

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES
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NEW ACTION PLAN LAUNCHES A PUSH TO RESTORE MARITIME INDUSTRY STRENGTH

U.S.-flag shipping advocates including the M.E.B.A. are encouraged by the newly-released new Maritime Action Plan (MAP), an ambitious blueprint for revitalizing the U.S. Merchant Marine. The plan touches every corner of the sector — from U.S.-flag vessels and domestic shipyards to the broader maritime workforce and educational institutions. The MAP was developed by senior federal officials across State, Defense, Commerce, Labor, Transportation, Homeland Security, and Trade to rejuvenate the industry and reclaim U.S. maritime strength. The plan emphasizes not only investment but also modernization of procurement processes, regulatory streamlining, interagency coordination, and long-term funding and demand signals for U.S.-built ships, shipyards, and mariners.

Under the plan, the U.S. mariner pool would be expanded through a mix of workforce development, retention incentives, and targeted tax reforms aimed at making maritime careers more competitive. Proposed measures include scaling up training capacity at maritime academies, streamlining credentialing and medical clearance processes through the U.S. Coast Guard, and increasing recruitment from underrepresented and nontraditional labor markets. Retention would be bolstered by addressing quality-of-life concerns, improving career progression pathways, and expanding access to sealift and commercial sailing opportunities coordinated by the Maritime Administration.

A key component is mariner taxation reform, including proposals to reduce or defer federal income taxes on qualifying maritime service, align tax treatment more closely with international standards, and provide credits or exclusions for time spent sailing. Together, these steps are intended to grow the size, readiness, and long-term sustainability of the U.S. mariner workforce. The MAP's proposals are broken down into four "pillars."

Pillar I: Rebuilding U.S. Shipbuilding Capacity - To drive investment and growth, Pillar I proposes a mix of incentives and structural reforms. These include expanded financing tools and tax incentives for shipyards, modernization of the Federal Ship Financing (Title XI) program, new grant and capital improvement programs, and the creation of Maritime Prosperity Zones to channel private and allied capital into shipbuilding regions and workforce pipelines. The plan also addresses supply-and-demand gaps by stimulating growth in the U.S.-flag fleet, providing regulatory relief, and strengthening industrial resilience. Finally, it leverages partnerships with allies through coordinated

trade policy and investment frameworks, encouraging foreign shipbuilders to invest in U.S. facilities and reduce reliance on unreliable suppliers.

Pillar II: Expanding and Strengthening the U.S. Mariner Workforce - Pillar II directly targets the size, readiness, and retention of the U.S. seafarer workforce. It modernizes education, training, and credentialing to reduce barriers to entry and accelerate career progression, while expanding capacity at maritime academies, apprenticeship programs, and military-to-mariner pathways. A central element is improving mariner retention through quality-of-life measures and financial incentives, including mariner taxation reform. Proposed tax policies—such as partial income exclusions, credits for time spent at sea, or deferred taxation during qualifying service—are intended to make U.S.-flag service more competitive internationally and encourage experienced mariners to remain active. These workforce reforms are coordinated across federal agencies, including the Maritime Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard, to ensure credentials, training, and labor supply align with fleet growth.

Pillar III: Stabilizing the Maritime Industrial Base and Demand - Pillar III seeks to protect and stabilize the Maritime Industrial Base by aligning trade policy, cargo policy, and federal procurement with national security objectives. It aims to strengthen cargo preference and shipping requirements to ensure more government and commercial cargo moves on U.S.-built, U.S.-flagged, and U.S.-crewed vessels, reinforcing demand for domestic shipbuilding and mariner labor. The pillar also proposes a Land Port Maintenance Tax to rebalance infrastructure incentives between land ports and seaports. In parallel, it advances major federal procurement reforms—such as multiyear contracts, clearer requirements, and greater use of commercial designs—to reduce costs and delays. The pillar also addresses unfair foreign trade practices identified by the Office of the United States Trade Representative while coordinating with allies to strengthen fair competition.

Pillar IV: Maritime Strength for National and Economic Security - Pillar IV integrates shipbuilding, fleet readiness, and supply-chain security into a unified strategy to support military logistics, protect trade, and sustain a wartime economy if needed. It emphasizes reducing foreign dependencies, modernizing shipyards and ports, diversifying supply chains, and accelerating adoption of advanced technologies such as automation, additive manufacturing, AI, and robotics. Operationally, it calls for expanding the internationally trading U.S.-flag fleet through initiatives like a Strategic Commercial Fleet, recapitalizing government sealift assets including the Ready Reserve Force, and establishing a Maritime Security Trust Fund for stable financing. The pillar also advances leadership in autonomous maritime systems and a comprehensive Arctic strategy to secure emerging trade routes and future maritime interests.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac noted, “We believe the MAP provides meaningful, long-term solutions aimed at reversing the decline of our U.S. flag fleet and mariner pool, notably by expanding U.S. cargo preference requirements and incentives, providing tax relief for U.S. mariners, and dedicating financial investments to maritime workforce training and domestic shipyard capacity. These policies are essential to growing the U.S.-flag fleet, creating good-paying American maritime jobs, and ensuring the United States can once again compete against nations that use unfair practices and state subsidies to dominate global shipping and shipbuilding.”

Implementation of the MAP is expected to unfold through a mix of executive action, agency rulemaking, budget proposals, and congressional legislation, rather than as a single standalone bill. Some elements — such as pilot programs, procurement reforms, regulatory streamlining, and

interagency coordination — can move forward through executive authorities and agency action led by the Department of Transportation and the Maritime Administration, working alongside the U.S. Coast Guard. Other components, including mariner taxation reforms, new trust funds, cargo policy changes, and large-scale shipyard investment incentives, will require congressional authorization and appropriations.

**LASSLEY TO HEAD GOVT. FLEET;
CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR NORFOLK AGENT**

With the departure of former Branch Agent Craig Moran at the Norfolk Union hall, Ola Lassley has been promoted as the Union’s new Government Fleet Representative. Eminently qualified, Ola has toiled at the hall since 2019 as Dispatcher and Assistant Government Fleet Representative. He spent 22 years with the U.S. Navy then signed up with the M.E.B.A. and worked for a decade for the Military Sealift Command before coming shoreside and assisting operations at the hall.

The Union is now seeking a Norfolk Branch Agent to helm day-to-day operations at the hall while working closely with Ola to assist on Government Fleet matters. This is a unique opportunity to make an impact and be part of a team dedicated to serving our members and advancing the mission of the M.E.B.A.

Job applicants should be highly organized, quick learners with strong clerical and interactive personal skills. Ideal candidates will have familiarity with how a Union hall works and have experience with the Military Sealift Command (MSC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. There is no relocation reimbursement for this position. Any Member who wishes to be considered for this job should send their résumé and a letter of interest to M.E.B.A. Headquarters at mebahq@mebaunion.org

**MEMBER/RETIREE SOUGHT TO HEAD UP POTENTIAL
NEW PORTLAND, MAINE HALL**

M.E.B.A. is strongly considering opening up a new Union hall in Portland, ME to better serve the large concentration of New England-based members. The Union would like to hear from members or retirees interested in serving the prospective hall as its first Representative. In addition to providing day-to-day operations for nearby members, the hall will also provide a vantage point to enhance recruitment efforts at Maine Maritime Academy.

There will be no relocation reimbursement for this position and the hours and parameters of the job are yet to be determined by the District Executive Committee. The job is expected to be commensurate with dispatcher level work and not seagoing compensation. Members or retirees interested in this opportunity should send a résumé and letter of interest to Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan at jcallahan@mebaunion.org

NOTE ON CMES COURSE ENROLLMENT

M.E.B.A. students should note that course enrollment at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES) occurs in two phases:

- Applications for Fall Semester courses (held July 1 - December 31, 2026) will be accepted *no earlier than May 1, 2026.*

- Course application forms can be obtained at the M.E.B.A. Union halls, at the M.E.B.A. School OR on the CMES web site at <https://www.mebaschool.org/admissions/meba-students-admissions-procedures/course-applications-electronic-and-pdf>
- A separate application must be submitted for *each* course a student wishes to take.

DESPITE ATTACKS, UNION REPRESENTATION GREW IN 2025

New data released by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows union representation grew by 463,000 in 2025, bringing the total number of workers represented by union contracts to 16.5 million. Thanks to years of sustained organizing, 11.2% of all wage and salary workers in the United States are now covered under union contracts, up from 2024 and the highest in 16 years.

“Billionaire bosses and union-busting politicians have tried to throw the kitchen sink at working people and their unions — slashing our jobs and rigging the rules to scare us out of organizing — but they are failing,” said AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler. “Workers know that the best check on a bad boss is a strong union contract. In 2026, workers will continue to organize in every corner of the country and build power to fight for the lives they deserve.”

DOL SEEKS TO LOWER SHIPBUILDING INSURANCE BURDEN

Federal labor officials have rolled out updated rules that relax certain insurance-related obligations for companies operating in shipbuilding and other critical industrial sectors, a move intended to reduce costs throughout the U.S. maritime supply chain. The policy update clarifies how insurers must determine security deposits required under the Longshore and Harbor Workers’ Compensation Act. By standardizing the way financial risk is evaluated, the Labor Department says the changes will curb excess regulatory costs without weakening safeguards for workers who are injured on the job.

Under the new framework, the department will consider factors such as an insurer’s financial stability, experience writing LHWCA policies, and the speed at which it pays approved claims. These measures are intended to increase predictability, reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, and improve industry confidence in managing potential liabilities.

WATERY GRAVE OF CLASSIC LAKES STEAMER LOCATED

Over 150 years after it vanished beneath Lake Michigan, the long-lost passenger steamer LAC LA BELLE has been located by shipwreck divers, bringing closure to one of the Great Lakes’ enduring maritime mysteries. The 217-foot vessel, once among the most popular passenger steamers on the lakes, sank during a storm on Oct. 14, 1872. Veteran shipwreck hunter Paul Ehorn confirmed the discovery after locating the wreck roughly 20 miles offshore between Racine and Kenosha, Wisconsin. Ehorn had searched for the vessel for six decades.

Public announcement of the find was delayed while crews worked to capture three-dimensional video of the site, a process repeatedly slowed by adverse weather conditions. The LAC LA BELLE rests upright on the lakebed. While its upper cabins have collapsed and the wreck is heavily encrusted with mussels, divers report the hull remains largely intact.

The sinking of the LAC LA BELLE, which claimed eight lives, was a stark reminder of the perils faced by Great Lakes mariners in the 19th century. Just over two years later, on February 23, 1875, the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.) was founded on the Great Lakes. Incidents like

the LAC LA BELLE undoubtedly inspired the organization's forefathers to band together, creating a union to protect mariners' rights and safety, and ensure that those who worked the lakes and oceans would no longer be left to face danger alone.

151 YEARS STRONG: M.E.B.A. ANNIVERSARY ON MONDAY

M.E.B.A. celebrates its 151st anniversary on Monday, February 23. For more than a century and a half, Union has stood as a pillar of strength, progress, and professionalism in the American Merchant Marine. Founded in 1875 by mariners facing dangerous conditions and relentless exploitation, M.E.B.A. emerged from necessity and endured with resolve. Through collective bargaining and legislative advocacy, M.E.B.A. mariners moved from "hired hands" to officers entrusted with immense responsibilities. From the perilous boiler rooms of river steamers and Great Lakes freighters to the decks of today's complex next-generation vessels, M.E.B.A. keeps up the fight for fair wages, benefits and working conditions.

M.E.B.A. has never limited its mission to wages alone. It has consistently championed a strong U.S.-flag Merchant Marine, pushed back against harmful propaganda, and worked to ensure the nation's maritime future matched its seafaring heritage. From surviving crushing defeats to leading historic victories in labor rights, training, pensions, and safety, the Union proved resilient. As M.E.B.A. celebrates its 151st birthday, it honors generations of deck and engine officers whose expertise, professionalism, and solidarity built an enduring legacy — one that continues to propel American ships and labor forward.

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

Monday, March 2 – **Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, March 3 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, March 4 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, March 5 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, March 6 – **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. Website: www.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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org