

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 27 – July 8, 2021



In this issue//MLL Reopener Talks//ATC Reopener Completed//Tanker Fleet Receives Needed DOD Endorsement//Ferry Investment Part of House-Passed Transport Infrastructure Bill//Relief over End of EVER GIVEN Saga//Executive Order Would Target Anti-Competitive Shipping Practices//Norfolk Branch Agent Honored by USMMA//Book Gives Tips for Mariner Mental Health Improvement//

MLL REOPENER TALKS

M.E.B.A. negotiators, including a rank-and-file team, began discussions with Maersk Line, Ltd. this week in reopener talks. The parties discussed wages and benefits as well as other economic terms of employment. The reopener covers 19 ships over three contracts (MLL, E-Ships & M-Ships). The overall agreements expire in 2025.

Talks with the company took place at Headquarters on Wednesday and Thursday of this week. Rank-and-file members on the M.E.B.A. team included Dan Davis (Captain on the ALLIANCE NORFOLK) and Keith Turcotte (Chief Engineer on the MAERSK DURBAN). Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan is overseeing negotiations for the Union and is also being assisted by HQ Contracts Officer Mark Gallagher. Talks are expected to continue in August when bargaining dates can be isolated.

ATC REOPENER COMPLETED

The M.E.B.A. finalized a reopener agreement with ATC/OSG effective July 1, 2021, covering our engineers on the Alaska Tanker Company vessels. M.E.B.A. represents engineers onboard the ALASKAN EXPLORER, ALASKAN LEGEND, and ALASKAN NAVIGATOR. Among other things, the new MOU includes increases in Company contribution to pension and medical, as well as codifying OT and paid day off. M.E.B.A. established a floor for a reopener next year as oil markets are now recovering from the global pandemic.

The M.E.B.A. team was led by Executive Vice President Claudia Cimini, assisted by Gulf Coast Vice President Adam Smith, Oakland Patrolman Max Alper, and an ATC rank-and-file team consisting of Andrew Wormwood, Justin Harding, and Mikel Avery.

RELEASE OF TRANSCOM STUDY CONFIRMS DOD ENDORSEMENT OF TANKER PROGRAM

A long-awaited report conducted by the U.S. Transportation Command confirms the military significance and need for a Tanker Security Program (TSP), a crucial endorsement needed for the appropriation of funds to establish the fleet. The proposed Tanker Security Program would be a fleet of 10 commercial U.S.-flag petroleum product tankers modeled after the Maritime Security Program. It would support our nation's long-term strategic defense needs and reduce the U.S. military's reliance on foreign-flag commercial vessels while also expanding the qualified mariner pool.

The Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) provided the authority for the establishment of a TSP contingent on the results of the Mobility Capabilities and Requirements Study (MCRS), which was in process at that point.

With this week's release of the tanker portion of the MCRS, and the delivery of the report to Congress, TRANSCOM has now confirmed their support for the TSP based on national interest. They note that their endorsement of the tanker fleet is based on a number of factors creating uncertainty that the Defense Department has sufficient tanker access to fulfill needs in a contested environment.

The President's recently-released budget plan for Fiscal Year 2022 included full funding for the TSP (\$60 million). TRANSCOM's confirmation of the value of the program is an important step toward securing federal funding from Congress required for the launch of the initial Tanker Security fleet.

FERRY INVESTMENT PART OF HOUSE-PASSED TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE BILL

Late last month, the House of Representatives approved a \$715 billion surface transportation reauthorization and water infrastructure bill that would provide significant federal investments in rebuilding American roads, highways, ports, rail and transit systems. The INVEST in America Act, that passed by a vote of 221 to 201 (largely on party lines), also included \$560 million for ferry operations as well as the construction of ferry boats and ferry terminals.

In addition, the legislation would require the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on the capital investment needs of U.S. public ferries and how federal funding programs are meeting such needs.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan group of senators reached a deal on a \$579 billion infrastructure proposal endorsed by President Biden. The outcome of these negotiations remain unclear as lawmakers and the White House discuss other provisions that could complicate the process including disagreements over how to pay for it.

RELIEF OVER END OF EVER GIVEN SAGA

The International Transport Workers' Federation and other unions and groups representing seafarer interests expressed relief that mariners aboard the much-maligned M/V EVER GIVEN can get back to work after the ship was released from detention. The EVER GIVEN made headlines earlier this year when the ship got stuck - splayed across the Suez Canal – shutting down the vital waterway for a week. This week, a financial dispute was finally settled between Canal authorities and the vessel's Japanese owners, allowing for the release of the vessel from a 3-month detention. A Suez Canal Authority lawyer announced that the EVER GIVEN “is always welcome” to sail through the Canal in the future.

ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton noted that the EVER GIVEN seafarer unions have ensured that the mariners aboard were well-cared for and well-represented. Eight original crewmembers were able to sign off since the incident and 17 more are still serving aboard until their assignments end.

“While we celebrate this outcome,” said Cotton, “our attention is still on the 200,000 seafarers trapped working on vessels unable to go home due to the worsening crew change crisis.”

Indian Seafarer union official Abdulgani Serang noted that no charges or negative findings were lodged against the crew, but he expressed disappointment that Egyptian authorities used the crew as leverage in financial negotiations with the ship's insurer. He said, "We are pleased that this ordeal is finally over for the crew. Their professionalism has been confirmed by a lack of adverse findings. Like all seafarers, it is through their passion and commitment that they are able to rise to the challenge and make the sacrifices required to move the world."

EXECUTIVE ORDER WOULD TARGET ANTICOMPETITIVE SHIPPING PRACTICES

The *Wall Street Journal* and other news agencies are reporting that the President is planning to issue an Executive Order that would aid U.S. consumers by helping to scale back anti-competitive pricing by ocean shippers.

The report said the forthcoming Order, that would also address the railroad industry, is being issued to help remedy prices that have continued to rise, in part because of consolidation and reduced competition. Sources said the Order would direct the Federal Maritime Commission and the Surface Transportation Board to consider ways to increase competition and crack down on unreasonable fees.

NORFOLK BRANCH AGENT HONORED BY USMMA

M.E.B.A. Norfolk Branch Agent/Government Fleet Representative Jack Menendez was honored by the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy recently for distinguishing himself within our industry. The Academy tapped him as one of this year's recipients of its "Outstanding Professional Achievement Award."

The Award is presented to an anniversary year graduate who attains personal achievement in his or her chosen field thus lending honor and prestige to the Academy, the Alumni Association and Foundation and to its midshipmen. Jack joins a long list of accomplished Kings Point graduates including many great M.E.B.A. members.

Jack was a 1976 Kings point graduate who served as Master, Chief Mate and Second Mate on almost every government and commercial M.E.B.A. contract. He also spent time in the Navy and is a longtime adjunct instructor at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. Congratulations Jack!

Jennifer Boykin ('86), who is the President of Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia, was named as the USMMA Alumni Association and Foundation (AAF)'s 2021 Kings Pointer of the Year.

BOOK GIVES TIPS FOR MENTAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT FOR MARINERS

Clinical psychologists at Mental Health Support Solutions (MHSS), a group that provides mental health support at sea and ashore, has published a book with tips and guidance on how seafarers can maintain or improve their mental wellbeing while aboard a vessel or onshore. The 30-page booklet, titled *A Guide To Mental Health at Sea: How to Prevent Stress and Depression*, features helpful advice for crew members, particularly those struggling more so than usual amid the coronavirus pandemic.

There has been an uptick of calls at the MHSS hotline service from crew members suffering mentally after being denied shore leave. The rise in calls was linked to the renewed crew-change crisis caused by COVID-19 surges in countries such as India, forcing many seafarers to stay on board vessels beyond their assignments.

MHSS said, “Our book, created specifically for seafarers, provides helpful tips and easy ways to improve your wellbeing on board and ashore. Through simple methods, theories and illustrations, you will learn how to support your mental health at all times. You will discover ways to prevent the most common issues affecting the wellbeing of people around the world such as stress, anxiety and depression. This book will help you to adopt a more relaxed lifestyle, learn the importance and benefits of good mental health hygiene and explore ways of regulating stress levels in everyday life.”

The book is available at <https://tinyurl.com/nvp3fdc8>

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – ALL *REGULAR* MEETINGS ARE IN-PERSON

(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.