

# 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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In this issue//Congresswoman Asks NYC to Boost S.I. Ferry Mariners//Vaccination Policies & Protocols//CMES Sets 2022 Cadet Internship Program Dates//NCL Contract Ratified//ALJ Wants More Info from Google on Anti-Union Campaign//Jones Act Helps Keep Hawaiians Supplied//Education & Labor are Key to Peacebuilding, Says Pope//Campaign Protected Seafarers from Criminalization in UK//MLK Day Closings//

### **CONGRESSWOMAN URGES NY MAYOR TO WORK WITH M.E.B.A. TO HELP BOOST S.I. FERRY MARINERS**

Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY-11) has penned a letter to New York's new Mayor, Eric Adams, asking him to give a shot in the arm to the Staten Island Ferry system by repairing a broken wage structure that is compromising consistent ferry sailings, mariner retention and passenger safety.

The M.E.B.A., which represents Captains, Assistant Captains, Engineers and Mates on the ferries, has pointed out that officers in the fleet are working for much less than industry wages with inadequate benefits. They haven't had a pay increase in almost 11 years as the City continues to offer below-market compensation for workers with huge responsibility in a high-stress job.

Rep. Malliotakis, the Congresswoman who represents the Staten Island Borough, sent the letter to the Mayor's office on Tuesday saying that the city's failure to offer a fair contract to the M.E.B.A. officers comes "at the expense of our mariners and commuters alike."

Addressing the City's inability to attract and retain qualified mariners because of lowball negotiating, the Congresswoman wrote that she fears "the longer the [City] refuses to offer prevailing wages to SIF mariners, the more operational and passenger safety risks will continue to grow."

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland "Rex" Rexha, once a former Shop Steward at the ferry system, believes the incoming Mayor's stated desire to "show America how to run a city" provides an excellent opportunity to restore the disregarded ferry system to prominence and ensure a safe and rewarding experience for passengers and the mariner force.

Rexha said the pandemic has further exacerbated problems by adding to an exodus of qualified officers who can find better paying jobs with fewer headaches elsewhere. "Nobody sticks around, they leave," he said. "Why would they stay at the Staten Island Ferry when it's not even close to industry wages?"

"Overtime almost becomes mandatory, because you have to work OT or you're not going to make a livable wage in New York City," he noted. "If you don't work overtime, who can support a family in New York City on \$70,000 a year? Especially when you consider the level of responsibility these workers have."

A spokesperson for the Mayor's office noted that, "Ferry workers have played a vital role in keeping Staten Island moving. We look forward to engaging M.E.B.A. leadership on a conversation about how to move forward with a fair and equitable contract that recognizes their hard work and contributions."

The Congresswoman's letter has been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage which can be accessed at [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org).

### **VACCINATION POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS FOR DEEP-SEA COMPANIES**

As of early January, most deep-sea employers now have vaccination mandates in effect for their mariners and employees. Many companies require vaccinations as part of a member's fitness for duty assessment, though requirements vary per contract. You should contact an M.E.B.A. Union hall about company vaccine requirements.

From early on, M.E.B.A. has been working with the companies to make sure our members are properly incentivized to support the vaccination effort, while also ensuring that the execution of these mandates don't encroach on specific circumstances of our mariner force.

The M.E.B.A. believes that mandates are subject to bargaining and we have worked with our companies to secure further compensation for our membership, even pursuing interest arbitration when necessary. While we do not deny the companies' ability to apply the mandate, we continue to take into account the sincere concerns of our affected membership while we assist the companies in the effort to provide a safe and healthy shipboard experience.

### **CMES SHORES UP DATES FOR 2022 CADET INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School will reboot its wildly popular and successful Licensed Cadet Internship program after a two-year COVID lay-off. The School has blocked out three weeks, from July 11 to July 29 this summer, to allow up to 80 cadets from various maritime academies across the country to get a head start on their shipping careers. The (normally) annual program helps mold the next generation of M.E.B.A. mariners and eases their way toward a shipping career with the Union, if they so choose. The program enables attending cadet-interns to absorb valuable knowledge and much-needed skills in a highly-professional and enjoyable learning environment.

During their three weeks, program participants will take advantage of a series of training courses including Damage Control, Small Arms, Crowd/Crisis Management, High Voltage Safety and other Coast Guard-approved and Government training, as well as abbreviated modules that will help prepare next-generation mariners.

Cadets can take part in the program without making a commitment to the Union, but while they attend, they will learn more about the excellent career opportunities that the M.E.B.A. presents.

### **NCL CONTRACT RATIFIED**

A new 12 ½ year agreement with Norwegian Cruise Line-America covering M.E.B.A. members sailing on the PRIDE OF AMERICA has been ratified and is currently in effect. The vessel is the lone large U.S.-flag passenger vessel and also the only cruise ship operating exclusively between the Hawaiian Islands.

The new contract establishes wage and benefit increases, a number of additional improvements, sets reopener dates and adds a new billet, among other items.

The vessel is currently sidelined because of the ongoing COVID situation but the company is hoping that it can resume its regular schedule in March.

### **LAW JUDGE SEEKS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT GOOGLE ANTI-WORKER CAMPAIGN**

A National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Administrative Law Judge is demanding that technology company Google turn over documents related to their recently-uncovered anti-union campaign named “Project Vivian.” Google’s plan to crush pro-union sentiment and dissuade employees from an organized plan of improving wages and conditions was exposed after the company fired seven of its employees who had become more active in calling for improved working conditions. The company denied the employees had been fired in retaliation. After they were let go in December 2019, the workers filed an unfair labor practices charge with the NLRB. The Board investigated and found that it appeared Google unlawfully targeted at least two of the employees for their activism, which led to the filing of an NLRB complaint.

Newly released documents detail Google’s launch of Project Vivian several years ago involving the hiring of a consulting firm skilled in combatting union activism.

In one of the documents already secured by the ALJ, Google’s Director of Employment Law Michael Pfyl stated that the mission of Project Vivian is “to engage employees more positively and convince them that unions suck.” That document also reportedly suggests ways to manipulate the media into parroting the company’s viewpoints concerning unionized tech company workplaces.

### **JONES ACT HELPS INSULATE HAWAII FROM GOUGING; SHIELDS STATE FROM DESPERATE SHORTAGES**

The two U.S.-flag shipping companies bringing crucial goods to our 50<sup>th</sup> state have been largely unscathed from the supply chain crisis that is creating global shortages and price gouging. Jones Act carriers Matson and Pasha Hawaii have remained on an even keel while avoiding the delays and bottlenecks that have prompted foreign carriers to recoup their losses by overcharging. As a result, stores in Hawaii can count on regular deliveries from them, as Matson and Pasha keep the cargo coming from the West Coast on a reliable pace.

The Jones Act has allowed these two companies to commit themselves to Hawaii, build the infrastructure and port logistics necessary to keep deliveries regular, and build trust with Hawaiians who are dependent on imports to keep their stores supplied.

Matson noted that along with the importance of the Jones Act for homeland security and national defense, it also ensures reliability and economic security. They said, “the importance of being able to rely on critical supply line transportation is easy to take for granted but hard to overstate.”

### **EDUCATION & LABOR ARE KEYS TO PEACEBUILDING SAYS POPE, CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO WORKPLACE CONDITIONS**

On New Year’s Day, Pope Francis released his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace. The Holy Father said labor or work along with dialogue and education are tools for peacebuilding.

He said, “labor is an indispensable factor in building and keeping peace. It is an expression of ourselves and our gifts, but also of our commitment, self-investment and cooperation with others, since we always work *with* or for someone. Seen in this clearly social perspective, the workplace enables us to learn to make our contribution towards a more habitable and beautiful world.”

Pope Francis looked at the impact of the pandemic on work and workers, and paid special attention to migrant workers and all those trapped in the informal economy. But he also had a more general message. “Currently only one third of the world’s population of working age enjoys a system of social protection, or benefit from it only in limited ways. Violence and organized crime are on the increase in many countries, impinging on people’s freedom and dignity, poisoning the economy and hampering the development of the common good. The only answer to this is an expansion of dignified employment opportunities.”

“It is more urgent than ever to promote, throughout our world, decent and dignified working conditions, oriented to the common good and to the safeguarding of creation... There is a need to promote, welcome and support initiatives that, on all levels, urge companies to respect the fundamental human rights of workers, raising awareness not only on the part of institutions, but also among consumers, civil society and entrepreneurial entities. As the latter become more and more conscious of their role in society, the more they will become places where human dignity is respected. In this way, they will contribute to building peace.”

### **CAMPAIGN IN UK PROTECTS SEAFARERS FROM CRIMINALIZATION FOR AT-SEA RESCUES**

Seafarers will be exempted from criminal prosecution for helping rescue people at sea, following a successful campaign by Nautilus International, with assistance from Maritime UK and the UK Chamber of Shipping.

It’s a fight that never should have had to be undertaken, as mariners have long-considered coming to the aid of those in distress as a moral and humanitarian obligation.

A UK immigration bill had previously included broad language targeting smugglers and criminal gangs that would have had negative applications against mariners involved in at-sea rescues when the survivor or refugee is brought ashore in the UK. The campaign to exempt mariners from the potentially damaging bill language was successful and the Government provided assurances and confirmed changes to protect seafarers.

Nautilus General Secretary Mark Dickinson said, “Together we have achieved a very good outcome and I am pleased the government listened to the industry’s concerns.

### **M.E.B.A. HALLS AND OFFICES CLOSED MONDAY TO HONOR MLK**

M.E.B.A. Union halls and offices will be closed on Monday, January 17<sup>th</sup> in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Along with his exceptional leadership in advancing civil rights, MLK was a champion for workers and for those seeking union recognition. He believed that unionization is one of our most important civil rights. At the Illinois AFL-CIO Convention in 1965, King declared, “The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life”

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

**Monday, February 7** – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300.

**Tuesday, February 8** – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

**Wednesday, February 9** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – **Register now at [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

**Thursday, February 10** – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

**Friday, February 11** – Honolulu@1100.

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*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](mailto:mebahq@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](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*