

# 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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### **M.E.B.A. CLOSES ON WINTER WORK AGREEMENT WITH INTERLAKE**

The Union signed an agreement this week with Interlake Steamship Co. to cover M.E.B.A. members who work aboard company vessels during the Great Lakes season's winter layup. Such winter work had not previously been part of the Union's collective bargaining agreement with the company. M.E.B.A. members and applicants utilized by the company in that capacity in the past did not receive contract wages or covered employment.

Beginning with the approaching lay-up season (expected in January), the new agreement secures improved wages, pension benefits for members performing winter work as well as pension and medical paid on earned vacation days.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac worked with the company on the new agreement along with Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan with contributions made by Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway. The agreement will be made available at the monthly membership meetings next week.

### **PAY POLICY FOR VACCINATED INTERLAKE MARINERS**

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac is pleased to announce that the Union has signed off on a new pay policy to compensate fully vaccinated M.E.B.A. members sailing for Interlake Steamship Co.

The policy doesn't mandate vaccinations but provides a generous payment for those who are or get inoculated against COVID-19 and sets up a system where an additional one-time payment is authorized for members if at least 85% of the fleet is certified to be fully vaccinated. The M.E.B.A. fully endorses this proactive and fair approach to motivate mariners to get inoculated, and we sincerely appreciate Interlake's leadership on this.

Eligibility requirements and additional details regarding the pay policy are included in a document that will be sent to the Union halls and made available as part of next week's monthly membership meeting packet.

## **CHIMACUM CREW RESCUES PASSENGER WHO WENT OVERBOARD**

The crew of the Olympic-class Washington State Ferry CHIMACUM was involved in the rescue of a passenger who went overboard while the vessel was on its regular run from Bremerton to Seattle on Thanksgiving Day. It was not clear how the woman ended up in the drink, but the “Man Overboard” call was soon sounded after the passenger was spotted bobbing near Duwamish Head near West Seattle and the crew wheeled into action. CHIMACUM Captain Tom Tilton, who was serving out his last day before retirement, got some unexpected excitement but handled it with his typical veteran poise. The vessel reversed course and a crewmember heaved a life ring toward the stricken woman as the inflatable rescue boat was readied to come to her assistance. Mariners on the vessel are represented by M.E.B.A., MM&P and IBU.

Once the rescue boat reached her, the CHIMACUM crew hauled her aboard and returned her to the ferry where she received medical attention. An ambulance was waiting at the terminal when the ferry pulled into Colman Dock and reports indicate that the woman was in stable condition. Capt. Tilton credited the crew for their “textbook” response and said “everything went right.” He noted that he has only been involved in a handful of such incidents during his 25 year career sailing with the WSF. The ferry system said, “We are so thankful for Capt. Tilton and crew for their efforts and all our vessel employees for training and practicing regularly for emergencies!”

## **M.E.B.A.-CREWED MSC SHIP RESCUES STRUGGLING IRANIAN FISHERMEN**

An M.E.B.A.-crewed Military Sealift Command vessel rescued two Iranian fishermen last weekend after their boat went adrift for eight days in the Gulf of Oman. The International Maritime Coalition and the Combined Maritime Forces relayed a distress call, received from the Iranian fishermen, to the MSC dry cargo ammunition ship USNS CHARLES DREW. The DREW crew was in the area and immediately responded and raced to the scene where they were able to locate the fishermen within six hours of the distress call. From there, the crew was able to bring the two men aboard and provide them with food, water and medical care. The uninjured men were later transported to an Omani coast guard vessel near Muscat, Oman.

“This is what we are trained and ready to do,” said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. “As professional mariners, we have a responsibility to help people in need at sea. We appreciate the government of Oman for its assistance and support in helping us return the mariners home,” he noted.

## **GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO STAY INVOLVED – SIGN UP FOR WEDNESDAY’S ONLINE HQ MEETING**

You should send an email to [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org) to announce your intentions to attend the upcoming online informational meeting held by M.E.B.A. Headquarters. The meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 8 at 1300 eastern time. This is not an actual membership meeting but it presents a terrific opportunity for Members, Applicants and Retirees to discuss M.E.B.A. business, exchange information and learn more about the latest Union initiatives. Attendees need to register in advance for this meeting by sending an email to [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org) You should provide your full name and proof of good standing - such as your last dues receipt/service charge number or statement that you are enrolled in Dues Check-Off (DCO) with a particular bargaining unit. Retirees should provide their full name and indicate their status. Upon confirmation, the Zoom access link will be emailed to you shortly before the meeting.

## **KP STUDY FINDS UNRESOLVED “SYSTEMIC ISSUES”; “DOING NOTHING” THREATENS ACADEMY’S FUTURE**

A new report issued by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has found that the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy faces “longstanding systemic issues” across almost all areas of its operations, including educational programs, facilities maintenance and capital management, sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH) prevention and response, diversity, inclusion, and internal and external governance. The study, authorized by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, found that the Academy’s shortcomings in these and other areas puts “the safety and health of the midshipmen and the entire USMMA community in peril.”

The assessment further warns that, “Because of the magnitude and fundamental nature of the challenges USMMA faces, the greatest risk to USMMA’s future is doing nothing to significantly address its challenges and the causes of those challenges.” NAPA’s report also makes clear that these challenges have worsened over many years and that under-resourcing—particularly unmet personnel needs—makes many of these challenges more difficult to resolve. The report noted, “The charge to address these changes is significant and will require meaningful leadership attention, strategic prioritization, and substantial resource commitments.”

Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley accepted the results of the report and said, “We acknowledge, and have been working to address, the many urgent issues raised by NAPA’s report and to put USMMA on a path to modernization.”

## **ORGANIZING ELECTION RERUN ORDERED FOR ALABAMA AMAZON WORKERS**

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) found that Amazon improperly influenced an organizing campaign at one of its facilities earlier this year and must rerun the election. In August, an NLRB review of the failed labor election at an Amazon fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama confirmed that the company used union-busting techniques during the vote which was open to about 6,000 Amazon workers.

The report substantiated claims made by the union looking to represent the workers, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), that the company employed tactics to intimidate employees into overwhelmingly rejecting the organizing bid. Throughout the years, Amazon has remained non-union at all its plants despite subjecting employees to grueling work conditions and low pay. This week, the NLRB Regional Director ordered a rerun of the election, though the company is expected to appeal. An Amazon spokesperson noted, “It’s disappointing that the NLRB has now decided that those votes shouldn’t count. As a company, we don’t think unions are the best answer for our employees.”

RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum said, “Today’s decision confirms what we were saying all along – that Amazon’s intimidation and interference prevented workers from having a fair say in whether they wanted a union in their workplace – and as the Regional Director has indicated, that is both unacceptable and illegal. Amazon workers deserve to have a voice at work, which can only come from a union.”

## **UNIONS TELL EMPLOYERS TO BATTLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A new report calls on transport employers to do more to tackle domestic violence amongst its predominantly male staff. The report, produced by the International Transport Workers’ Federation

and the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, details how workplaces are at greater risk of accidents, injuries and fatalities when men engage in domestic violence at work. “In order to eliminate domestic violence, we must shift the focus. Our society focuses on the impacts of domestic violence on women, as if this is solely a women’s issue,” said ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton. “But this is fundamentally flawed. Domestic violence is predominantly perpetrated by men, and if we’re serious about tackling domestic violence we must shift the focus to men changing their behavior, and the negative impact of their abuse particularly in workplaces.”

“From the workplace perspective, this report shows the detrimental impact that domestic violence perpetration has on the workplace from increased risk of accidents, injuries, and fatalities to reduced productivity. This puts responsibility on employers to take action and lead the way by developing and supporting policies and procedures that create safer workplaces, and critically engage men in conversation about domestic violence prevention and intervention,” said Cotton. ITF noted that too often, domestic violence is dismissed as a private matter, but we can now show conclusively that employers have significant liability - as well as a serious moral responsibility - to do more to end domestic violence amongst their workforce. “Attracting and retaining women is a challenge in the transport industry,” said Diana Holland, ITF Women Transport Workers’ Committee Chair. “Transport is vital to women’s lives yet remains a male-dominated industry where women are grossly underrepresented and too often the victims of violence and harassment.”

### **CREW CHANGE CRISIS EASES A LITTLE, CHALLENGES REMAIN**

The monthly Neptune Declaration Indicator has found that the crew change crisis has eased somewhat as vaccination rates among seafarers go up - but uncertainties remain as new variants are discovered. The latest Indicator showed that the number of seafarers remaining onboard ship beyond their assignments has decreased to 4.7% from 7.1% in the last month, and the number of seafarers onboard vessels for over 11 months has also decreased to 0.7% from 1.0%. These are the lowest numbers since the monthly reports began being issued in May. The Neptune Indicator also reports another positive trend, with an 8.5 percentage point increase in seafarer vaccines, from 41% in November to 49.5% in December as seafarers are increasingly gaining access to vaccines.

However, vaccine hesitancy is still reported and supply challenges persist in certain geographies. Seafarer travel still remains challenging as there are issues with international travel vaccine recognition and approval. This has even led some seafarers to take repeated vaccinations, at an unknown health risk. Finally, access to booster vaccines is likely to become a new challenge in the coming months. Ship managers still reported in December that crew-changes remain challenged by flight cancellations, strict regional crew-change requirements and travel bans. The data for this month’s indicator was collected before the rise of the new Omicron variant, which could lead to new complications as governments strengthen travel restrictions and other corona measures.

### **THE LOWDOWN ON THE THROWDOWNS: UPCOMING M.E.B.A. HOLIDAY PARTIES**

"The Beastie Boys said, “You gotta fight for your right to party!” We’ve done the legwork for you already - now all you have to do is show up! Work be damned, it’s time to bust loose and make merry – M.E.B.A.-style. Here’s your key to enjoying the M.E.B.A.-sanctioned festivities:

Members at the **Boston** hall get funky first with an onslaught of merrymaking immediately after the membership meeting on Monday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.

On Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 3 pm in **Charleston**, members will gather for the real business of the day at the Dig In The Park at 1049 E Montague Avenue. The good times roll in the Big Easy that same day. After the New Orleans hall membership meeting on Wednesday, December 8, the party portion of the program prevails and members can begin filling their faces with food.

Three of the four membership meetings on Thursday, December 9, go full force on a free-form fiesta of fun. After the meeting in **Norfolk**, the party pace gets frenetic and the holiday hoopla goes into hyperdrive. Party-goers at the **New York/New Jersey** hall will wait for the final gavel of the meeting before they raise the roof and “get their groove on.” Down in **Tampa** that same day, the hot and heavy holiday hullabaloo will be historic with plenty of hootin’ and hollerin’. M.E.B.A. Tampa will have their party at Gaspar's Grotto from 2 to 5 p.m. at 1805 E 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There’s no sanctioned revelry at the Cleveland hall - though Cheryl will keep the cookie tray loaded up with goodies. So stop by and get your paws on some sweet treats.

On Friday, December 10, M.E.B.A. Jacksonville and Oakland will be whooping it up with raging revelry. **Jacksonville** members, applicants, retirees, friends and families will converge at Pat’s Lounge from 2 - 5 p.m. on 4870 Hwy Avenue. In **Oakland**, the end of the Friday job call signals the beginning of the holiday hubbub. They’ll rev it up around 12:30 and kick it into high gear until 4 pm or so.

**M.E.B.A. Headquarters** gets down to party business on Thursday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. Similar to the Beatles final concert, the big bash and life-affirming fun will take place on the rooftop. You’re all invited, but contact HQ in advance to let us know.

In **Houston**, the cork pops at 1 pm at the hall on Friday December 17 and they’ll tear down the house and turn up the power for hours.

In the Aloha State, the “Big Kahuna” of parties cuts loose on Wednesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> at the **Honolulu** hall. The muumuu-sized revelry gets going at 10 a.m. on Hawaiian time.

Drake said, "Live for today, plan for tomorrow, party tonight!" So, don't be tardy for the party, Marty! Stop on by. Catch up with old shipmates, meet new friends and raise a glass to those who can't attend. Be safe!!! And make it a joyful holiday season!

### **MARITIME CHAMPION REP. PETER DeFAZIO ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT**

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio won't seek re-election in 2022 - sad news for the U.S.-flag shipping industry which he has championed during his 18 terms in Congress.

He has been a resolute and powerful voice on behalf of the Jones Act and Maritime Security Program, cargo preference and other programs and initiatives benefiting American mariners. Rep. DeFazio's

lifetime support for the industry was recognized earlier this year by the Propeller Club which honored him with the 2021 Salute to Congress Award.

The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) issued a statement praising Congressman DeFazio for his efforts to secure investment in our transportation networks, emphasis on Buy America policies and championing worker policies.

“We commend his unwavering commitment to improving the lives and livelihoods of working people and advancing policies that will invest in U.S. aviation, maritime, rail, surface transportation, and transit. A dedicated public servant, Chairman DeFazio’s legacy as a pro-worker, pro-transportation, and pro-infrastructure lawmaker is unparalleled. We thank him for his decades of service and congratulate him on a well-earned and much-deserved retirement.”

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

**Monday, December 6** – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300.

**Tuesday, December 7** – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

**Wednesday, December 8** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online Headquarters “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – **Register now at [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

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

**Friday, December 10** – 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). Visit us on Facebook. 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.*