

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. ELECTION 2024: BALLOT FINALIZED

With the uneventful passing of the appeals period mandated by the M.E.B.A. By-Laws, the list of candidates qualified to run for M.E.B.A. offices and jobs during the 2024 election cycle has become final. In mid-July, a rank-and-file Credentials Committee scrutinized eligibility requirements of nominees and issued a report submitted to the membership. That report was sent to all halls, posted on the M.E.B.A. website and made part of this month's membership meeting packet.

For the first time since the 1978 election (46 years), the Union's top position is uncontested. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac will take the oath of office for a second four-year term on January 1, 2025 after a term spent strengthening the Union by diversifying member job opportunities, improving contracts, bolstering representation, expanding member training and modernizing the Plans. M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha will also suit up for a second term and continue his tenacious pursuit of job opportunities and improved conditions for our membership, as evidenced by his successful battle to win an historic contract for our members sailing in the Staten Island Ferry fleet. In another uncontested office, Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith will return for a second term and resume his dogged defense of our membership, continue contract improvements and enhanced recruiting efforts, and focus on improving member services. Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway is the final senior M.E.B.A. official running unopposed and is looking forward to maintaining her intensity in battling on behalf of our membership in contracts, outreach and increasing representation for our members both at sea and ashore.

TrueBallot, Inc. is serving as the Impartial Administrator for the 2024 M.E.B.A. Election and the ballot to be sent to members next month has now been finalized. A ballot will be mailed out to all M.E.B.A. members on Tuesday, September 3 at their address listed in the Headquarters database. 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 quarter where applicable. All

members and potential nominees are urged to pay their dues to the end of 2024 (or beyond) as soon as possible.

A special election edition of the *Marine Officer* has also been finalized and will mail out to members, applicants and retirees in the coming weeks. That issue will contain statements of the candidates as well as key information relevant to the election.

LAST WEEKS TO CLARIFY ADDRESS BEFORE IMPORTANT MAILING

The Union strongly urges all members to make sure Headquarters, not just Plans, has your correct address so that you receive your ballot. There will be a process available to members who do not receive a ballot because of bad address information, but the easiest way to smooth the process is to ascertain that your address information is current ahead of the ballot mailing.

The simplest way to do that is to log into the M.E.B.A.'s online Member Payment and Update Portal (PUP) accessed from the homepage (www.mebaunion.org). Once you log in, you can easily pay your dues, and verify your contact information on file, among other functions. The information displayed in the Member PUP mirrors the Headquarters database. Those who have not used the Member PUP can easily create a new account and select their own password. You can contact Headquarters if you have any difficulty.

If you have not received past *Marine Officers*, P.A.F. mailings or other M.E.B.A. mailings (not M.E.B.A. Plans) at your current mailing address, your information may not be on file with Headquarters and you should update us immediately.

Besides the Member PUP, you can also update your contact information using the address change form available on the M.E.B.A. website found at www.mebaunion.org under the "Members" tab or in the "Documents & Member Notices" section. Alternatively, you can send your updated information to Renee Bowman at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org. The Headquarters and Plans Office databases are not shared, so your address information housed by Plans is not necessarily part of the Headquarters database.

WSF ENGINEERS, OILERS VOICE FRUSTRATION WITH PAY DISPARITIES

M.E.B.A. Marine Engineers and Oilers working for Washington State Ferries are voicing their frustration that the system's two-tiered wage system undervalues their positions and, along with other bad management decisions, has directly led to staffing shortages and service disruptions that has diminished the fleet.

Negotiations are currently underway to secure better wages for ferry staff, which fall short compared to the private sector. An editorial in the *Seattle Times* penned by M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha noted that private sector Chief Engineers can earn up to \$300,000 for half the year's work, while their counterparts at Washington State Ferries earn less than half that amount for full-year employment. Oilers, in turn, earn less than terminal ticket-takers. With retirements depleting the workforce and the extensive training required to become an engineer, the ferry system is relying heavily on overtime, leading to burnout among staff. "Crew members are often working back-to-back shifts and sometimes even sleeping in their cars," an M.E.B.A. spokesperson explained.

M.E.B.A. officials and mariners addressed the public at the Seattle Ferry Terminal during a Wednesday press conference to shed light on the factors behind ferry cancellations while proposing solutions to improve service reliability for communities that rely on the ferries for work, healthcare, and education. The Union noted that state management decisions are exacerbating crew burnout, hindering the recruitment and retention of skilled staff, and leading to significant maintenance backlogs.

The M.E.B.A. continues negotiations with the WSF and has launched a public petition asking Washington Governor Jay Inslee to direct the state to provide competitive pay to retain and recruit engine room crew, key to restoring safe and reliable ferry service.

Secretary-Treasurer Rexha said, “The lack of highly trained, essential engine room crew to run ferries each day is the number one reason for canceled ferry sailings, and low pay is the number one reason why the ferries are short staffed. Engine room crew aren’t as visible to the public as deck crew, but ferries can’t run, get needed maintenance or repairs without them. Other ferry systems around the country that have invested in competitive wages have seen their engine room workforce shortage disappear and been able to restore reliable, on-time, service to passengers. Unless Governor Inslee and the state agencies responsible for Washington State Ferries step up and make the investment in wages needed to retain and recruit essential crew members, the Washington Ferry System will slide further into failure.”

Long wait times, delays, and cancellations have become all too common at the WSF. Despite ridership rebounding to pre-pandemic levels, the nation’s largest passenger ferry service is grappling with an insufficient fleet and staffing shortages, particularly in the engine rooms where the crucial work is often unseen by passengers. Adding to the strain is the aging fleet. With a need for 26 vessels, the service only has 21, and just 15 are in operation. Although the state is investing in electric ferries, it could take up to a decade to realize a fully modern fleet. Last year saw over 3,500 canceled sailings, and passengers’ frustrations are often misdirected at deckhands, who are not at fault.

M/V YAKIMA Chief Engineer Cameron Ruth noted, “WSF management fails to see the value of fairly paying the staff that keep the boats running, on average paying engineers 19% less than equivalent positions on deck and in the wheelhouse. Because of the lower wages, it has been much harder to attract and retain marine engineers with the necessary education and experience in the field to run the boats efficiently. The state needs to invest not only in new boats and captains, but also in its forgotten engineers that silently keep vessels running day in and day out.”

M/V TACOMA Oiler Brandon Powell said, “You can’t just hire anyone to do these jobs. Even entry level oilers require years of training and sea time to become licensed credentialed engine room crew...It’s getting harder and harder to make ends meet and justify staying in this job when management doesn’t treat us equitably. Consistently relying upon overtime to keep the ferry system operational is an extremely dangerous management strategy.”

M/V SPOKANE Oiler Nick Twietmeyer added, Ferry riders have a right to expect reliable ferry service, but that’s impossible when management doesn’t prioritize the workers who are responsible for ensuring ferries are well maintained and adequately staffed. It’s shameful that Washington has gone from one of the best paying ferry systems in the country to one of the worst.”

SIU'S TELLEZ AMONG NEXT SLATE OF AOTOS HONOREES

Three new recipients of the Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) statuette were announced this week by the United Seamen's Service, including Seafarers International Union (SIU) Executive V.P. Augie Tellez. The AOTOS awards are essentially lifetime achievement honors for towering maritime industry figures. The United Seamen's Service (USS) sponsors the event which will take place in New York City on October 25, 2024. Besides Tellez, the honors will be presented to TOTE Group President/CEO Tim Nolan and Fairwater CEO Daniel J. Thorogood.

The USS press release noted that Augie, "has dedicated his entire career to ensuring the well-being of SIU members and to the preservation and growth of the U.S.-flag maritime industry. His collaborative approach was critical during the height of the pandemic when all segments of the American maritime community worked together during unprecedented circumstances. He remains a valuable, insightful liaison with SIU's colleagues within government, the armed forces, management and other maritime labor unions." Congratulations!

This will be the 55th presentation of the prestigious AOTOS Awards and will take place at the Sheraton New York Times Square Hotel. The three men will be presented with the traditional silver statuette of Christopher Columbus – the first Admiral of the Ocean Sea. The recipients will share the evening with a group of American seafarers who will be honored for acts of bravery at sea. Last year, M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac was honored with the AOTOS along with the presidents of our contracted companies Interlake (Mark Barker) and Pasha (George Pasha IV).

A Special AOTOS Recognition Plaque will be presented to ILWU Local 142 and Hawaii Longshore Division for their response to Maui being hit by a catastrophic wildfire that spread throughout the Community of Lahaina in August 2023. The ILWU workers responded with life-saving supplies and humanitarian support that helped save lives and restore hope and dignity to the stricken population.

REPORT SAYS HYDROGEN DEMAND WILL REQUIRE OVER 400 NEW HYDROGEN SHIPS

A new International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) report says that the increased demand for clean hydrogen to meet decarbonization targets will require over 400 new hydrogen vessels by mid-century. The report titled "Turning Hydrogen Demand into Reality: Which Sectors Come First?" says that the scale of renewable electricity demand for green hydrogen production is unprecedented and will lead to once-in-a-generation opportunities and challenges.

The report highlights that to meet just 30 million tons of annual global green hydrogen demand, the world would require up to 411 new hydrogen vessels and the equivalent of the yearly electricity production of South and Central America combined. The report seeks to better assess the future supply and demand dynamics of the new zero emission fuels that industrial sectors, including shipping, will use in the coming decades.

Guy Platten, ICS Secretary General said, "For global hydrogen demand to keep the net-zero by 2050 scenario within reach, demand for hydrogen-based fuel sources would need to scale five times from current levels to reach approximately 500 million tons from 2030 to 2050. One of the main takeaways in this report is the high variability in potential demand. Industry will dominate the hydrogen demand. Shipping however can play a key role as an enabler to the hydrogen economy."

RADM CARY TO LEAD NOAA OMAO

The M.E.B.A. was pleased to learn that the U.S. Senate confirmed NOAA Rear Adm. Chad Cary to head up NOAA's Commissioned Officer Corps and the agency's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO).

The Union has had a great working relationship with Admiral Cary through the years in his capacity as OMAO Deputy Director. Cary will oversee NOAA's fleet of 15 research and survey ships and 10 specialized aircraft, including the agency's "hurricane hunters," all of which are operated by a combination of NOAA Corps officers and civilians.

M.E.B.A. represents engine officers aboard the 15 NOAA research vessels that conduct a variety of scientific missions. The NOAA fleet collects data critical for nautical charts, fishery quotas, exploration of the nation's 4.3-million-square-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, storm surge modeling and climate research.

UNIONS POWER AMERICA SWEEPSTAKES RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 21

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 21 and members are vying for \$90,000 in cash prizes including a Grand Prize of \$50,000 and a four-night stay at Casa de Campo Resort & Villas in the Dominican Republic. Two First Prize winners will receive \$5,000 each and 30 people will receive \$1,000 each. Winners will be announced on Labor Day, September 2nd in which there will be additional live event prizes handed out. You can enter at unionplus.org/laborday

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.

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

Friday, August 9 – **Honolulu@1100**

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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