term time and voyage charters through individual task orders, providing greater flexibility for military logisticians and more predictability for participating carriers. The awardees are American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier, Farrell Lines, Federated Maritime, Liberty Global Logistics, Patriot Shipping, Schuyler Line Navigation and Waterman Transport. The contract has an estimated face value of $1.2 billion and a maximum ceiling of $2.7 billion over its five-year period.

GREAT LAKES PORTS, SHIPYARDS FORGE NEW PARTNERSHIP

The American Great Lakes Ports Association (AGLPA) and the Great Lakes Alliance of Shipyards (GLAS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding creating the first formal partnership between the Great Lakes port and shipyard communities. Signed during AGLPA's 2026 Annual Conference in Chicago, the voluntary, non-binding agreement aims to strengthen domestic shipbuilding, expand maritime commerce, develop the region's workforce and advance federal policies supporting the Great Lakes maritime industry.

Under the agreement, the organizations will coordinate on vessel construction, repair and modernization, fleet renewal, cargo and export opportunities, infrastructure investment, workforce recruitment and training, and federal maritime policy. The groups said closer cooperation will help expand the region's industrial capacity, attract investment and strengthen the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway System as a critical link between American industry and domestic and global markets. The coalition also expects to expand as additional shipyards and maritime organizations join the effort.

NMC OFFERS RELIEF TO MARINERS WITH DELAYED APPLICATIONS

The National Maritime Center (NMC) is offering targeted relief to mariners whose Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs) expired while renewal applications were delayed in processing. Eligible mariners can receive a 120-day temporary authorization to sail under the authority of their expired national endorsements. To qualify, the MMC must have expired between January 1 and July 31, 2026, the renewal application must have been submitted before expiration and no later than August 26, and the NMC evaluation must result in a request for additional information or an Approved to Test letter. The authorization applies only to national endorsements - not STCW endorsements or medical certificates - and mariners must carry both their expired MMC and authorization letter while sailing.

The full notice is available from NMC and has been placed on the M.E.B.A. website in the "Documents & Member Notices" section.

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.