

# 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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### **GREG REGAN SUCCEEDS WILLIS AT TTD**

Greg Regan was unanimously elected as President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) months after the tragic death of previous President Larry Willis in a biking accident. Regan had served under Willis as Secretary-Treasurer and has been part of the TTD since 2011 when he was a legislative representative under then-President Ed Wytkind. M.E.B.A. is a founding member of the TTD which represents 32 unions in the maritime, aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, and related industries. The TTD Executive Committee, which met yesterday, also unanimously elected Shari Semelsberger as the TTD's new Secretary-Treasurer. She has been with TTD since 1999, and has overseen much of the organization's operations working as the office's administrator.

During the virtual meeting, Board attendees honored the life of Larry Willis, who over a 20-year career, helped establish TTD's policy leadership, and raised the bar for demanding and enforcing worker protections throughout our nation's transportation system. Newly installed President Greg Regan said, "Larry dedicated his life to the labor movement, working tirelessly to enhance the rights and livelihoods of those who build, operate, and maintain our transportation system...I am committed to carrying forward the work Larry started, and will fight to improve the lives of transportation workers."

Transportation union leaders also unveiled the Larry Willis Leadership Award, which will be given annually to a public servant or community leader who demonstrates commitment, dedication, and advocacy on behalf of transportation workers. "Millions of people have had their lives improved because of Larry's work. We see it today in the legislation he helped shape, the policy makers he reached, the colleagues and staff he mentored and inspired, and the working people he dedicated his life to," Semelsberger said. "The Larry Willis Leadership Award will ensure this legacy lives on by recognizing those who exemplify the work ethic, passion, and mission-driven focus that Larry brought to TTD every day." A nice, short video about the award and Larry's legacy can be viewed here: <https://ttd.org/about-ttd/larry-willis-leadership-award/>

The TTD Executive Committee also discussed priorities with special guest Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Transportation. They talked about various issues including federally mandated COVID-19 workplace protections, emergency transportation funding, and long-term infrastructure investment.

## **VISA TABLETOP EXERCISE**

Defense, government, and maritime industry representatives held a recent tabletop exercise (TTX) to stage an activation of commercial ships enrolled in the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA) in support of Department of Defense (DOD) operations during a national emergency.

There were over 80 participants in the online meeting representing DOD, the Maritime Administration, commercial sealift carriers, and maritime labor that talked through an activation of VISA ships. The agreement, which has never been activated, is an emergency resource designed to provide the department with sealift capacity necessary during a crisis or contingency. A companion to the Maritime Security Program, VISA is the mechanism by which the federal government gets assured access to MSP assets and related intermodal systems. Together the programs allow the U.S. maritime industry to provide ships and mariners for national service for joint forces logistics support.

The Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) General Stephen Lyons said, “When our Nation goes to war, so does the maritime industry. With 85 percent of military forces based in the continental United States, nearly 90 percent of our military equipment is expected to deploy via sealift in a major conflict.”

When the need for large-scale, contingency sealift develops, DOD will generally first turn to its fleet of prepositioned vessels in place around the world and then rely on organic surge capacity provided by both Military Sealift Command and MarAd. As the organic fleet is activated and mobilized, the enterprise also seeks voluntary U.S. and foreign flag commercial capacity to meet increased contingency demand. If sufficient capacity is not generated through these volunteers, VISA activation is the next option available.

Lessons learned from the exercise were shared with government and industry executives at the biannual VISA Executive Working Group (EWG) held virtually Feb. 11, 2021. “The table top exercise highlights the value of our relationship with industry and the dedication of all parties involved to provide the strategic sealift our nation would need in a contingency,” said U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Dee Mewbourne, USTRANSCOM deputy commander, who co-chaired the working group. “While we haven’t had to activate VISA, we’re in a better place should the need arise.”

## **NOMINEE TO REPLACE NLRB GENERAL COUNSEL IS A REAL UPGRADE**

The President has nominated Jennifer Abruzzo, currently an attorney for the Communications Workers of America, to be the next General Counsel at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). She previously served at the NLRB for 23 years in various capacities including Acting General Counsel.

If confirmed, she would replace Peter Robb, a management-side attorney appointed by former President Trump and later fired by President Biden. Robb helped steer the Board toward anti-worker policies and decisions.

The AFL-CIO issued a statement praising the Abruzzo nomination calling her a “lifelong protector of working people.” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, “Abruzzo will work to enforce U.S. labor laws that safeguard the rights of workers to join together to improve their wages and working conditions and protect against unfair labor practices...The days of the NLRB actively blocking

workers from organizing a union are over. We look forward to working people finally getting the fair treatment we deserve.”

### **TUESDAY IS M.E.B.A.’s 146<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

Founded February 23, 1875 on the banks of the Great Lakes, the M.E.B.A. is celebrating its 146<sup>th</sup> anniversary this coming Tuesday. The Union’s ten founding fathers met in Cleveland, Ohio on that fateful date to form a united front to combat the oppressive and dangerous working conditions of the day. The founders were representatives of three Lakes associations, a river association and an ocean port – and over the course of a few days, they hammered out a cohesive Constitution for a national organization that protected and enhanced their members’ interests. This was the beginning of the National Marine Engineers’ Association. Eight years later the word “Beneficial” was added to the name.

M.E.B.A.’s 100th Anniversary booklet “Worthy of Our Heritage” called the formation of the union “a bold venture.” “Not only was it the first group of maritime workers to organize nationally, but it was among the earliest crafts of the American wage earners to reach this stage of development. There were few precedents available for the guidance of marine engineers in that period; and in view of the depression conditions of 1874-1875, the seeming odds against its success were great.”

Early on, our M.E.B.A. forefathers battled for favorable legislation to certify and license waterborne engineers. They secured U.S. officers – both deck and engine – aboard U.S.-flagships, helped repeal controversial seafarer fees, and raised the standard of living for all mariners. Those early struggles and many others paved the way for the worker protections and benefits we often take for granted today. Let there be rejoicing. Happy birthday M.E.B.A.!

### **IMO/WISTA SURVEY LOOKS TO BOOST WOMEN, EXPAND DIVERSITY**

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA International) have launched the Women in Maritime – IMO and WISTA International Survey 2021 to examine the proportion and distribution of women working in the maritime sector, from support roles to executive level positions. The survey is part of a series of activities aimed at laying the groundwork for further discussions on how to build a more diverse workforce within the maritime sector, essential for a sustainable future. The data obtained by the survey will help build a picture of diversity and gender equality in the industry.

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim said, “Diversity in maritime matters. Empowering women fuels thriving economies across the world, spurs growth and development, and benefits everyone working in the global maritime community and beyond. We need solid data on female participation, as this will enable us to track and quantify our ambitions in what has traditionally been a male-dominated sector. I am pleased to invite all Member States and maritime stakeholders to take part in this important survey.” The survey runs until June 30 2021. For more, and to fill out the survey, visit this link: [www.research.net/r/IndustryIMOWISTA](http://www.research.net/r/IndustryIMOWISTA)

### **GREAT LAKES RELATIVELY FREE OF ICE**

With the Great Lakes shipping season at a relative standstill with vessels in their winter lay-ups, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has recorded uncharacteristically low levels of ice in the region. NOAA said that, as of January, only 2.4 percent of the entire surface of the Great Lakes was covered by ice, representing the lowest amount of ice coverage on that date in the

last 48 years. Peak ice coverage is expected to span only 30 percent of the lake surface sometime from mid-February to early March. Average peak ice coverage is around 53 percent.

Above-average temperatures across the Great Lakes during the first two months of winter helped prevent ice from forming on the lakes.

### **REP. MOOLENAR HONORED FOR GREAT LAKES LEADERSHIP**

The Great Lakes Maritime Task Force (GLMTF) honored Congressman John Moolenaar (R-MI-4) as the Great Lakes Legislator of the Year stemming from his work to benefit the Great Lakes navigation system. GLMTF is a labor/management coalition that includes the M.E.B.A.

The Task Force celebrated Rep. Moolenaar's leadership in securing the new large navigational lock in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan that is currently under construction. Congressman Moolenaar has actively advocated for the Great Lakes Navigation System and continues to protect the Great Lakes and the mariners that ply the waters. He was instrumental in the increase of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers funding for the Great Lakes and securing a substantial share of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund for the system's operation and maintenance. The additional funds will be used to improve navigation structures, conduct much needed dredging of Great Lakes harbors and channels, and stabilize and replace failing nearshore infrastructure where high waters have caused significant coastal damage.

"I have worked to be a strong steward of the Great Lakes," said Rep. Moolenaar. "I am proud to have worked across the aisle to help fund the construction of a new lock at the Soo Locks which will ensure shipping continues to support American jobs in manufacturing, construction, and other industries. I have also supported the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative because it will help protect the Lakes from invasive species and pollution. It's an honor to receive this award from the Maritime Task Force and I will continue to be an advocate for our state and the Great Lakes in the years to come."

### **ONLINE FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (All times are local)**

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

**Tuesday, March 9** – CMES@1430 (*CMES Meeting will be conducted in-person*);  
Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

**Wednesday, March 10** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

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

**Friday, March 12** – Honolulu@1100

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*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.*