

# 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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### **MARITIME LABOR ALLIANCE POINTS OUT FOLLY OF ILL-ADVISED BALLPARK PROPOSAL**

The five-union Maritime Labor Alliance has strong words for the City of Oakland, California's irresponsible plan to create a new 35,000-seat waterfront baseball stadium that would interfere with ongoing port and vessel operations. In a February statement released this week, the MLA, which includes the ARA, IBU, ILWU, M.E.B.A. and the MM&P, decried the city's insistence on building a new ballpark for the Oakland A's at the Charles P. Howard Terminal.

The MLA believes the new stadium, built in an already overworked traffic area, would prove detrimental to public safety, create transportation conflicts and hamper smooth vessel operations, among other issues. The MLA statement says the terminal "is located between a major rail line, an overweight truck and rail corridor, and the turning basin in the estuary where all the container ship traffic docking at the Inner Harbor has to turn." "Since 2013," the statement read, "Howard Terminal has been used as a vital container staging facility for the Port of Oakland, the location of the ILWU training facility and a berth for layup vessels."

The MLA predicts that the port will eventually come under threat if the proposed plan proceeds and that ballpark crowds and new residents in the condominiums will encroach on – and eventually help influence the demise of port activities. "Residents settling into their new million-dollar condos at Howard Terminal—with great views of the port and San Francisco beyond—would quickly realize that the bright lights and noise associated with nearby container operations are not as alluring as they had imagined." The statement said, "The port would face political pressure to limit hours and, with a domino effect, to shut down and sell the land to real estate developers for more condos."

You can read the MLA statement on the M.E.B.A. homepage located at [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org).

### **MLA STRATEGY SESSION**

Leaders of the five unions that make up the Maritime Labor Alliance met in Juneau, Alaska recently to deliberate over a series of issues important to the coalition. The MLA is a cooperation between the ARA, IBU, ILWU, M.E.B.A. and the MM&P that fights to protect MLA member jurisdictions, working conditions and labor rights. M.E.B.A. was represented at the meeting by President Marshall

Ainley, Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo, Seattle Branch Agent Jeff Duncan and Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan.

While they were in Juneau, MLA union officials and representatives met with legislators and joined a protest rally on the steps of the Alaska Capitol building to voice displeasure about the State's gutting of the Alaska Marine Highway System. Last year, massive State budget cuts majorly impacted ferry fleet operations stranding many Alaskans who live in remote locations and depend on the AMHS. The ferry fleet has served as a crucial connector for Alaskan communities spread out over 3,100 miles.

To keep up with the latest on the situation, you can visit [www.FriendsofAMHS.org](http://www.FriendsofAMHS.org) which catalogs AMHS news and developments and continues to urge lawmakers to restore funding.

Each of the MLA affiliates at their meeting in Juneau gave a report, and a multitude of important issues were thoroughly discussed as the Alliance looks to enhance conditions for working men and women in the maritime industry. Internal MLA organizational issues were also discussed and MLA held its annual officer election and re-elected MM&P's Don Marcus as MLA President and M.E.B.A.'s Bill Van Loo as MLA Secretary-Treasurer.

### **CORONAVIRUS CONCERNS**

Several M.E.B.A. shipping companies that trade in areas beset by the Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) such as China and South Korea, have issued alerts and guidance while implementing policies to ensure mariners and employees remain safe. M.E.B.A. posted the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention's issuance of its "Guidance for Ships" related to the disease, and information offering "recommended measures to address COVID-19 risks on ships" was put up on the M.E.B.A. homepage ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) earlier today. You can also better educate yourself about the disease and its spread by visiting the CDC site at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-stop-fear.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-stop-fear.html)

Union officials have been kept updated on the fluid situation and can be contacted by members and applicants should they have questions. More information will be available at the March membership meetings next week, so try to attend.

The pneumonia-type illness emanated from the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and death.

At press time, almost 83,000 worldwide cases had been reported and the death toll had surpassed 2,800. There have been at least 15 confirmed cases of infected Americans in this country including a female patient in Sacramento, CA who did not travel abroad and is reportedly unaware how she contracted the virus.

### **SAUDIS SAY RED SEA TERRORIST ATTACK WAS FOILED**

The Saudi Press Agency reports that a naval coalition operating in Yemen thwarted an "imminent" terrorist attack in the southern Red Sea, involving an unmanned boat laden with explosives.

Coalition spokesperson Col. Turki Al-Malki blamed the attack on Houthi rebels who have conducted past vessel attacks as part of the conflict and continued unrest in Yemen. Col. Al-Malki did not

identify the intended target, but noted that the unmanned boat, that reportedly was launched from the Hodeidah province in western Yemen, was destroyed by coalition forces. The action was said to have taken place near the Bab al-Mandeb strait at the southern mouth of the Red Sea.

### **SEALIFT CONCERNS AIRED BEFORE SENATE COMMITTEE AS LOGISTICS BRASS GIVE POSTURE REPORT**

Senators were briefed on a number of defense issues this week by top officials at the U.S. Transportation Command and U.S. European Command including concerns about the nation's future sealift capabilities. USTRANSCOM Commander General Stephen Lyons told the Committee, led by Chairman James Inhofe (R-OK), that sealift concerns need to be addressed in order to satisfactorily meet current and future readiness challenges. "We depend on sealift to carry about 90 percent of our cargo capacity in a wartime scenario," he noted. "Our current readiness of the fleet is below where we need it to be."

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) asked about the Command's work toward increasing fleet readiness to their stated goal of 85%. Current readiness is estimated to be about 59%. Gen. Lyons had stated that the Sealift fleet could lose 1-2 million square feet of capacity each year as ships reach the end of their useful life. The Commander pointed out that the average age of the RRF is 43 years old. "It's no secret that when you retain a large fixed-plant facility like one of our large Sealift platforms it becomes increasingly more expensive the older it gets...what we would like to see very much is a little bit less in terms of service life extension, in other words, extending these ships beyond 50 to 60 years..."

The General said he has been working with the Navy and Maritime Administration on plans to purchase seven used ships – subject to funding - that would take the place of the oldest vessels in the aging Ready Reserve Force fleet. Gen. Lyons said the first vessel in this seven-ship plan could join the fleet as soon as the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2021.

### **HQ MEMBERSHIP STALWART RETIRES**

Doris Fitzgerald, longtime M.E.B.A. staffer who has worked on behalf of members and applicants since 1996, wrapped up her final day at Headquarters today and heads into a deserved retirement. She came aboard during M.E.B.A. President Alex Shandrowsky's administration and began work in our Washington DC office in the Accounting Department. But six years later, she transitioned over to the Membership Department, and cemented her position for the next 18 years. Doris assisted members and applicants with their sailing documents/employment time to help them upgrade their Group status. In addition, she was the point of contact to process new applicants and help them upgrade to membership. Renee Bowman, who has been with the Union since 2002, and has worked with Doris in Membership since 2015, assumes a larger role within the Department. Doris expressed excitement to begin the next chapter of her life but noted that she'll miss the M.E.B.A. and her years spent at 444 North Capitol Street. Fair winds and following seas Doris!

### **GOOD RESPONSE FOR RETIREE PAF DRIVE**

M.E.B.A. has received very favorable response from retired members in the initial weeks into a Political Action Fund pledge drive spearheaded by one of our pensioners. Former Chief Engineer Mark Engberg, in a letter sent to retirees, challenged them to take the "2020 M.E.B.A. PAF Retiree Pledge" that will help strengthen the Union and industry and help guarantee the ongoing viability of the M.E.B.A. Benefit Plans.

Mark is matching \$10,000 of his own money to the Fund if 20 retirees commit to supporting the M.E.B.A. PAF by contributing \$500 per year for the next 5 years. There have already been several commitments to the pledge and others have responded with continued contributions that will help safeguard and strengthen the interests of our current and future membership.

As you know, contributing to the M.E.B.A. PAF is one of most important things you can do as a member of this Union. The PAF is a vital tool that allows the Union to protect and advance the interests of the U.S. Merchant Marine through the funding of key maritime provisions including the Maritime Security Program, protecting the Jones Act, as well as our health care and pensions.

Members, applicants and retirees are encouraged to contribute to the M.E.B.A. Political Action Fund online by visiting the Union homepage at [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org) and selecting "Political Action Fund" to support this important cause.

### **OVERFLOWING WATER WILL CAUSE UPPER GREAT LAKES SHIPPING SEASON DELAYS**

Continued high water on the Great Lakes will disrupt supply chains for the first few weeks of the international shipping season after authorities announced that part of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system would delay opening to commercial navigation for 12 days past the original schedule. The Lakes are suffering their highest water levels in 34 years and shoreline erosion and flooding have followed. A dry February and continued outflows have helped mitigate the situation somewhat - but not enough to prevent the delay that will keep the Montreal to Lake Ontario section closed to navigation until April 1<sup>st</sup> – a decision opposed by affected shipping companies. The Soo Locks are still scheduled to reopen on March 25<sup>th</sup> preserving the opening date of the domestic Great Lakes shipping season.

### **PLAN TO SUPPORT THE 4MF WHEN YOU HIT THE HALL**

With meeting week coming up next week, those stopping by an M.E.B.A. Union hall should remember to support M.E.B.A.'s Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) with the purchase of 50/50 raffle tickets. Members, applicants, retirees and everyone else are strongly encouraged to support the 4MF which provides upkeep and improvements to the Memorial Park located at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES). The Memorial honors fallen mariners who helped blaze the proud tradition our members continue today. The winning raffle ticket (\$2 apiece) will be drawn on October 6, 2020 at the CMES during the monthly membership meeting. You do not need to be present to win. The grand winner will receive 50% of the proceeds from raffle sales. The popular swag giveaway promotion is in effect for this raffle for those who buy at least \$50 worth of tickets.

### **HOUSTON HALL CLOSED ON MONDAY**

M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in Houston will be closed on Monday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> for the observation of Texas Independence Day. Texas declared its independence from Mexico on March 2, 1836 as the Mexican army laid siege to the Alamo. It fell four days later. It wasn't until April of that year when Sam Houston's 910-man army defeated Mexican General Santa Anna in a surprise attack at the San Jacinto River that Texans turned 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 Texas to join the union.

**MEMBERS, APPLICANTS ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND  
MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS NEXT WEEK**

Members and applicants are urged to attend one of the thirteen March membership meetings taking place next week (March 2-6) at the Union halls. Membership meetings are a great way for members, applicants and retirees to stay involved, get informed, and deliver input to help advance the business of the Union. There is another full agenda that will benefit from healthy meeting attendance and participation.

Check the meeting schedule below to see what works for you.

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

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;  
Thursday, March 5 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;  
Friday, March 6 – Honolulu@1100.

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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.*