

# 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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### **OSG TO DEPLOY ADDITIONAL VESSEL INTO JONES ACT FLEET**

Overseas Shipholding Group, Inc. has entered into a 10-year Bareboat Charter Agreement to operate a 1999-built chemical/oil tanker that will supplement the company's Jones Act fleet. They expect to begin operating the former Chevron tanker OREGON VOYAGER in the second quarter of 2019 after redubbing the ship as the OVERSEAS KEY WEST. M.E.B.A. engineers will serve on the ship under our existing contract with OSG when the newly procured vessel goes into service this spring.

Sam Norton, OSG's President and CEO, noted, "The extended duration of this new lease agreement is both an affirmation of our positive outlook for the future as well as a validation of OSG's reputation as a preferred counterparty in operating Jones Act tank vessels to the high standards demanded by its customers."

Mr. Norton added, "At current market levels, we expect the OVERSEAS KEY WEST to contribute more than \$18 million per annum in time charter equivalent revenue once she enters into service. At this revenue level, we estimate that the OVERSEAS KEY WEST would add approximately \$5.5 million in net annual vessel operating contribution, which would be a welcome addition toward building a solid future cash flow profile."

### **ONLINE SHIPPING RULE REFERENDUM: TALLYING COMMITTEE ELECTIONS AT THREE HALLS**

Voting in the District-wide Online Shipping Rule Referendum concluded on Monday night. The vote count will not be released until a three-person rank and file tallying committee certifies the results on Monday, January 14 at Headquarters. The online referendum began on December 1 and concluded on December 31<sup>st</sup>.

The M.E.B.A. By-Laws state: "For Online voting, a Tallying Committee of three members and three alternates, shall be elected at a regular or special meeting held in the Vice Presidents' Ports. An alternate will only participate should the elected Tallying Committee member, from the port in which they are elected, be unable to participate."

Therefore, a member and an alternate in good standing will be elected for the Tallying Committee at each of the January Union hall membership meetings held in Oakland, Houston and NY/NJ. An alternate will only participate in case the elected Tallying Committee member from that port is unable to attend.

The Tallying Committee will travel to M.E.B.A. Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Sunday, January 13. It is projected the business of the Committee will last no more than a day. On the Committee's work day, Monday, January 14, they will ensure that each member casting a vote in the Referendum was a member in good standing as of December 17, 2018, as specified in the M.E.B.A. By-Laws. Those who did not pay their 2018 Fourth Quarter dues by that date are not eligible to participate and their votes will not count in the final tally. The Committee will also review the online process used to conduct the vote and will issue a report. Voting results will then become official and the report will be made part of the meeting packet at the February membership meetings.

The online referendum involved a vote on a possible change to the M.E.B.A. Shipping Rules on whether to permit new Group III applicants to remain on the Port Relief List for one year from the date of their first registration. The Rule change was designed to extend the window for new applicants to seek viable shipping opportunities as they begin their seafaring careers.

#### **AFGE LAWSUIT OVER PARTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

On behalf of its members, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is suing the federal government for making federal employees work without pay during the partial government shutdown. Because of the shutdown, federal employees deemed "essential" - working in as-yet unfunded government departments - are expected to continue working, albeit without a paycheck for the time being.

"Our members put their lives on the line to keep our country safe," said AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. "Requiring them to work without pay is nothing short of inhumane." He said, "Positions that are considered 'essential' during a government shutdown are some of the most dangerous jobs in the federal government. They are frontline public safety positions, including many in law enforcement, among other critical roles. A substantial number of those working without pay are military veterans."

AFGE noted that President Trump made matters worse by suggesting that federal employees 'don't want to work' and then canceled a 2.1% pay increase for this year. The union said that AFGE "brothers and sisters take home an average of \$500 a week. Losing this pay is devastating." The shutdown began Dec. 22 after the President demanded more than \$5 billion for a wall along the southern U.S. border.

Heidi Burakiewicz, partner at Kalijarvi, Chuzi, Newman & Fitch (KCNF DC) which joined the lawsuit said, "Approximately 420,000 federal employees are continuing to work, but don't know when they will get their next paychecks. This is not an acceptable way for any employer, let alone the U.S. government, to treat its employees. These employees still need to pay childcare expenses, buy gas, and incur other expenses to go to work every day and yet, they are not getting paid. It is a blatant violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act."

You can read the full complaint at: <https://tinyurl.com/y7vbze5b>

## **AFL-CIO ON SHUTDOWN: “BRING THIS DEBACLE TO AN END”**

The AFL-CIO is calling on President Trump and Congressional leaders to quickly put an end to the “pointless” partial government shutdown that continues to deny paychecks for 800,000 federal employees. The shutdown is now in its 13th day. “America’s working families are looking to our Congressional leaders to bring an end to this debacle,” AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka noted. “Working people—and their livelihoods—should never be used as political pawns.”

You can visit the following link to take action and let Congress and the White House know that they need to stop playing games and get the Government back to full power: <https://tinyurl.com/y9p79ysz>

Despite the shutdown, roughly 420,000 federal employees, from law enforcement and corrections officers to Transportation Security Administration agents, are still working and putting their lives on the line without collecting a paycheck. That doesn’t include about 380,000 workers who are currently furloughed, or sent home without pay.

In a tweet earlier this week, Trumka said, “Let’s call the shutdown what it is: the Trump Mexican Bailout. Mexico was never going to pay for the wall that won’t uplift workers anyway. Now Trump’s holding US workers hostage and wants taxpayers to foot the bill. Say no to the #TrumpMexicanBailout.”

## **ASST. GOVT. FLEET REP. JOE MUCHULSKY HANGS UP HIS BOILER SUIT**

Joe Muchulsky, who had an extremely long and productive career at sea capped by four years assisting M.E.B.A.’s Government Fleet in a shoreside position, has retired as of last week. He had been serving as M.E.B.A.’s Assistant Government Fleet Representative working out of our Norfolk hall.

Joe was eminently qualified to assist Government Fleet members, a department headed up by Norfolk Branch Agent/Govt. Fleet Rep. Tracy Burke. He initially began sailing in the 1960s as a teenager aboard the SS UNITED STATES for several years until the vessel’s demise in 1969. At first he was the ship’s Assistant Linen Keeper then progressively worked himself up to First Class Deck Steward then Tourist Class Waiter then Cabin Class Waiter and finally First Class Waiter. After the lay-up of the Big U, Joe shipped out on a variety of vessels with the National Maritime Union in a number of positions including Wiper, Fireman/Watertender/Oiler, Pumpman, Machinist, Reefer Engineer, Deck Engineer, Electrician, and Deck Engineer Machinist (DEMAC). In 1979, his career really took shape when he began shipping and excelling in the Military Sealift Command fleet. He worked his way up to Chief Engineer and spent 32 years sailing for MSC on a multitude of vessels. Since then he spent several years lending his expertise to the Norfolk, VA Mid-Atlantic Maritime Academy, where he helped with course development and served as an Instructor.

Joe lives in the Norfolk area with his wife Melissa. Their son, Joe Muchulsky, Jr. (Joey) is set to graduate from SUNY Maritime this spring. Joe has no imminent plans for any work-related activities in the near future and will make a concerted effort to enjoy the hell out of retirement and focus on family and fun. The M.E.B.A. has appreciated Joe’s efforts in his role as Assistant Government Fleet Rep., especially with recruiting and representation of our MSC members. We hope Joe enjoys his hard earned, well deserved retirement.

## **M.E.B.A.-CREWED CAR CARRIER ASSISTS BURNING VESSEL IN PACIFIC**

The Central Gulf Car Carrier M/V GREEN LAKE assisted search and rescue efforts of crewmembers forced off a burning Panama-flagged vessel earlier this week in the Pacific near Wake

Island. At least four crewmembers of the SINCERITY ACE are dead, and a Coast Guard team has now suspended the search for a missing crewmember after finding no hopeful signs. 16 of the 21-person crew were rescued following what was described as a “significant vessel fire” that prompted the crew to abandon ship.

The 650-foot Japanese car carrier, built in 2009, was halfway to Honolulu from Japan with about 3,500 Nissan vehicles onboard when the fire was reported early Monday morning. The fire’s cause is as-yet unknown and it is believed the vessel is still drifting unmanned in the Pacific at this time. Vessel owner Shoei Kisen Kaisha Ltd. has implemented a salvage plan.

The GREEN LAKE was one of the first vessels to arrive on scene and immediately began aiding operations to recover the stricken SINCERITY ACE mariners. Several other commercial vessels in the area also diverted from their runs to lend assistance.

“We are thankful for the assistance the crews of these merchant vessels have given us during this event significantly reducing possible response time,” said Lt. Duane Zitta, Coast Guard Joint Rescue Coordination Center Honolulu. “Their quick actions provided for the rescue of 16 members of the crew who would otherwise still be in the water and are continuing to aid us.”

The GREEN LAKE, a Pure Car/Truck Carrier enrolled in the Maritime Security Program, is crewed up with M.E.B.A. engineers. Current officers in the engine department include C/E Joseph Tierney, 1st A/E Shauna Glasser, 2<sup>nd</sup> A/E Elliott James, 2<sup>nd</sup> A/E Thomas Pollock and 3<sup>rd</sup> A/E Maria Asuncion.

#### **COAST GUARD DOUBLES MINIMUM RANDOM DRUG TESTING RATE**

The Coast Guard has set the calendar year 2019 minimum random drug testing rate at 50 percent of covered crewmembers - double the amount of the 2018 rate (25%). The agency said that it increased the minimum random drug testing rate as a result of Drug and Alcohol Management Information System (MIS) data indicating that “the positive rate” for the most recent reporting year was greater than one percent. Regulations require the Commandant to set the minimum random drug testing rate at 50 percent when the positivity rate for drug use exceeds one percent.

Coast Guard requires marine employers to establish random drug testing programs for covered crewmembers. Every marine employer must collect and maintain a record of drug testing program data for each calendar year, and submit this data to the Coast Guard in an annual report. Each year, the Coast Guard publishes a notice reporting the results of random drug testing for the previous calendar year’s MIS data and the minimum annual percentage rate for random drug testing for the next calendar year. Coast Guard Drug and Alcohol Program Manager Patrick Mannion can be contacted for additional info at at [DAPI@uscg.mil](mailto:DAPI@uscg.mil).

#### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, January 7 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

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

Wednesday, January 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, January 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

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

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