

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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PARTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN SHUTTERS RECs

Because of the continued partial government shutdown, the National Maritime Center (NMC) and all Regional Examination Centers (RECs) are closed. Customer walk-in service at the RECs is suspended. Examinations and other REC appointments are cancelled.

However, the Application Submission Portal (ASAP) for submission of applications and supporting documentation remains active. Processing will resume once appropriations are restored. In addition, Merchant Mariner Credentials (National Endorsements only) and Medical Certificates (National and Pilot expiration dates only) that expire in February and March 2026 remain valid until April 30, 2026. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential AND a copy of a letter (available on the NMC site) while sailing under the authority of those credentials. The NMC will not issue separate or replacement MMCs or Medical Certificates reflecting the extension.

For updates on NMC and REC operating status, please monitor the NMC website located [here](#). For questions, contact their Customer Service Center via the NMC online chat system, by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

M.E.B.A. reposted the latest NMC notices on our website in the Documents & Member Notices section.

FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE TO BE ELECTED NEXT WEEK

A six-person rank and file Financial Review Committee will be elected at the regular membership meetings from March 2-6 at certain M.E.B.A. Union halls. The FRC, which meets annually, will assemble at M.E.B.A. Headquarters on April 21 to spend three days reviewing last year's Union finances (2025 calendar year). Committee members will be elected at the March meetings in New York/New Jersey, Houston, Oakland, Norfolk, Tampa, and Seattle.

NY/NJ, Houston, and Oakland will also elect a designated substitute to the Committee. The substitute will only participate if the first elected FRC member from that port is unable to attend.

Once assembled in Washington D.C., the FRC will be comprised of five members as well as one member who will serve as an alternate. Rank and file members elected to the Committee must be in good standing to serve and cannot be an official or employee of the Union currently - or for the year being reviewed (2025).

The elected Union members will travel to M.E.B.A. Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Monday, April 20, 2026. They will begin their work at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 in the Conference Room at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. It is anticipated that the business of the FRC will be completed by Thursday, April 23 with travel home scheduled for Friday, April 24.

UNION RIGHTS FOR GOVERNMENT FLEET MARINERS PROTECTED FOR NOW
M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac contacted Government Fleet mariners sailing for the Military Sealift Command and Army Corps following the resumption of the dues check-off system in the wake of a court ruling protecting union rights.

Late last year, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued a preliminary injunction from the bench, ruling that the administration cannot bypass union contracts or strip organized federal workers of their bargaining rights while litigation brought by the AFL-CIO, M.E.B.A., and other unions proceeds. The move restored automatic dues deductions for Government Fleet mariners represented by M.E.B.A. after the system had been disrupted following a White House Executive Order aimed at limiting federal employees' collective bargaining protections.

In compliance with the injunction, MSC resumed dues check-off payments on January 16, 2026, while the Army Corps reinstated deductions for the pay period ending February 7, 2026. The dues check-off resumption represents a reaffirmation of federal workers' rights and the enforceability of collective bargaining agreements, even in the face of continued executive attempts to alter longstanding union protections.

President Vokac thanked members who kept their dues current during the disruption and emphasized the Union's commitment to continuing representation despite the Executive Order and ongoing legal challenges. "We appreciate your patience as we work with the agencies to ensure a smooth and successful reimplementation," Vokac noted. "We are grateful and proud that we can continue to represent the hardworking Engineers at MSC and Army Corps."

MARINERS, FARMERS LOOK FOR FOOD AID BOOST

In the wake of the first major Food for Peace purchase since the dismantling of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the M.E.B.A is pushing for well-rounded Congressional funding of America-first programs like PL-480 and McGovern-Dole aid. M.E.B.A. signed on to the Fiscal Year 2027 International Food Assistance Funding Letter, underscoring the union's strong support for U.S. food aid programs that save lives abroad while sustaining American maritime jobs at home. While backing continued funding for Food for Peace, Food for Progress, and the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education program, M.E.B.A. reaffirmed the critical role U.S.-flag vessels and American mariners play in delivering humanitarian assistance around the world. Food for Peace requires that at least 50% of international food aid cargoes be carried on U.S.-flag ships. The program helps feed countries in need while supporting American agriculture and U.S.-flag shipping.

The Union's support highlights how international food assistance is not only a moral imperative, but also a smart investment in U.S. economic strength, national security, and the continued vitality of America's maritime workforce.

The letter sent to key Congressional leaders notes, "We ask that you continue to allow these Buy American, America First programs to reinforce our nation's standing as a global leader in food security by funding Food for Peace and McGovern-Dole at their FY24 levels of \$1,619,107,000 and \$240,000,000, respectively."

The farmers and maritime organizations that signed onto the letter said that these U.S. international food aid programs "are among the world's most critical humanitarian assistance programs, save countless lives, bolster our nation's global security, and help millions in need around the world."

SHIPBUILDING COLLABORATION HAILED AT DC PROP CLUB FUNCTION AS CSA STALWART IS HONORED

The Washington D.C. Chapter of the Propeller Club took center stage as international shipping representatives celebrated a promising new shipbuilding collaboration inked this week.

ONEX Shipyards & Technologies and Hanwha Power Systems inked a new agreement on Wednesday, marking a strategic step in U.S.-Greek-Korean industrial cooperation. The partnership aims to support shipbuilding, including commercial and naval projects under the recently proposed U.S. Maritime Action Plan, while also opening up opportunities in large-scale energy infrastructure.

Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan is M.E.B.A.'s representative on the D.C. Propeller Club's Board of Governors. American Maritime Congress President Fair Kim heads up the Club and presided over the ceremony that included a slew of important guests including two Ambassadors. Antonis Alexandridis, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the U.S., as well as Kimberly Guilfoyle, the U.S. Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic were in attendance and hailed the agreement as an historic pact that looks to deepen U.S. economic ties with Greece and Korea. Also taking part in the event was Federal Maritime Commission Chairperson Laura DiBella and International Propeller Club President Costis Frangoulis.

Of note, longtime maritime industry champion Kathy Metcalf, who has done so much for the industry since her 1978 graduation from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, was honored as the Maritime Person of the Year. Kathy is President Emeritus of the Chamber of Shipping of America and has advocated for maritime interests before the U.S. Congress, federal and state agencies, and international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization, shaping policy on safety, environmental standards, and regulatory issues. Congratulations Kathy!

REPORT WARNS OF RISING CYBER THREATS TO GLOBAL SHIPPING

As smart shipping technologies become deeply embedded in vessel operations, navigation, and port logistics, Korean cyber security experts CYTUR is warning that the industry's rapid digitalization is outpacing its cybersecurity readiness. In its newly released 2026 Maritime Cyber Threat White Paper, CYTUR reports that maritime cyber incidents surged by 103% in 2025 compared to 2024, with smart shipping systems increasingly targeted by ransomware, malware, DDoS attacks, and navigation interference that poses direct risks to vessel safety, crew welfare, and operational continuity.

The report highlights that smart shipping's reliance on interconnected IT, OT, satellite communications, and automated decision-making systems has expanded the attack surface across fleets and ports. Vulnerabilities in GPS, GNSS, ECDIS, VSAT, and remote maintenance platforms are enabling attackers to move beyond data theft toward cyber-physical attacks capable of disrupting navigation, halting port operations, or even seizing partial control of vessels.

Looking ahead, they warn that the threat to smart shipping will intensify as AI-driven attacks, large-scale supply chain compromises, and coordinated cyber-physical operations become more common. Without proactive security measures embedded into vessel design, equipment manufacturing, and fleet operations, the efficiencies promised by smart shipping risk being undermined by escalating cyber threats that could disrupt global trade and endanger lives at sea.

HOUSTON CLOSED MONDAY FOR TEXAS INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Houston Union hall will be closed on Monday March 2nd for Texas Independence Day – the 190th anniversary. Texas declared its independence from Mexico on March 2, 1836 as the Mexican army laid siege to the Alamo, which fell four days later. In April of that year, Sam Houston's 910-man army defeated Mexican General Santa Anna in an 18-minute surprise attack at the San Jacinto River helping Texans to turn the tide. Soon after, Sam Houston was sworn in as President of the Republic of Texas. Various skirmishes with the Mexicans continued until a truce was finally signed in June 1843. Texas was actually an independent nation for several years until December of 1845 when President James Polk signed an annexation act allowing the Lone Star State to join the union.

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