

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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UNION SUCCESSFULLY FULFILLS OBLIGATIONS FOR MARAD PAPER BREAKOUT

Earlier today, M.E.B.A. satisfied our exercise obligations of a massive tabletop Government fleet activation by (virtually) filling engine and deck jobs for 19 vessels. The M.E.B.A.-crewed MarAd (RRF) vessels that were "activated" are managed by Patriot Contract Services, Matson Navigation and Keystone Shipping.

The Maritime Administration oversees this simulated breakout that helps evaluate whether the industry's workforce is capable of supporting a major ramp-up of surge sealift ships. This was a paper exercise and mariners were not required to report to the vessels.

Specifically, the Command Post Exercise simulates the activation of the Ready Reserve Force fleet and Military Sealift Command surge vessels to test procedures and coordination necessary to meet strategic sealift requirements.

The exercise began on Wednesday afternoon requiring phone calls to members with the appropriate licenses and qualifications. Members currently serving aboard vessels were not eligible for the exercise. Many thanks to our Point Persons on this exercise: Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway, NY/NJ Patrolman Nico Sermoneta, Oakland Dispatcher Michelle McGlaston and Seattle Dispatcher Joshua Hahn. Each proved relentless in the task as they summoned qualified mariners and began to "crew up the ships" on paper. Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith helped oversee the successful completion of the exercise.

Those who filled virtual jobs are not precluded from taking actual shipping work. Exercise participants may receive a follow-up communication from MarAd to verify their information. Our thanks go out to all the members and applicants who participated in Breakout 2021!

Members, applicants and retirees should make sure to keep the Union updated with their latest contact information and other important data to assist our records and ability to better pursue initiatives and job opportunities for our membership.

MARITIME COALITION URGES REVERSAL OF CARGO PREFERENCE CUTS

USA Maritime, a coalition of maritime unions, associations and shipping companies - including the M.E.B.A. and AMC – is urging lawmakers to reverse a damaging cut to cargo preference laws made a decade ago and add important preference provisions to future infrastructure programs that would help reinforce the U.S. Merchant Marine.

In 2012, Congress lowered the food aid cargo preference level from 75% to 50% which ushered in a precipitous (25%) reduction of the internationally-trading U.S.-flag fleet over the next decade “The commensurate loss of jobs was significant,” USA Maritime noted in a letter sent to House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio, “and the impact on American national security and readiness has been serious.”

The Coalition called for Members of Congress to repeal the 2012 cut and potentially increase the requirements to 100% to “undo the damage,” fortify, and increase our U.S.-flag international fleet. In addition, USA Maritime called on Congress to supplement future infrastructure plans with included cargo preference provisions to ensure this critical investment in America also supports U.S. mariner jobs and our country’s flag fleet.

FIRST SHIP IN MSC FLEET OILER RENEWAL PROGRAM CHRISTENED

The 742-foot USNS JOHN LEWIS, the first of six planned fleet oiler newbuilds that will join the Military Sealift Command fleet, was christened this week at San Diego’s NASSCO shipyard. The LEWIS and the Lewis-class vessels will provide underway replenishment of fuel and stores to US Navy ships at sea and jet fuel for aircraft assigned to aircraft carriers. M.E.B.A. represents the engineers in MSC’s Civilian Mariner fleet.

The ship’s sponsor, actress and activist Alfre Woodard Spencer, christened the ship with the traditional champagne bottle break alongside the hull. The vessel is named after the Congressman and American civil rights leader John Lewis. The christening took place on the one-year anniversary of his death.

The Lewis-class oilers have the capacity to carry 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and sail up to a speed of 20 knots.

In addition to the christening of this ship, three vessels in the T-AO class fleet oiler program – the future USNS HARVEY MILK, the future USNS EARL WARREN, and the future USNS ROBERT F. KENNEDY – are currently under construction. The second ship, the future USNS HARVEY MILK is scheduled to launch later this year.

CANADA LOOKS TO LIFT CRUISE BAN IN NOVEMBER

The Canadian Government may relax its prohibition on large passenger vessels operating in Canadian waters sooner than expected. The COVID situation had prompted the country to bar cruise ships and Arctic pleasure craft from making stops in Canada until March 2022. Now, it says the prohibition could be lifted as soon as November 1, 2021 “if operators are able to fully comply with public health requirements.”

The ban induced U.S. lawmakers to pass a workaround bill, since signed into law, that temporarily relaxes Passenger Vessel Service Act (PVSA) provisions to allow foreign-flag cruise ships to bypass Canada on Alaska cruises from Washington. The existing exemption only applies for specified list of cruise ships and remains in place only as long as the Canadian ban is in effect.

Foreign-flagged passenger vessels need to make Canadian stops on their voyages to the Last Frontier to satisfy the PVSA. The Act prohibits foreign-flagged cruise ships from directly operating between two U.S. ports.

The Government of Canada continues to advise Canadians to avoid all travel on cruise ships outside the country until further notice.

NMC'S EXAM RENEWALS BY EMAIL WORKING WELL

Over 1,200 mariners have completed more than 3,000 examination modules using email in a system that was introduced by the National Maritime Center (NMC) in May 2020. The process allows mariners to request, complete, and submit renewal examinations for grading by e-mail. NMC announced that they have received “overwhelmingly positive” feedback since the process was implemented and mariners believe it has contributed to improved communication and significant reduction in processing time. NMC is currently discouraging requests to mail hardcopy examinations. You can learn more about electronic examinations from <https://www.dco.uscg.mil/nmc/examinations/>

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback regarding this process, contact the NMC Customer Service Center by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

OMSA VESSEL PATROLLING OFFSHORE JONES ACT VIOLATIONS

The Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA), which represents entities that own and operate marine service vessels, has deployed a new tool to help root out Jones Act violators. OMSA has chartered a vessel known as the JONES ACT ENFORCER that will help keep the offshore service industry honest by collecting video and photographic evidence of violators which will be sent to authorities and made public.

OMSA says that the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has approved dozens of loophole requests through the years from foreign vessel owners that are not found in law. Such loopholes, OMSA says, are then exploited repeatedly by other vessels. “Each time the loophole is exploited,” they said, “American crewmembers lose out.”

“The Jones Act is very simple, if a foreign vessel picks up cargo at one point in the United States, and takes it to another point, it has broken the law,” said OMSA President Aaron Smith. “Foreign vessels have succeeded in confusing this issue for a long time. Now, we’re going to shine a bright spotlight on their actions and show everyone just how many foreign mariners are taking money out of U.S. mariners’ pockets. If foreign vessel owners or the companies they work for don’t like this scrutiny, I suggest they hire U.S. owned, U.S. crewed, and U.S. built vessels.”

LABOR FEDERATION DRUMMING UP PRO ACT SUPPORT

This week, the AFL-CIO trumpeted the “Protecting the Right to Organize Act”, better known as the PRO Act, in a nationwide week of action. Among other things, the legislation would revamp labor laws to beef-up collective bargaining rights and otherwise strengthen the hand of workers while weakening so-called right-to-work laws. It would impose penalties on employers who interfere with worker rights to form a union and eliminate many obstacles companies use to prevent workers from having a real voice on the job.

The PRO Act passed the House along party lines but passage in the Senate would require the bill to meet a 60-vote threshold (to override a filibuster), which it doesn't appear to have.

The Labor Federation, and many of its affiliates, turned out at state office rallies across the country, held press conferences, and both mailed and handed out literature.

AFL-CIO noted, "Our outdated labor laws have been chipped away and weakened by anti-worker legislators. Every day, we hear about corporations openly union-busting and retaliating against workers without consequence. That's why we need the PRO Act, the most significant worker empowerment legislation since the Great Depression. If it passes, it would empower workers to form unions and bargain over wages and work conditions; Hold corporations accountable for union-busting. Repeal "right to work" laws, which were created during the Jim Crow era to divide Black and White workers. Strong unions mean higher wages, safer working conditions and dignity for all people who work. Passing the PRO Act is our first step to getting there."

You can visit <https://proact.aflcio.org/actions/sign-the-petition-to-support-workers-and-democracy/> to sign a petition and go to <https://proact.aflcio.org/actions/write-your-u-s-senators-and-tell-them-to-pass-the-pro-act/> to fill out an easy form that allows you to encourage your Senators to support this important labor legislation.

LONG LIVE SCABBY THE RAT!! NLRB OKAYS PROTEST RODENT

In a 3-1 decision, the National Labor Relations Board found that the public use of a 12-foot inflatable rat with red eyes, fangs, and claws, widely known as "Scabby the Rat," as well as certain banners targeting employers, do not violate the National Labor Relations Act. Such props typically used in labor protests are loathed by employers and enraged the former Trump-appointed NLRB General Counsel Peter Robb who worked against pro-worker policies on the Board before his 2021 Inauguration Day firing. Robb previously argued that the display of such items are unlawfully coercive, and said that the Board should overrule precedent.

The case was put before the NLRB following a labor dispute between Local 150 of the International Union of Operating Engineers and an RV supplier (Lippert Components) in 2018. Lippert filed an unfair labor practice charge against the union after the labor protest that took place near the entrance of an RV trade show in Elkhart, Ind.

Three members of the Board joined in an opinion dismissing the complaint. In her separate concurrence, Chairman Lauren McFerran expressed her belief that the outcome of this case was required by Board precedent. In their separate concurrence, Members Marvin Kaplan and John Ring agreed that the complaint must be dismissed here to avoid creating a possible conflict with the First Amendment, but expressed disagreement with some aspects of prior precedent. Member William Emanuel, dissenting, believes the display of the banners and rat violates the Act.

REPORT: TECHNOLOGY, CONNECTIVITY KEY FOR MARINER NEEDS OF TOMORROW

A new report, conducted by mobile satellite communications company Inmarsat, explores the future of mariners 30 years from now and offers recommendations on how shipping, training institutions and welfare services can respond to the changing needs of tomorrow's seafarers.

The study, ‘A Fair Future for Seafarers?’ finds that digital crew welfare services will be central to shipping’s ability to deliver fairer conditions for global seafarers. Gazing into their crystal ball at the shipping industry of 2050, the report suggests epidemics and pandemics may become more common, predicts that crew safety, fatigue and harassment issues are unlikely to recede in the short term, and foresees the potential for seafarer abandonment and criminalization as growing problems that need to be addressed.

They also highlight connectivity as a necessity. “Seafarers in 2050 will likely have greater interaction and engagement with teams of people ashore,” according to the report. Shipping economics and carbon emission strategies point to shorter port stays. Welfare services will become more digitally focused than physical, face-to-face contact. Lower crew numbers and shorter shore leaves will also mean less reliance on seafarer centers, therefore online charity outreach services will grow in vital importance.

In 2050, seafarers will have been born into the digital era, the authors note. But the use of artificial intelligence (AI), 3D printing, and extended reality (XR) technology onboard will still demand higher levels of technical training, they say.

The report can be downloaded at <https://tinyurl.com/2nbns5u3>

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, August 2 – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300;

Tuesday, August 3 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, August 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online Headquarters “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No voting)

Thursday, August 5 – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, August 6 – 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 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. 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.