

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



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

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

*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*  
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### **MORE NEW WORK! M.E.B.A. SIGNS UP IMPULSE CONSULTING**

M.E.B.A. has signed up yet another shoreside company with up-and-coming ship services employer Impulse Consulting, LLC. The company focuses on maritime inventory management consulting including cycle counts, inventory audits, and database clean-up.

M.E.B.A.'s Executive V.P. Claudia Cimini brokered the contract with Impulse with full M.E.B.A. Pension, Medical and Training benefits, as well as MPB & 401k. The Memorandum of Understanding runs through August 31, 2027.

The Union is providing senior level licensed marine engineers for service with Impulse-directed projects on an as-needed basis. The MOU went into effect earlier this month, and already, highly skilled engineers are working for the company under M.E.B.A. contract on a project for Chevron Shipping performing vessel inventory.

These positions pay industry standard wages for 8-hour workdays (OT possible) with no minimum number of days working on projects either in port or riding the vessel.

Chief Engineer James Dyer, a 31-year member whose wife also sails with the Union, owns the Oregon-based company and is well aware of the value that our engineers bring to the table.

Those interested in future positions should contact EVP Cimini at M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in Oakland and forward their résumé to [ccimini@mebaunion.org](mailto:ccimini@mebaunion.org).

This new work is part of continuing efforts to secure a diverse array of job opportunities both at sea and ashore for our highly-skilled membership.

### **M.E.B.A. PUSHES BACK AFTER CALL TO FEED FOREIGN SEAFARERS INTO U.S. MERCHANT MARINE**

Overseas Shipholding Group CEO Sam Norton sparked a firestorm this week after comments delivered to *TradeWinds* indicated his willingness to address mariner shortages on U.S.-flag vessels by employing foreign nationals in those positions. In the article "OSG's Sam Norton Seeks to Solve the

U.S.-flag Crewing Crisis by Looking Overseas,” Norton notes that “young people don’t want to work in the American business....There’s a wave of retirements coming, and there’s not a lot of new talent coming in. This is a common theme in the industry. New ideas need to be considered.” One idea, he endorses, is “sponsoring people to come to the U.S. on visas with a pathway to citizenship.” He stated, “I want to be very clear that I’m not talking about just replacing US seafarers with foreign seafarers. There would be visas that provide a green card from the day you land, with a process to earn US citizenship.”

In a swift response to Norton’s comments, M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac rejected the notion of filling American mariner jobs with foreigners and offered an alternative suggestion: Make the jobs more attractive to American mariners by paying them what they’re worth. “Instead of looking to circumvent the employment of American labor,” President Vokac asserted, “Mr. Norton would be better served using his time more wisely making his company a desirable place to work by improving the wages, retirement, and quality of life for the mariners that make his company profitable.”

He said, “It is ironic that Mr. Norton, whose company receives tens of millions of American taxpayer dollars annually to ship cargo for the United States military, wants to benefit from government support while simultaneously exploiting cheap, foreign labor and further degrading our nation’s fourth arm of defense.”

The fire was further stoked after an editorial appearing in the trade publication *gCaptain* detailed Norton’s comments but called for a multi-faceted approach to address shortages including measures to counteract wage stagnation in the industry. The editorial penned by John Konrad, accessed [here](#), warns that pursuing the “immigration” path as a solution is tantamount to hitting the “easy button” instead of prioritizing “the welfare and advancement of its mariners.” He said, “Ensuring fair and competitive compensation is not just a matter of equity; it is a strategic necessity that will determine the future resilience and efficacy of the U.S. Merchant Marine.”

The OSG CEO attempted to clarify his comments in a series of LinkedIn posts, insisting that the immigration proposal is not a ruse “to use foreign labor to depress wage and benefits or to supplant the existing workforce.” However he refused to support the assertion that wage stagnation in these inflationary times is a core cause in keeping young Americans from joining the industry.

Vokac called for reinvestment in our domestic maritime workforce by making U.S.-flag shipping more attractive for American workers. He said, “Mr. Norton’s ambitions would only suppress industry wages and the quality of work while driving away any hope of recruiting and retaining aspiring cadets and seamen who want to pursue a lifelong, prosperous career in shipping.”

### **M.E.B.A. PART OF ITF DOCKERS & SEAFARERS CONFERENCE**

M.E.B.A. representatives discussed issues important to our industry at the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) Dockers’ and Seafarers’ Conference that took place in Santiago, Chile last week. Our Union is a member organization of the ITF, a global union federation fighting for the rights, equality and justice of 18 million working men and women in the transport sector around the world.

This conference was the largest meeting of maritime worker representatives with approximately 300 delegates, from 129 unions in 70 countries coming together to share industrial campaigns, identify common issues, and agree on priorities going forward.

M.E.B.A. was represented by Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha, Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith - who was newly made a Delegate to the ITF Seafarers Section - and Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan.

Some of the topics roundly discussed included the ongoing global maritime shortage, alternative fuels to meet climate goals, flag-of-convenience shipping and strengthening cabotage laws including the Jones Act. In addition, attendees discussed the safeguarding of maritime workers' rights against artificial intelligence and automation as well as strengthening collective rights for seafarers, including cadets, trainees and apprentices.

ITF Seafarers Section Chair Dave Heindel noted that, "Whether we're talking about local seafarers' jobs in Chile, fighting for fundamental labor rights or responding to the deepening climate crisis, we know that the voice of organized labor is key to transforming our world."

### **SPACE AVAILABLE FOR CMES ADVANCED PIPE WELDING COURSE**

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School announced that there are still spots available for the upcoming Advanced Pipe Welding Practices class taking place from February 5-16, 2024. This two-week course is for those who have already completed the four-week basic welding course and want to improve their level of skill in welding and fabrication.

Applications should be submitted as normal and should be sent via the CMES website ([www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org)), faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to [applications@mebaschool.org](mailto:applications@mebaschool.org)

### **COAST GUARD NVDC CONTACT INFO**

As a reminder to members, we republish the contact information for the Coast Guard's National Vessel Documentation Center:

#### **NVDC Address**

USCG/National Vessel Documentation Center  
792 T J Jackson Drive  
Falling Waters, WV 25419

#### **Phone Numbers**

Toll Free: (800) 799-8362

Main: (304) 271-2400

Phone Hours: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday)

Phones are not manned on Thursdays

*All Times are Eastern Time (Standard or Daylight Savings, when applicable)*

#### **NVDC Email Addresses**

Submit general questions/inquiries to [NVDC.W.WEBMASTER@USCG.MIL](mailto:NVDC.W.WEBMASTER@USCG.MIL)

Submit applications for renewals and/or address changes to [NVDCRENEWALS2@USCG.MIL](mailto:NVDCRENEWALS2@USCG.MIL)

Submit all other applications to [NVDC.PDF.FILING@USCG.MIL](mailto:NVDC.PDF.FILING@USCG.MIL)

## VACATION BENEFITS – 2023 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 2023 in the Outports *and* the Plan Office is Monday, December 18, 2023.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2023 will be made on 12/19/2023 and the funds will be deposited into bank accounts on 12/21/2023.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/18/23 at 12:00 PM EST will be paid in the order received beginning 1/2/2024.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2023 must file before this deadline. Remember, Monday, December 25, 2023 and Monday, January 1, 2024 are holidays and the Outports and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify the specific holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

### *Split Your Vacation Payments between 2023 and 2024*

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 2023 and a second in 2024. The 12/18/2023 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.

## MICROSOFT TO “STAY NEUTRAL” ON UNIONIZATION EFFORTS

The AFL-CIO and Microsoft Corp. announced the formation of a new partnership to create an open dialogue to discuss how artificial intelligence (AI) must anticipate the needs of workers and include their voices in its development and implementation. The partnership is the first of its kind between a labor organization and a technology company to focus on AI and with the aim to deliver on three goals: (1) sharing in-depth information with labor leaders and workers on AI technology trends, (2) incorporating worker perspectives and expertise in the development of AI technology, and (3) helping shape public policy that supports the technology skills and needs of frontline workers.

Building upon the neutrality agreement, the Communications Workers of America negotiated with Microsoft covering video game workers at Activision and ZeniMax, as well as the labor principles announced by Microsoft in June 2022, the partnership also includes an agreement with Microsoft that provides a neutrality framework for worker organizing by AFL-CIO affiliate unions. This framework confirms a joint commitment to respect the right of employees to form or join unions, to develop positive and cooperative labor-management relationships, and to negotiate collective bargaining agreements that will support workers in an era of rapid technological change.

## LAST ROUND OF M.E.B.A. HOLIDAY PARTIES

Sadly, there are only a few M.E.B.A. holiday parties left, though you have the authority to celebrate the season on your own accord, at any (non-work) hour. Here are the remaining M.E.B.A.-sanctioned celebrations:

### Friday December 15

- **M.E.B.A. Jacksonville** parties at Pat's Lounge from 2-5 p.m. (4870 Hwy Avenue)

### Tuesday, December 19

- The **M.E.B.A. Honolulu** hall parties at 10 a.m. at the hall.
- **M.E.B.A. Houston** parties from 3-6 at the Karbach Brewery (2032 Karbach Street).

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

Monday, January 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, January 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, January 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, January 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, January 12 – **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.***

*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](mailto: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](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*