

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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AMC APPOINTS O'CONNOR AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The American Maritime Congress (AMC) has announced the appointment of Elizabeth O'Connor as its new Executive Director, following an extensive nationwide search. O'Connor succeeds Fair Kim, who has successfully led the AMC since 2021. The AMC is a maritime research and educational organization advocating for the U.S. Merchant Marine and made up of M.E.B.A.-contracted companies. Most recently, O'Connor served as Chief Counsel at the Maritime Administration (MarAd), where she supported agency leadership in promoting and developing U.S.-flag shipping. She reported to work on Monday. Kim will remain with the organization through a designated transition period to ensure a seamless handover. A proven leader within the U.S. maritime sector, O'Connor brings extensive experience supporting the U.S. Merchant Marine through her tenure at MarAd and her previous work with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Her hands-on expertise in the transportation sector uniquely positions her to advance AMC's mission of cultivating a robust, resilient, and reliable U.S.-flagged fleet.

"We are delighted to welcome Elizabeth O'Connor as our new Executive Director," said M.E.B.A. President and AMC Chairman Adam Vokac. "Elizabeth is a dynamic, values-driven leader whose diverse background and excellent track record will further AMC's multi-faceted mission to ensure reliable trade, bolster diplomatic strength, and secure fair futures for American workers. The Board looks forward to Elizabeth unlocking the full potential of AMC as the premier voice for the workers and shipping companies dedicating their lives to the U.S. Merchant Marine and our national security." The AMC Board of Directors expressed its deep appreciation for outgoing Executive Director Fair Kim. "The AMC is incredibly grateful to Fair Kim for his dedicated leadership over the last five years," the Board stated in a joint remark. "Fair's strategic efforts have significantly strengthened the AMC. Having given advance notice of his desire to transition out of the role, he graciously agreed to continue leading the organization until a suitable successor was found. We wish him the absolute best in his next chapter."

HOUSE VOTES TO PUT NEWLY ORGANIZED WORKERS ON FASTER TRACK TO FIRST CONTRACTS

In a significant victory for working people and organized labor, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Faster Labor Contracts Act (FLCA), bipartisan legislation designed to prevent employers

from delaying first contracts after workers vote to unionize. The bill, led by Representatives Donald Norcross (D-N.J.) and Pete Stauber (R-Minn.), would amend the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) to establish clear timelines for negotiating first collective bargaining agreements. Under the legislation, employers would be required to begin bargaining within 10 days after workers vote to form a union. If the parties fail to reach an agreement within 90 days, the dispute would move to mediation, followed by binding arbitration if necessary. The legislation advanced after a successful discharge petition forced the bill onto the House floor for a vote. Labor organizations have hailed the measure as one of the most important worker-protection bills to reach Congress in decades.

The AFL-CIO, representing 65 affiliated unions and approximately 15 million workers, strongly supports the measure, arguing that current labor law allows employers to drag out negotiations for months or even years after workers successfully organize. According to labor advocates, first contracts currently take an average of more than 450 days to secure, leaving many newly organized workers without the benefits they voted to achieve. “Victory is too often followed by years of bad-faith delay,” the AFL-CIO noted in a letter urging passage of the legislation. The federation said the bill would close a major loophole in federal labor law and help ensure that employers bargain in good faith.

The M.E.B.A. strongly supports the FLCA and its goal of ensuring that workers who exercise their right to organize are able to secure the benefits of collective bargaining without unnecessary delays. The legislation now moves to the Senate, where a companion bill introduced by Senators Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) and Cory Booker (D-N.J.) has attracted bipartisan support. If approved by the Senate and signed into law, the measure would mark one of the most significant changes to federal labor law in decades.

ANTI-JONES ACT CAMPAIGN RENEWS PUSH FOR REPEAL

A well-funded advocacy campaign is once again targeting the Jones Act, with the so-called “Americans for Prosperity (AFP),” backed by billionaire Charles Koch, launching a six-figure digital effort urging Congress to permanently repeal the cornerstone maritime law that has supported the U.S. Merchant Marine for more than a century. The campaign includes online advertising and grassroots outreach designed to generate constituent pressure on lawmakers. AFP argues that the Jones Act increases transportation costs by requiring cargo moved between U.S. ports to be carried on vessels that are U.S.-built, U.S.-owned, U.S.-flagged, and predominantly U.S.-crewed.

Supporters of repeal contend that eliminating the law would reduce shipping costs and lower prices for consumers. AFP points to the emergency Jones Act waivers issued during the 2026 Strait of Hormuz crisis as evidence that the law can complicate domestic energy transportation during supply disruptions. Transportation costs represent only a small portion of the final price of most goods and that studies frequently cited by opponents fail to account for the broader economic and national security benefits generated by the domestic maritime industry. In addition, the Jones Act helps sustain the U.S.-flag fleet, preserves critical maritime jobs, supports domestic shipbuilding capabilities, and provides a pool of trained American mariners available to support military sealift operations during national emergencies and armed conflicts. Repeal would likely shift a significant portion of domestic waterborne commerce to foreign-owned and foreign-crewed vessels, increasing U.S. dependence on overseas shipping interests while further eroding the nation’s already limited commercial shipbuilding capacity.

AFL-CIO SUES OVER WHITE HOUSE BURDEN ON UNIONS

The AFL-CIO filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration over a new Department of Labor rule that violates federal law in an effort to drain union resources away from organizing and representing workers. The rule adds excessive, burdensome financial reporting requirements on unions in violation of the Administrative Procedures Act and other laws. The policy, known as “the LM-2 long form,” is designed to drown unions in paperwork and drain them of resources needed to organize, collectively bargain, and advocate for their members — especially for smaller unions who are particularly challenged to take on the additional administrative burden. Meanwhile, wealthy corporations continue to go under-scrutinized, allowed to get away with minimal reporting requirements compared to the unions who represent the workers that create their profit.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said, “Whether they’re stripping one million federal workers of their collective bargaining rights or illegally springing unnecessary reporting requirements on unions, they’re using every tool in the toolbox to come after workers. But the labor movement doesn’t back down and will fight every one of these attacks. We’ll see the administration in court.”

The AFL-CIO submitted comments condemning a version of this rule when the Trump administration first proposed it in 2020. That proposal was later withdrawn in 2021. Now the AFL-CIO says the administration performed a bait-and-switch on workers and their representatives: first releasing a manageable, legally founded LM-2 rule in 2025 — which the AFL-CIO supported — only to swap it out with this new version, without the required public comment period. The AFL-CIO lawsuit asks the court to immediately halt the implementation of the new rule while litigation continues.

CHIEF ENGINEER CHARGED IN KEY BRIDGE DISASTER

Federal prosecutors filed a criminal charge against the former chief engineer of the containership DALI, alleging he failed to report a critical safety issue before the vessel’s catastrophic collision with Baltimore’s Francis Scott Key Bridge in March 2024. Karthikeyan Deenadayalan was charged in U.S. District Court in Maryland with violating the federal Port and Waterways Safety Act. According to court filings, prosecutors contend that he knowingly failed to notify the U.S. Coast Guard that the vessel was operating two generators with an improperly configured fuel pump that lacked a required backup system.

M.E.B.A. believes that criminal charges should be reserved to vessel principals rather than the crew, arguing that responsibility for the March 2024 Key Bridge disaster rests with the ship’s foreign owners and operators. As he argued in a recent editorial, Vokac said the incident cannot be attributed solely to a single mechanical failure, but instead reflects a broader pattern of cost-cutting, inadequate maintenance, and disregard for U.S. maritime safety standards. He further stated that compliance with U.S. maritime laws and the use of American-crewed operations would likely have prevented the onboard blackouts, the subsequent collision with the Francis Scott Key Bridge, and the loss of six lives.

The charge follows a broader federal investigation that resulted in indictments against Singapore-based ship manager Synergy Marine and former technical superintendent Radhakrishnan Karthik Nair. They face allegations that company officials concealed the fuel pump issue and misled investigators following the disaster. Their criminal trial is scheduled for October 2027.

Meanwhile, civil litigation stemming from the collapse has largely been resolved through settlements, including agreements addressing claims related to the deaths of the six workers. Earlier this year, Maryland, ship manager Synergy Marine, and ship owner Grace Ocean reached a \$2.25 billion settlement. Remaining legal disputes primarily involve claims for economic damages by businesses and local governments.

NORFOLK, BALTIMORE AREA MEMBERS CAN GET EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT HISTORIC TALL SHIP AT SAIL 250 CELEBRATION

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, ports along the East Coast will welcome an international fleet of historic vessels as part of the Sail 250 festivities. Among them is the legendary tall ship *Gazela*, and M.E.B.A. members will have a unique opportunity to visit the vessel and connect with one of our own serving aboard the ship. M.E.B.A. member Dan Luglio is working on the *Gazela* as a volunteer and welcomes fellow members to stop by, tour the ship during public access periods, and learn more about her history and operation. You can visit www.philashipguild.org/america250-gazela125 for more.

Gazela will participate in two Sail 250 events that may be of particular interest to M.E.B.A. members: **Portsmouth, VA** (across the river from Norfolk) – from Friday, June 19 to Monday, June 22 and **Baltimore, MD** – Thursday, June 25 to Sunday, June 28. There are also additional Tall Ship festivals in Boston (July 11-16) and New York City (July 4-8) that will be of interest to members, though the *Gazela* won't take part in those as it will be back in Philadelphia for July 4 festivities. See www.sail250.org for details.

Built in Portugal in 1901, *Gazela* has spent 125 years preserving a remarkable chapter of maritime history. Originally constructed as a commercial cod-fishing vessel, she crossed the Grand Banks for decades, fishing the waters off northeastern Canada until 1969. Today, *Gazela* is maintained and operated by the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild (PSPG), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving traditional maritime skills and heritage.

The vessel is a wooden barkentine — believed to be the oldest surviving vessel of her type in the world. She measures 177 feet overall with a 26-foot beam and carries nearly 9,000 square feet of sail spread across 15 sails and three masts. While *Gazela* was originally built without an engine, she now operates with a Caterpillar 3406 auxiliary engine rated at 540 horsepower along with 20-kW and 25-kW generators.

Members interested in visiting *Gazela* can attend public open-ship events, special programs, or dockside activities throughout the season. The vessel also hosts educational programming and community outreach efforts, including PSPG's pre-apprenticeship initiatives that introduce young people to maritime careers and skilled trades. If you're planning to attend the Sail 250 festivities in Norfolk or Baltimore, be sure to seek out *Gazela*, explore one of the maritime world's true living treasures, and say hello to a fellow M.E.B.A. member helping to keep this historic vessel sailing for future generations.

BIG M.E.B.A. TURNOUT FOR SUCCESSFUL “FAMILY FUN DAY”

More than 200 attendees, including M.E.B.A. and MM&P members, along with their families, showed up and had a blast for “M.E.B.A Family Fun Day” at the Monmouth, NJ Race Park on Saturday, June 6. The Union reserved a trackside picnic area with a tent at the horserace with plenty of food and

drinks. Those in attendance honored Kevin “Happy” Fahey, a former Staten Island Ferry & Statue of Liberty crewmember who passed away in 2024. At the picnic, M.E.B.A. members Chief Engineer/Ferry Shop Steward Chris DeFonce and Captain Henry Feeney were recognized and presented with Staten Island Ferry artwork created by a retired M.E.B.A. member and local artist.

A special thank you goes out to the family of Captain Kevin Buselmeier for volunteering to man the grill on such a hot day. Grill masters Rolando, Bianca, Aiken, and Diana helped make this a terrific day. We’ll do it again next year!

NMC PROCESSING TIMELINE UPDATE

The National Maritime Center (NMC) has made substantial progress in reducing the backlog of applications resulting from the 2026 lapse in appropriations. As a result of sustained recovery efforts and increased production capacity, the NMC updated its published processing timeline. Effective immediately, complete applications are expected to be processed within 8 months from the date received, an improvement from the previously published estimate of 8-12 months. This improvement reflects expanded production efforts, overtime, surge processing, workflow efficiencies, and the reallocation of personnel and resources to reduce the backlog inventory accumulated during the lapse. While application volumes remain elevated, current trends indicate continued progress toward restoring more normal processing timelines. Mariners and maritime employers should continue to plan accordingly and submit applications early to avoid potential disruptions to employment and vessel operations. Applications will continue to be processed on a first-in, first-out basis. Only applications demonstrating a clear and documented nexus to national defense will be considered for expedited processing. Mariners are strongly encouraged to apply early, up to 8 months before expiration, via the ASAP Tool to account for unforeseen delays. Mariner credential renewals may also be post-dated up to 8 months, allowing mariners to renew early. Paper and incomplete submissions may delay issuance.

CUSTOMIZED M.E.B.A. BASEBALL JERSEYS

Due to popular demand and for a limited time only, customizable M.E.B.A. baseball jerseys are available for order. This iconic M.E.B.A. item can be customized on the back with a stitched name (of reasonable length) and number. Net proceeds generated go to the Good & Welfare Fund. All orders must be submitted (and paid for) by Friday, June 26, 2026. The information and order form are available at each of the Union halls and a pdf copy is also available from the M.E.B.A. website on the homepage.

NASSCO CHRISTENS LATEST FLEET OILER

The seventh ship in the U.S. Navy’s John Lewis-class fleet oiler program is nearing delivery as the Military Sealift Command continues to upgrade its aging fleet. NASSCO shipyard recently christened and launched the USNS THURGOOD MARSHALL at a ceremony in San Diego, CA. The newbuild 742-foot-long oilers are designed to transfer fuel to U.S. Navy carrier strike group ships operating at sea and have the capacity to carry 157,000 barrels of oil, a significant dry cargo capacity, aviation capability and up to a speed of 20 knots. The ship is named in honor of Thurgood Marshall, the first African American appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, serving from 1967 to 1991. He was a prominent civil rights lawyer who argued and won the landmark Brown v. Board of Education case, which helped end racial segregation in public schools.

The Lewis-class of oilers are replacing the Kaiser Class fleet replenishment oilers as they age out of the MSC fleet. Civilian Mariners in the MSC fleet are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

The first six ships in the class — USNS JOHN LEWIS , USNS HARVEY MILK, USNS EARL WARREN, USNS ROBERT F. KENNEDY, USNS LUCY STONE and USNS SOJOURNER TRUTH — have all been delivered and deployed into the MSC fleet.

HALLS CLOSED THURSDAY FOR JUNETEENTH

The M.E.B.A. halls and offices are closed tomorrow (Friday, June 19) for Juneteenth/Emancipation Day. Juneteenth, which symbolically commemorates the end of slavery in the United States, has been celebrated in Texas for years. It was made a national holiday five years ago. The observance harkens back to 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger and his Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas and ordered the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, which took place 2 ½ years earlier. Granger announced that “all persons held as slaves” in the Lone Star State were “thenceforward, and forever free.”

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

Monday, July 6 – **Bloody Thursday (Observed) - West Coast Halls Closed - Boston@1200.**

Tuesday, July 7 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Portland, Maine@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

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

Thursday, July 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, July 10 – **Honolulu@1100**

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



***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. Website: www.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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org