

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. AIDING EFFORT TO ADVANCE RECOGNITION FOR MARINERS SERVING IN HIGH-RISK OPERATIONS

After months of coordination and steady progress, a significant industry-wide effort to recognize U.S. merchant mariners for service in designated military and humanitarian operations is nearing its first major milestone. The initial shipments of Merchant Marine Expeditionary Medal certificates and the actual medals are expected to be sent to shipping companies shortly for distribution to eligible mariners.

Over the past several months, M.E.B.A. has been coordinating with the Maritime Administration (MarAd) submitting information for U.S. those merchant mariners who qualify for the honor who served aboard U.S.-flag commercial vessels supporting authorized operations.

Vessels are not automatically approved for the award; eligibility is established only after voyage data, crew lists, and supporting documentation are collected from individual operators and formally reviewed by MarAd. In parallel, coordination has also been underway with Military Sealift Command's point of contact to facilitate approvals and certificate issuance for MSC vessels. To streamline the process, a single point of contact has been maintained with MarAd throughout. Norfolk Branch Agent/Government Fleet Rep. Craig Moran is the point of contact working on behalf of the M.E.B.A. and other maritime unions on this project, and building upon the initiative spearheaded by his predecessor Jack Menendez. From the outset, the goal has been to make this effort fully inclusive, ensuring that every mariner who served aboard a qualifying vessel is accounted for. MarAd's Office of Sealift Support has played a critical role, providing consistent support in reviewing submissions and advancing approvals.

To date, complete award packages have been submitted for twelve commercial vessels. Four vessels — LIBERTY POWER, LIBERTY GRACE, LIBERTY GLORY, and OVERSEAS MYKONOS — have already resulted in 124 approved medals, which are now on hand in Norfolk. Additional vessels have also received MarAd approval and are awaiting the arrival of further medal inventory. These include ALLIANCE NORFOLK, MAERSK ATLANTA, MAERSK CHESAPEAKE, MAERSK DETROIT, MAERSK SARATOGA, MAERSK SENTOSA, TORM THOR and the SHENANDOAH TRADER.

The review process also confirmed eligibility tied to several previously authorized MarAd campaigns. Mariners may qualify for the Merchant Marine Expeditionary Medal for service in the following missions and operations:

- Desert Shield (1990–1991)
- Desert Storm (1991)
- Operation Restore Hope (1992–1993)
- Operation United Shield (1995), and related Somalia operations between 5 December 1992 and 31 March 1995
- Operation Enduring Freedom (2001–2014)
- Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003–2011)
- Operation Neptune Solace (2 March–31 August 2024), the Gaza humanitarian pier mission
- Operation Prosperity Guardian (Red Sea, Bab al Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden, in direct support of military operations since 19 November 2023)

MarAd is also in the process of authorizing Operation Inherent Resolve, which would further expand eligibility once approved.

One issue identified during the process was presentation. MarAd issues certificates as loose documents, a format that does not fully reflect the level of service, risk, and sacrifice involved. To address this, participating companies have agreed to fund custom presentation folders so the awards are delivered in a more fitting manner. All five companies with qualifying vessels — Liberty Maritime, USMMI, Fairwater, OSG, and Maersk — have committed to supporting this effort. Once the folders are delivered to the Norfolk hall, certificates will be assembled and sent out for distribution.

The objective throughout has been straightforward: mariners who operated in high-risk environments during a volatile period deserve formal recognition for their service. The strong cooperation among operators and stakeholders has underscored a shared commitment across the industry to ensure this recognition is delivered properly and with the respect it merits.

SERVICE REDUCTIONS AT N.O. REC

Due to staffing shortages at Regional Examination Center (REC) New Orleans, the National Maritime Center (NMC) has implemented the following temporary measures:

- **Mariner Examinations:** REC New Orleans will continue to provide mariner testing via scheduled examination appointments only. Examination appointments are available Monday through Thursday 7:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. CT. Examination appointments are not available on Fridays or federal holidays.
- **Counter Service:** REC New Orleans has temporarily discontinued all counter service including by appointments and is unable to accommodate walk-in visits. Only applicants with scheduled examination appointments will be permitted to enter the REC at this time.
- **Application Submission:** Effective January 5, 2026, REC New Orleans will no longer accept applications in-person. The NMC anticipates transition to an online application submission portal in January (see December 2, 2025, announcement for further details). Until the portal is available, mariners should submit merchant mariner credential applications via e-mail directly to

MMCAApplications@uscg.mil and medical certificate applications via e-mail to MEDAIP@uscg.mil. Only applicants seeking first class pilot routes within the REC New Orleans area of responsibility should mail or e-mail their application to the REC.

We anticipate that the temporary measures at REC New Orleans may last for several months while the NMC seeks to fill current vacancies.

For more information regarding the current status of REC New Orleans or how and where to submit credential applications, visit the NMC website. If you have questions or require assistance, contact the NMC Customer Service Center, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST, by using Live Chat, by e-mailing iasknmc@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

APPLY FOR UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS

M.E.B.A. families have until January 31, 2026 to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. Union Plus is doling out one-time cash awards of \$500 to \$4,000 for study beginning in the Fall of 2026. M.E.B.A. members, retirees and their families - as well as members of affiliated M.E.B.A. unions - are eligible courtesy of the Union's enrollment in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to financing children's educations.

Visit www.unionplus.org/scholarship for details. Families of M.E.B.A. members or affiliated members are among past scholarship money recipients. Union Plus Scholarship are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor.

Applications can be submitted up until Saturday, January 31, 2026, at noon (EST). Applications arriving after the deadline will not be considered. The award date is May 31, 2026. During the first week of June 2026, award recipients will be notified.

Current and retired members of unions participating in any Union Plus program, their spouses and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations) are eligible. Grandchildren are not eligible unless a legal dependent (as defined by IRS regulations). At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant's spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one-year membership minimum must have been satisfied by May 31, 2025. Members of participating unions from the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands and Canada are eligible. The applicant must be accepted into a U.S. accredited college, university, community college, technical or trade school at the time awards are issued. Awards must be used for the 2026 - 2027 school year. Undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to apply.

Get the official application and all the details including eligibility criteria by visiting unionplus.org/scholarship

NEW YEAR CLOSINGS

M.E.B.A. halls and offices are closed today (Jan. 1) but will open again on Friday, Jan. 2. Please follow up with your local Union hall to make sure you can complete your Union business.

MAKE SURE YOUR DOCUMENTS ARE IN ORDER FOR JOB CALL!

It is the responsibility of members and applicants to have all their necessary documentation in-hand ahead of time for job call. Those who have recently upgraded their license should make sure their STCW reflects the upgrade. Your license, passport and other important documents should be valid for at least six months from the time you begin working aboard ship. Your drug-free certificates have to be valid at least until the day you join your ship. Check your expiration dates!

If flying with your documents on the way to a hall, double-check that you haven't left any essential documents at home and make sure to keep your docs with you in your carry-on luggage. The primary documents you'll need include your Merchant Mariner Credential with current STCW, VSO or VPDSO endorsement, TWIC, Passport, USCG Medical Certificate, Drug-free Certificate or Drug-free Letter, Group Card, Dues Receipt and proof of vaccination(s). Permanent or relief employees should get their company clearance to the hall ahead of time. Work with the Military Sealift Command will require security clearances.

As you should know, no one can be dispatched to a job while on vacation or while receiving a paid vacation benefit without a waiver. The Union requires a return-to-work date when clearing for a vessel so make sure you have your vacation pay and vacation carry-over statements, shipping discharge and port relief pay voucher for verification of return to work. It should also be noted that failure to obtain prior Union permission to return to work early, before the return-to-work date as listed on your carry-over or vacation statement, will subject you to a penalty.

Remember, a member or applicant cannot be dispatched for a job requiring STCW credentials if the Coast Guard Medical Certificate is due to expire prior to the completion of the job called. Members are encouraged to have their paperwork for the USCG Medical Certificate completed and to submit it for renewal at every annual physical in order to avoid an issue at job call. Certain jobs require proof of benzene or shot records, MSC courses, GMDSS, High Voltage/Marine Propulsion, Crowd Control, Welding, or other courses to satisfy company requirements.

Mariners are reminded to keep their vaccination records with them when sailing – especially when shipping onboard MSC-contracted vessels. Keep your documents with you at all times when travelling and NEVER leave them in your car. If you have questions about your documents, direct them to your local hall.

UNION-MADE HANGOVER CURE

Labor411, which encourages the use of products made by union-friendly companies that treat their workers fairly and give them a voice on the job, has found the cure for the after-effects for New Year's Eve reveling. There are plenty of union-made items to help you get back to yourself and face 2026 with a clear head and some pep in your step. Fill up your system, your pantry and your medicine cabinet with these brands made by worker-friendly companies. Happy New Year!

Relief – Afrin; Aleve; Alka-Seltzer; Bayer; Milk of Magnesia; Pepto-Bismol. **That First Cup** - Eight O'Clock Coffee; Folgers; Kauai Coffee; Maxwell House; Millstone Coffee; USA Coffee Company. **Hydration** - All Sport; American Springs; Apothic Red; Dasani; DejaBlue; Mio; Nothern Fall's; Penafiel; Pocono; Poland Spring; Realemon; Realime; Venom Energy.

To view more union-made products, visit the Labor411 directory at <https://labor411.org/listing-region/consumer-products/>

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

Monday, January 5 – **Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, January 6 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, January 7 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, January 8 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, January 9 – **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