

# 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 24 – June 13, 2024



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## **M.E.B.A. CREW PART OF RESCUE EFFORTS ON TEXAS A&M TRAINING SHIP**

On Sunday morning, cadets aboard the Texas A&M Maritime Academy's T/S KENNEDY received first-hand training answering the first law of the sea - rendering aid to those in distress. Shortly before daybreak, cadet lookouts spotted a small vessel disabled and drifting in the Gulf of Mexico with her crew in distress. In coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard, professional crew, including M.E.B.A. members and retirees, aided in the rescue of three individuals who had been adrift for 15 days. The rescued persons were medically treated and received care. The KENNEDY made a quick detour offshore of Key West to drop the individuals off with the U.S. Coast Guard who took charge of their care.

The event occurred during the academy's annual summer sea semester on the 540-foot training vessel. The 171 student cadets onboard are applying classroom learning to real-world environments through daily training in navigation, engineering, maintenance, safety and security while attending classes. Training for marine transportation students includes standing watch to survey the waters and surrounding areas for possible dangers and abnormalities.

The M.E.B.A. crew onboard the T/S KENNEDY includes Milton Korn, Terence Cooper, John Beal, William O'Rourke, David Maccini, Lana Nguyen, Jessica Gratzner, Alexander Hicks, Jon Lincoln, James Gompper and Steve Gardiner.

## **CAL MARITIME CONSIDERING MERGER WITH CAL POLY**

A 30% enrollment decline over the past seven years has prompted the California State University Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime) to consider a merger with California Polytechnic State University.

Cal Maritime is one of six state maritime academies in the U.S. and the sole academy on the West Coast. CMA Executive Vice Chancellor Steve Relyea and Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs Nathan Evans made the recommendation to Chancellor Mildred García, explaining that bold and decisive action is necessary to address growing financial challenges and enrollment declines at Cal Maritime that have undermined its viability as a standalone institution. "The integration of Cal Maritime and Cal Poly will benefit the students, faculty and staff of both institutions, as well as advance the broader mission of the CSU system by enhancing the quality,

diversity and sustainability of the CSU's academic programs and services statewide," said Relyea and Evans. "In addition, it will serve industry and workforce needs of the state of California and of the nation while also supporting U.S. economic and national security interests. We are confident in our recommendation."

Under the recommendation, Cal Maritime would retain its maritime focus within Cal Poly, with the integration of operations, resources and governance structure. CMA's specialized degree programs, three of which lead to a Merchant Marine license, would continue to be offered at the Vallejo campus. Cal Maritime's students would become part of the Cal Poly student body and gain access to a broad range of academic facilities and student services.

The integration, which would be complete by the start of the 2026-27 academic year, requires the approval of the CMA's Board of Trustees. The board will be asked to act on the recommendation at its November 2024 meeting following information sessions at its July and September meetings.

### **SOLIDARITY WITH SIU OVER FALLEN VP**

The M.E.B.A. expresses its sadness and sympathies to the family, friends, and colleagues of SIU Government Services V.P. Nick Celona, who unexpectedly passed away last week at the age of 65. Celona, a respected and dedicated union member, died at his home in New Orleans on June 8, apparently from natural causes.

A 1977 graduate of the Paul Hall Center, Celona found a lasting home with the SIU. His maritime career started in the engine department, where he sailed until 1982, continually upgrading his skills to chief electrician. Celona's commitment to the union was evident as he transitioned from sailing to union leadership. He served as a patrolman in New Orleans from 1983-1988, actively involved in multiple inland disputes. In 1989, he became the port agent in Piney Point before making a long-term move to the West Coast. Celona served as the union's San Francisco port agent from 1990-1994 and was promoted to assistant vice president in 1994. Since the summer of 2021, he had held the position of vice president, contributing significantly to the union's leadership. Nick Celona's dedication, hard work, and leadership have left an indelible mark on the union and the maritime community. His passing is a significant loss, and he will be deeply missed by all who knew and worked with him.

### **PANAMA CANAL CONTINUES TO INCREASE TRANSITS**

The Panama Canal continues to ease restrictions following drastic actions taken last year in the wake of record droughts that affected the Canal's water level. The Canal Authority steadily reduced daily ship transits late last year and into 2024, permitting only 18 transits a day as late as February. But after the situation eased somewhat, daily transits were steadily increased. Now they announce, effective July 11, transits will increase to 33 a day and go to 34 as of July 22, based on the current and projected level of Gatun Lake for the coming weeks, and due to the arrival of the rainy season in the Panama Canal Watershed.

With these progressive increases, by July 22 the Canal will have added two transits to the current schedule: one to the Panamax locks (raising the daily transits to 25), and one to the neo-Panamax locks (increasing daily transits to 9). Additionally, an increase in draft from 45 to 46 feet was announced, effective June 15.

## **BILL WOULD END FORCED ARBITRATION IN THE WORKPLACE**

House and Senate bills reintroduced this week would end forced arbitration clauses and protect workers' ability to pursue work-related claims in court. House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) are leading efforts in their respective chambers on behalf of the Restoring Justice for Workers Act, a bill first introduced in 2019.

The bill would override the 2018 Supreme Court decision, *Epic Systems v. Lewis*, which allowed employers to continue to enforce arbitration clauses against workers. These arbitration clauses prevent workers from banding together to enforce their legal rights and are often buried in the fine print of employment contracts, meaning many workers are not aware they've waived their rights. The use of forced arbitration clauses that block workers' access to the courts has led to widespread non-enforcement of workers' rights, including their right to minimum wage, overtime, and to a workplace free of discrimination.

## **4th ANNUAL LEROY KOEHLER DISC GOLF TOURNAMENT ON SATURDAY**

The M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) will host its fourth annual Leroy Koehler Disc (Frisbee) Golf Tournament on Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. Everyone is invited. The tournament benefits the Memorial Park at the CMES.

As you know, the Memorial was created to honor fallen seafarers who have delivered the goods and answered the call of this country since 1775. The Foundation supporting the Memorial is a section 501(c)(3) entity under Internal Revenue Service rules, so all donations are tax deductible. Leroy Koehler was a greatest generation mariner and consummate Chief Engineer who deeply cared about the M.E.B.A. heritage and made a generous financial contribution to the Memorial Park.

There is a \$25 entry fee for the tournament which will begin as early as 9 a.m., though stragglers will be allowed to tee off a little later, as long as it's reasonable.

For further information, contact 4MF Chairman Bill Van Loo at (443) 676-6248 or [bvanloo@bvlworks.org](mailto:bvanloo@bvlworks.org)

## **REPORT DETAILS PRO-LABOR GAINS IN CURRENT NLRB**

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) recently released a report outlining how the Biden administration's National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has consistently supported the rights of workers to form unions and collectively bargain for the wages and benefits we need.

The report notes that the current administration has nominated experienced worker advocates to the NLRB and secured the largest increase in funding for the agency in nearly a decade. Those appointees have addressed issues such as employee status under the law, the scope of concerted activity protected by the law, the representation process, and remedies for violations of the law. The report noted the agency has reinvigorated its enforcement of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and expanded its outreach efforts to ensure that more workers can exercise their rights to a union and collective action with their co-workers.

## **MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT INFO IS ON FILE WITH HQ**

The membership should make sure that M.E.B.A. Headquarters has your contact information on file including mailing and email address. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) located in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by e-mail [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org) or even regular mail.

The HQ database is NOT LINKED to the databases at the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore OR the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. To update your information with Plans, you can find the “M.E.B.A. Address Change Form” on the Plans website ([www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org)) under “Forms, Documents & Notices” then “Medical Plan Forms.”

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

Monday, July 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, July 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, July 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, July 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, July 12 – **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. The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org). M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org)*