

# 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"* Number 1 – January 5, 2023



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### GREAT LAKES ADVOCATES CELEBRATE FUNDING VICTORIES

As weekly readers know, the recently approved \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill for fiscal 2023 has positive implications for U.S. shipping including the Maritime Security Program, the Tanker Security Program, Coast Guard, MarAd and NOAA, among other areas.

The spending bill, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, consisted of 12 Government Department appropriations bills for FY '23. The 4,155-page bill contained \$858 billion in defense funding, aid for Ukraine, disaster aid, and dollars for childcare, food assistance, mental health and a huge array of other projects and programs.

Great Lakes advocates are praising the new law's funding improvements for the "fourth seacoast." In addition to a slew of Lakes' harbor investments and other port infrastructure, the new law pours money into the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and other programs targeted at preserving and enhancing the largest system of fresh surface water. Another trumpeted benefit for the Lakes is the newly created Great Lakes Authority that will operate as a federal regional commission to identify and advance solutions to the economic and environmental challenges facing the eight Great Lakes states.

"The Great Lakes Authority represents a new vision for how to harness existing assets and focus attention and resources to the corner of our nation that makes, builds, and grows America," said Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) who fronted the initiative. "As the home of a highly-skilled workforce, North America's freshwater kingdom, and a growing, innovative hub of manufacturing, energy, agriculture, and defense – the Great Lakes region is poised and ready to capture the future. Through the collaborative work of Republicans and Democrats, our new Great Lakes Authority will serve as a powerful catalyst to strengthen America's heartland and move us ahead for the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

Great Lakes organizations also hailed the National Defense Authorization Act which authorized \$857.9 billion in defense spending for Fiscal Year 2023. That bill was also signed into law in the last two weeks. The NDAA authorized \$857.9 billion in defense spending for Fiscal Year 2023. Among many other provisions, the new law authorized \$350 million for the Coast Guard's acquisition of a new heavy Great Lakes icebreaker. In addition, the Government Accountability Office will be tasked with studying the effectiveness of the USCG's icebreaking mission on the Great Lakes and resources

needed to improve the facilitation of the winter maritime supply chain. Over the past ten years, Great Lakes advocates say the lack of adequate icebreaking on the Great Lakes has caused the loss of over 10,000 jobs and \$2 billion to the economy.

The new law also reauthorized the new large navigational lock (Soo Lock) in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan at a higher amount. Due to inflation and other economic factors, the construction cost of the new lock nearly tripled requiring Congress to add language increasing the authorized amount.

Jim Weakley, President of the Great Lakes Maritime Task Force, called the new law “a big win.” He said, “Finally, there is recognition that the USCG is not adequately resourced to facilitate critical winter navigation on the Great Lakes. The North American economy and our national security are dependent on the raw materials, like iron ore, that need to move effectively to maintain the nation’s steel production.”

#### **“NO FREE WORKERS WITHOUT UNIONS” – POPE’S MESSAGE PRAISES LABOR**

The most recent news from the papacy involves the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, the former German pontiff who was mourned and laid to rest this week.

But recently the head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis, made some news that was more under the radar with another pro-labor address delivered before Italy’s version of the AFL-CIO, the Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL). Pope Francis has promoted the benefits of labor unions many times in the past and, in addition, has had kind words for seafaring men and women. In his recent Christmas message before the group, the Holy Father praised unions’ vital role in the fight against worker exploitation and gender discrimination, and in improving worker safety. “Every death at work is a defeat for the whole of society,” he said. “Rather than counting them at the end of each year, we should remember their names, because they are people and not numbers...It is about training to care about the lives of employees and educating oneself to take safety regulations seriously: only a wise alliance can prevent those “accidents” that are tragedies for families and communities.”

He said the amount of the “working poor” – those who struggle to support their families despite being employed - have continued to increase. Unions give voice to those who have no voice, he said. “I thank you for every initiative that promotes active employment policies and protects people’s dignity.”

The Pontiff worries about the treatment of workers as “performance machines” especially those exploited in agriculture and construction work, “the constraint on grueling shifts, the downward game in contracts, the contempt for motherhood, and the conflict between work and family.” Pope Francis has acknowledged that global seafarers have also faced many hardships and were heroic during the pandemic. The Pope called unions “the salt of a healthy economy, capable of making the world better.” Unions are - and should be - “sentinels” of the working world. Too many people “suffer from lack of work or undignified work: their voices deserve to be heard, they deserve union commitment.”

“There is no union without workers and there are no free workers without unions,” he said.

## **23 STATES RAISE MINIMUM WAGE**

The efforts of workers across the country showed tangible results on January 1, as nearly two-dozen states had minimum wage increases go into effect. The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour hasn't increased since 2009. That is the effective minimum in 20 states where the state minimum wage is set at equal to or below the federal wage. Nearly 30 cities and counties also will raise their minimum wage. Wage increases in 23 states are the result of legislative efforts and automatic cost-of-living increases. The higher wages will directly affect 8.4 million workers and account for more than \$5 billion in pay increases.

As of Dec. 31, 2022, or Jan. 1, 2023, wages increased in Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island and Virginia. Cost-of-living increases are being implemented in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont and Washington. Later this year, Connecticut, Florida, Nevada and Oregon will also see increases in their minimum wages.

## **AMMV CONVENTION BETS ON VEGAS**

The American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV) has shored up details of their upcoming Annual Convention that will be held at the Gold Coast Casino & Hotel in Las Vegas, NV from March 28-31. The AMMV is an organization of active and retired mariners that trumpets the vital role of the men and women of the Merchant Marine and their service to the country during peace and war.

Registration is open and M.E.B.A. members, applicants and retirees are encouraged to attend as the AMMV celebrates the legacy of the U.S. Merchant Marine and spotlights the WWII merchant mariner veterans that will be in attendance. You can go to <https://ammv.us/register/> for more details and sign up.

## **REVISED WARNINGS FOR GULF OF GUINEA TRANSIT**

The world's piracy hotspot was the subject of a renewed advisory issued by the Maritime Administration this week to warn U.S.-flag interests of threats to shipping. Maritime Security Communications with Industry (MSCI) (No. 2023-001) warns that pirates, armed robbers, and kidnapping for ransom (KFR) groups continue to operate off Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo. These nefarious parties, the MSCI states, target a variety of vessels including tankers, containerships, general cargo vessels, fishing vessels, passenger vessels, and vessels supporting oil drilling/production.

These groups have boarded vessels up to 275 nautical miles from shore, and it is not uncommon for them to fire upon vessels during boardings and attempted boardings. KFR groups generally kidnap senior crew members, including the Master and Chief Engineer, and any Western or foreign crew members. Kidnapped crew members are normally taken ashore in the Niger Delta region where KFR groups demand ransom payments in exchange for the safe return of the crew members. Details of Gulf of Guinea incidents can be found in the Office of Naval Intelligence Worldwide Threat to Shipping reports, posted at <https://www.oni.navy.mil/ONI-Reports/Shipping-Threat-Reports/Worldwide-Threat-to-Shipping/>.

## **MEMBERS SHOULD KEEP A CHECK ON DOCS & NOTICES SITE**

Members and applicants are reminded to make use of the "Documents & Member Notices" section of the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) to find important notices and forms relating to the Union and our industry. If a Union hall is closed for a national or local holiday, that information will

be reflected in that section. You might want to double-check the site before making a hall visit. NMC/Coast Guard notices are posted as well including REC information and Marine Safety Information Bulletins.

In addition, you'll find application forms for Deep-Sea, Government Fleet and the various bargaining units. Also posted are Group Seniority Card application forms, Sailing Time Verification & Transmittal forms and Change of Bargaining Unit Affiliation forms. In addition, the M.E.B.A. By-Laws, Constitution and Shipping Rules are there as well as many other important documents including the Recommendation Form - (*Reminder: two recommendation letters are needed from a Senior officer who sailed with the Applicant for at least 60 days.*)

Please make it a habit to get familiar with that web page. To get there, go to the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) and scroll down to the large "Documents & Member Notices" box on the right side of the main page.

## FACEBOOK PHOTOS NEEDED

We are always looking for photos from any of the M.E.B.A. bargaining units to keep our Facebook site current. Members are urged to send in your photos to [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org). Any photos with an M.E.B.A. connection, at sea or ashore, are appreciated. Digital pictures should be taken at the highest resolution setting. In all cases, make sure you ID. the photos. Check out the M.E.B.A. Facebook site which is usually updated daily.

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

Friday, January 6 – Honolulu@1100.

Monday, February 6 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, February 7 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, February 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; **Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thurs. February 9 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, February 10 – 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.*