

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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NEW DEVELOPMENT IN M.E.B.A.'S PURSUIT OF FIRST CONTRACT WITH HORNBLOWER

Negotiators are looking for progress in scheduled talks next week with Hornblower after a labor board ruling upheld the legitimacy of a representation election bringing NYC Ferry fleet captains under the M.E.B.A. wing.

Early last year, M.E.B.A. won the right to serve as the collective bargaining agent for NYC Ferry captains, which currently number about 50. The Hornblower-operated HNY Ferry, doing business as NYC Ferry, has a 28-vessel fleet on multiple New York City routes connecting locations in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens. The Union has been meeting with the company in pursuit of a first contract but progress has been slow, in part because the company had been challenging the legality of the representation election. Hornblower had appealed a National Labor Relations Board ruling denying the company's contention that the representation election was not valid because fleet captains should be classified as "supervisors." Supervisors are not governed by the National Labor Relations Act.

However, in a decision released last week, the NLRB, while upholding precedent, dispelled the company's argument that the representation election was not legitimate and *denied* the company's appeal.

M.E.B.A. negotiators led by Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan, will meet with Hornblower representatives in New York next Wednesday to move forward on a first contract for our new members in the NYC Ferry fleet that will help the unit thrive well into the future.

DOD RECOMMENDS STRENGTHENING OF SEALIFT READINESS REPORTING

An audit performed by the Defense Department's Inspector General has determined that both Military Sealift Command and the Maritime Administration need to strengthen their surge sealift readiness reporting process. The IG found that inaccurate reporting produced unreliable information available to the U.S. Transportation Command that could have potentially led "geographic combatant commanders to make incorrect assumptions about the initial availability of equipment and resupply of critical items."

Regarding Military Sealift Command, the report questioned the readiness status reporting of 15 MSC-owned surge sealift ships during Fiscal Years 2017-18. The audit concludes that MSC over-relied on ship contractor information and fell short in their verification process of that data.

The audit also said that MarAd's process follows different criteria than MSC's for readiness assessment and reporting. Therefore, conflicting information could be obtained from the MarAd data using MSC assessment criteria. "For example," the audit stated, "one MarAd ship had a deficiency identified in April 2018 that would have resulted in a not-available rating under the MSC criteria, but MarAd reported the ship as available for 99 days..."

The IG recommended that MSC and MarAd work together strengthening criteria to more accurately report readiness levels while jointly improving the oversight/verification process. The partially redacted report can be viewed online at www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/DODIG-2020-047.pdf

COAST GUARD/MARAD ISSUE CORONAVIRUS ALERTS

The U.S. Coast Guard and Maritime Administration have issued alerts to mariners as global precautions continue in attempts to keep the new Coronavirus outbreak at bay. The pneumonia-type illness, believed to have animal origins, emanated from the city of Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. As of today, there have been almost 8,000 announced cases with nearly 200 deaths. Cases have been discovered in a dozen countries including the U.S. This is a new strain of the virus that is being referred to as "novel coronavirus" (2019-nCoV). Signs and symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. It is currently unclear how easily this virus spreads between people.

The newly-issued Coast Guard Marine Safety Information Bulletin (01-20) (available at <https://tinyurl.com/sd9nj3f>) advises special caution for travelers, especially those visiting China and urges people to use best practices when coughing/sneezing and asks them to wash their hands frequently.

MarAd noted that this is still a rapidly changing situation and authorities are racing to learn more about the new virus. The U.S. State Department has also issued several travel advisories on the outbreak including a Level 4 Advisory ("Do not travel to Hubei province...") The U.S. government is monitoring the situation closely and anticipates updating its recommendations and guidance as needed. Globally, various ship operators are taking actions for crews transiting those areas including health screenings, restriction to ship in affected ports and rescheduling planned Chinese shipyard work. Any maritime industry questions on this issue can be directed to GMCC@uscg.mil.

M.E.B.A. SHIP IN CARGO OPS AT SOUTH POLE

The Waterman-managed heavy lift vessel M/V OCEAN GIANT is wrapping up cargo operations at the South Pole this week for an annual resupply mission. Since 1955, as part of Operation Deep Freeze, the Military Sealift Command resupplies scientists at McMurdo Station, Antarctica.

As they have for several years, MSC contracted the Waterman-managed heavy-lift vessel M/V OCEAN GIANT to bring in six thousand tons of supplies to the remote outpost, such as frozen and dry food stores, building materials, vehicles, and electronic equipment and parts. The familiar ice-pier at the Station was unavailable this year due to severe damage, so the OCEAN GIANT delivered a 65-ton marine causeway system.

The M.E.B.A. crew includes Chief Engineer Dave Morris, 1^s A/E Devin Savoie and 2nd A/E Nicholas Cabral along with MM&P deck officers and an SIU unlicensed crew.

OCEAN GIANT Capt. John Hawkins said, “Cold weather operations create their own set of challenges; things can freeze, workers can get cold, decks can get icy, hydraulic fluids and fuels can get thicker, and machinery in general just prefers a more moderate climate. We deal with cold by providing proper climate rated clothing and training, so we can be as prepared as we can.”

Capt. Hawkins also noted that Antarctica’s remote location is a challenge. The South Pole has no readily available communication grid, which means no cellular access and limited access to the Internet. The simple act of making a phone call becomes a burden that requires the use of a satellite phone system that can be unpredictable and sketchy at best.

“...People have become so used to having communications and access to information that used to be at their fingertips with their mobile phones. Your mobile phone doesn't work (at the Pole). There is limited access to Internet, so you can’t easily check your email or your bank accounts,” said Hawkins. “For someone used to texting a friend or checking out Facebook with their phone, it can be a rude awakening.”

Upon completion of their cargo offload, OCEAN GIANT will load containers of retrograde as well as ice-core samples for scientific study, then return to California’s Port Hueneme.

PLANS INFO: NEW W-4

Since the New Year began, the IRS has required the use of a newly issued W-4 Form. Effective Jan. 1, 2020, the M.E.B.A. Vacation Plan's claim forms was revised to include this new W-4 Form. Information about the revised Form, including an online calculator (IRS Tax Withholding Calculator) that you may find helpful in completing the new Form is available at: <https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-form-w-4>.

If you have specific questions, please consult a tax advisor. The M.E.B.A. Plans staff cannot provide tax advice.

CMES HAS ROOM IN P.E./MARINE MAINTENANCE COURSE

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School announced that space is still available for those wishing to enroll in the next installment of their Port Engineer & Marine Maintenance course. The three-week course runs from March 16 through April 3, 2020. This is the first of three such classes offered this year (also August 10-August 28 and October 12-October 30). The course prepares individuals currently working as port engineers, or those looking to pursue a port engineer position.

Applications may be sent via the CMES website, or can be faxed to (410) 822-7220 or emailed to applications@mebaschool.org

PRESIDENT SIGNS NAFTA REPLACEMENT

President Trump has greenlighted our country’s participation in the newly negotiated U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) after putting his signature on the Congressionally-approved trade agreement. Mexico previously ratified the replacement for the 25-year old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Canada is expected to follow.

After slow-going negotiations on the trade deal over the last few years, a breakthrough took place when AFL-CIO and Democratic lawmakers were able to help toughen up the agreement's labor and environmental provisions and get language dropped from an earlier version that kowtowed to pharmaceutical companies. Some Republicans grumbled that the President made too many giveaways to Democrats in order to reel in a showpiece for his re-election campaign, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell initially called the trade pact "not as good as I had hoped." However, lawmakers fell in line and both chambers approved the trade pact by wide margins leading to this week's signing.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the new deal "is far from perfect," but it makes trade rules "fairer" in a new package that will be more enforceable..."

SAN PEDRO TWIC CENTER MOVES TO LONG BEACH

Members traveling from the M.E.B.A. Union hall in San Pedro, CA to renew their TWIC cards will have to drive a little further beginning next week.

The Rancho Palos Verdes, CA Universal Enrollment Center on Western Avenue, just over a mile from our Union hall, is relocating to Long Beach on February 3rd. The new location, 444 West Ocean Blvd, Suite 800 in Long Beach is a little less than 7 miles from the M.E.B.A. hall.

The Western Ave. facility will close its doors tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. and begin its regular Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. & 12:00 noon-4:00 p.m. hours in Long Beach beginning this Monday.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, February 3 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, February 4 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, February 5 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, February 6 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, February 7 – 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. 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.