

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*



## **M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**

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### **APL AGREEMENTS RATIFIED**

At the regular December meetings held at Union halls last week, the membership ratified a pair of six-year agreements recently negotiated with American President Lines covering Licensed Engineering Officers (Deep-Sea) as well as Port Engineers. Copies of the MOUs as well as Salient Points are available at each of the M.E.B.A. halls.

M.E.B.A. thanks our membership which stayed united throughout the ups and downs of the negotiating process as well as the solidarity offered by other unions including support received from the Maritime Labor Alliance. In addition, member participation and input was invaluable during bargaining with the company.

Executive V.P. Adam Vokac led negotiations with APL joined by L.A. Branch Agent Rich Doherty and Oakland Patrolman Maxim Alper. Rank and file members involved in talks included Chief Engineers Torey Zingales and Fred Cuzner, 1<sup>st</sup> A/E Trevor Lapham and Rotary Engineers Lamont Randel, Connor White, Kurt Landwehr and Christian Yuhas. Retiree Duncan Ballenger participated in an early round of talks.

### **SECRETARY-TREASURERS' WINTER CONFERENCE AT AFL-CIO**

Dozens of Union Secretary-Treasurers flocked to the AFL-CIO on Tuesday for their Winter Conference at the Federation. These twice-annual Secretary-Treasurer meetings are a great networking opportunity that allow top officials to coordinate on various initiatives and strategies and foster improved solidarity between union brothers and sisters. In particular, attendees worked on setting labor issues and priorities for the upcoming Congress.

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo was in his element at the conference promoting issues of importance to us. AFL-CIO's agenda for the 116th Congress features several prominent items of interest to the M.E.B.A. including a push to strengthen the Jones Act and cargo preference laws, continued support for the Maritime Security Program and promoting legislation benefiting U.S. shipping such as next year's version of Rep. Garamendi's bill requiring U.S.-flag ships for energy exports.

Van Loo implores officials, members and others who support labor and U.S.-flag shipping to attend and participate in your local AFL-CIO and other labor coalition meetings. “Be vocal about our issues!” he urged.

### **IF YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOT CURRENT BY MONDAY, YOUR SHIPPING RULE VOTE WON’T COUNT**

Members only have until Monday to make sure their dues are current so their vote will count in the District-wide Online Shipping Rule Referendum. Members have until midnight on December 17<sup>th</sup> to be make sure their dues are paid for the year in order to be eligible to participate. As the M.E.B.A. By-Laws state, “No member's ballot shall be counted unless he is in good standing as of 15 days immediately preceding the closing of the balloting.” The online referendum runs between December 1 and midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>.

This is a one-question referendum on a possible change to the Shipping Rules to permit new Group III applicants to remain on the Port Relief List for one year from the date of their first registration. The Rule change is designed to extend the window for new applicants to seek viable shipping opportunities as they begin their seafaring careers.

A letter about the referendum explaining how to gain access was sent to all members at their address on file at Headquarters. In addition, an email was sent to all members who have a valid email address on file with Headquarters.

A rank and file Tallying Committee will be elected at the January meetings to verify eligibility of voters and ensure the integrity of the process. Voting results will then become official.

### **FARM BILL MORE LIKELY TO DECREASE FOOD AID CARGOES**

The recently passed 2018 Farm Bill, awaiting signature on the President’s desk, is generally not good news for the U.S. Merchant Marine as Congress chose to increase opportunities for the federal government to choose cash over U.S. commodities.

The five-year package includes the authorization for food aid programs including Food for Peace, Food for Progress and McGovern-Dole Food for Education – three programs that have helped provide cargoes for U.S.-flag ships.

Food for Peace helps feed developing nations while providing critical support to U.S. shipping and American farmers. Food for Progress helps provide U.S. agricultural commodities for emerging democracies. McGovern-Dole provides donations of U.S. agricultural products and financial and technical assistance for school nutritional programs in the developing world.

Though overall Food Aid funding levels are largely unaffected, the bill potentially diminishes the amount of food aid cargo carried by the U.S. Merchant Marine by increasing the ability of the federal government to use funds for direct cash assistance as well as storage and recipient-country transportation costs -- thus decreasing the overall amount of funding available to purchase commodities from U.S. farmers.

The President is expected to sign the bill into law in the next few days.

## **ITF DOESN'T TAKE KINDLY TO PANAMA CANAL'S REBUKE OF REPORT HIGHLIGHTING MARINER FATIGUE**

The International Transport Workers' Federation was "astonished and disappointed" with the Panama Canal Authority's (ACP) negative reaction to a recently-released independent report that found that Canal tugboat worker fatigue poses a major threat to safety in the operation of the Canal's Neopanamax locks.

The ITF has made sure that ACP's continued de-emphasis of safety conditions on the Canal does not go unnoticed. ACP has reduced tug manning to dangerous levels and stepped up overtime requirements exacerbating the fatigue factor. Some tug captains are forced to work more than 16 hours a day. Numerous times, the ITF has offered to facilitate an open and transparent dialogue between the representatives of the ACP and Union de Capitanes y Oficiales de Cubierta (UCOC), the union that represent the tugboat captains in the Canal operations. The offers are repeatedly rebuffed.

ITF was dismayed by ACP's recent comments to the media that diverted heavily from the truth, flew in the face of the report's findings and painted an ignorant alternate reality of Canal operations that was more suitable for Fantasy Land.

In a statement, ITF said that it is calling on the ACP "to cease its detrimental and damaging behavior and enter into a serious, constructive dialogue with the professionals that work in and for the Canal..." The ITF fully supports the Canal, they said, "but a successful Canal cannot be built on unsafe conditions that put human lives and the environment at risk. The ITF reiterates our strong commitment to constructive cooperation with the ACP and hope that ACP will accept our invitation to have an open, honest and transparent dialogue with UCOC."

## **COAST GUARD CALLS FOR MERPAC APPLICANTS**

The U.S. Coast Guard is seeking applications for membership on the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee. MERPAC advises the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security on matters relating to U.S. mariners including training, qualifications, certification, documentation, and fitness standards and other matters. Completed applications should be submitted to the Coast Guard on or before February 4, 2019. Further info can be sought at [davis.j.breyer@uscg.mil](mailto:davis.j.breyer@uscg.mil)

Each committee member serves a term of office of up to three years. Four positions are opening up on June 1 of next year and the following applicants are being sought: 1) Someone with a Chief Engineer's license or a designated duty engineer; 2) Someone with a current merchant mariner credential with an engineering rating endorsement; 3) A representative of shipping companies employed in ship operation management; and 4) A representative of the state maritime academies.

## **NYC DEVELOPER LOOKS TO REPURPOSE SS UNITED STATES**

The classic luxury liner SS UNITED STATES could be repurposed into a floating hotel if a newly-struck arrangement is followed through to fruition. The SS UNITED STATES Conservancy just announced that it entered into an agreement with prominent commercial real estate development firm RXR Realty, which will begin to explore options for the the great ship's revitalization.

The Conservancy has sought a new life for the "Big 'U'" since 2009. The vessel has been rusting away for decades at Pier 82 on the Delaware River in Philadelphia.

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 scrapyard 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.

Among others, the liner transported four U.S. presidents (Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Clinton), numerous foreign heads of state, multiple business, military, and diplomatic leaders, Hollywood celebrities, and *Telex Times* Editor Marco Cannistraro. It also carried thousands of immigrants to the United States.

RXR Realty is a commercial real estate developer that currently manages 69 commercial real estate properties and investments with an aggregate gross asset value of approximately \$18.1 billion. RXR and the Conservancy issued the following statement:

"The SS UNITED STATES is one of America's great vessels and an icon of American engineering and design. Given our history of repurposing and updating some of this country's most historic structures, we are now working with the SS United States Conservancy to explore what options might exist for the ship, going forward. We are currently at the very beginning of this process – a process that will require substantial work on all sides. At the end of this period, we will have a better sense as to whether we have a viable plan and, if so, the specifics of that plan and in which waterfront community it might be actualized."

#### **ANOTHER SIX WEEKS OR SO TO APPLY FOR UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS**

M.E.B.A. families have until January 31, 2019 to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. M.E.B.A. members, retirees and their families - as well as members of affiliated M.E.B.A. unions - are eligible courtesy of the Union's enrollment in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to financing children's educations.

Families of M.E.B.A. members or affiliated members have been scholarship money recipients several times in the last few years. Union Plus Scholarship are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor.

Applications can be submitted up until Thursday, January 31, 2019, at noon (EST). Those arriving after the deadline will not be considered. The award date is May 31, 2019. During the first week of June 2019, award recipients will be notified by postal mail, and all applicants will be sent email notification.

A GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended. The required essays can account for up to half your total score. Scholarship applicants are judged by a committee of impartial post-secondary educators.

Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2019. Students may re-apply each year. Visit [www.unionplus.org/benefits/money/union-plus-scholarships](http://www.unionplus.org/benefits/money/union-plus-scholarships) to get all the details including eligibility criteria and to secure the official application.

Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$4.3 million to students of union families. Over 2,900 union families have benefited from our commitment to higher education.

## **M.E.B.A. HOLIDAY PARTIES**

M.E.B.A. HQ and POID are wrapping up their holiday parties just about now. Here are the rest of the M.E.B.A. parties remaining on the docket. Each of them will take place at the M.E.B.A. hall or office unless otherwise noted:

**Baltimore Union** - December 14<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm.

**Houston Union Hall** - Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> after job call around 1 pm.

**Cleveland Union Hall** - Cookie tray!

**Seattle Union Hall** - Friday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 12 p.m.

**Honolulu Union Hall** - Tuesday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m.

**New Orleans Union Hall** - Thursday, December 20 at 1 pm.

## **VACATION BENEFITS - 2018 YEAR-END CLOSING**

*Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.*

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2018 in the Outports and the Plan Office is Monday, December 17, 2018.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2018 will be made on 12/18/2018 and the funds will be deposited into your bank account on 12/20/2018.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/17/18 at 5:00 PM will be paid on 1/2/2019.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2018 must file before this deadline. Remember, Tuesday December 25, 2018 and Tuesday January 1, 2019 are holidays and the Outports and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify your specific Outport holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

*Split Your Vacation Payments between 2018 and 2019* - You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2018 and a second in 2019. The 12/17/2018 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner **MUST** be a continuous vacation period. Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111 if you have any questions.

## **REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, January 7 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, January 8 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, January 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

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

Friday, January 11 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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