

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
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## **LAUNCH OF NEW FOOD AID BILL EMPHASIZES U.S. AG & MARINER INVOLVEMENT**

Representatives from U.S. shipping and agricultural interests were on hand earlier today outside the U.S. Capitol to launch a bi-partisan Food Aid initiative that solidifies the nation's commitment to fighting global hunger while supporting U.S. farmers. The "American Farmers Feed the World Act of 2023," a bill introduced today, reinstates the original intent of the Food for Peace program and ensures that U.S. taxpayer dollars will be directed towards purchasing food from domestic sources rather than from international competitors.

Food for Peace has proven to be the most successful international food aid program in the world providing transparency and reliability while lending crucial support to vital U.S. agriculture and maritime jobs. However, through the years, some opponents have called for elimination of the U.S.-flag cargo preference component to transform it into more of a cash-based system. The drastic reduction of cargoes for U.S.-flag shipping and the lowering of the food aid cargo preference level from 75% to 50% in 2012 helped facilitate a precipitous reduction in the internationally-trading U.S.-flag fleet as ships flagged out from the Stars and Stripes. The subsequent erosion of the mariner pool will continue to complicate the nation's ability to fulfill DOD sealift requirements.

The bill was introduced in the House by U.S. Representatives Tracey Mann (R-KS), John Garamendi (D-CA), Rick Crawford (R-AR) and Jimmy Panetta (D-CA). A companion bill is expected to follow in the Senate.

Transportation Institute Government Affairs V.P. Sara Fuentes spoke at the press conference and noted that, "One of the largest sources of peacetime work for our international-going U.S.-flag vessels is the Food for Peace program, so it is critical that we fulfill the original intent of this program in moving American-grown food on American-flagged ships to help others. This bill, and the successful enforcement of cargo preference laws, will help ensure that we have an active, trained, and ready mariner workforce, ready to deliver for our military, while accomplishing so much good around the world. Mariners move the nation and make the difference between victory and defeat."

The Act seeks to restore the Food for Peace program's original intent, emphasizing the utilization of U.S.-grown commodities to fight global hunger. Specifically, the legislation aims to protect at least

50% of the budget for acquiring U.S.-grown commodities and delivering them to the destination country. It also mandates that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) report all program implementations and budget details to Congress to enhance accountability.

Rep. John Garamendi stated that, “Congress always intended for these foreign relief programs to be a triple bottom line: A win for America’s farmers in years when they grow more than they can sell. A win for our nation’s shipbuilding and maritime industries, guaranteeing cargo during peacetime so we have the US-flag vessels needed during wartime. And a win for projecting the generous spirit of Americans to help those starving around the world. Our bipartisan bill restores this careful balance to ensure that taxpayer dollars for foreign relief are spent on American-grown foods transported on US-flag vessels, not foreign alternatives. I look forward to working with Congressman Mann and my other colleagues to make this bill a top priority in the coming Farm Bill.”

### **M.E.B.A. VESSEL WILL PROVIDE FUEL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES TO THE MILITARY**

An Overseas Shipholding Group contract award from the Military Sealift Command will put the M.E.B.A.-crewed tanker OVERSEAS MYKONOS to work providing ongoing fuel transportation services to the MSC.

OSG's CEO and President Sam Norton said, “We are honored that MSC has chosen to award one of the [MSC] contracts to the OVERSEAS MYKONOS. This ship and its crew have the capability to provide maritime transportation services using equipment and communication technologies that are in sync with the needs of the Department of Defense and Navy. This award highlights the benefits of cooperation between the Merchant Marine industry and the military. By working together, we are providing loyal and experienced U.S. citizen mariners, reliable vessels, and advanced equipment for our nation’s benefit. The OVERSEAS MYKONOS’ support to MSC will bolster our involvement in deepening and broadening the pool of domestic merchant mariners supporting a U.S.- flagged tanker presence in international waters,” he added.

The time charter awarded is for a 1-year base period with the MSC holding additional option periods to extend the contract out to a maximum period of 5 ½ years. The OVERSEAS MYKONOS will be delivered to MSC at Pearl Harbor in August. The medium range product tanker has 12 cargo tanks and a cargo capacity of 333,000 barrels. The ship has the ability to perform consolidated cargo replenishment at sea operations, providing flexibility and options for refueling the U.S. military fleet while underway. The vessel also has other militarily useful modifications, including those to meet TRANSCOM requirements.

### **GOOD TIMES AT THE CAA REUNION!**

A majestic fireworks display on Saturday night helped cap off a wonderful weekend in Easton, MD where M.E.B.A. members and retirees – including a slew of Calhoon Cadet school graduates – gathered for the long-awaited Calhoon Alumni Association Reunion.

This was the first such event in seven years after the pandemic canceled the last planned reunion in the Summer of 2020. There was great weather on Saturday – warm with a nice breeze that kept away the bugs – for a shiplot of attendees enjoying the party and picnic at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. The weekend also included the dedication of the CMES Lounge to its new

name (Calhoon's Saloon) and a Memorial garden tribute to former CMES Instructor Eugene Daisey who recently sailed into the sunset.

Many thanks to the CAA organizers – the triumvirate of Mike Fanning, Ernie Clements and Phil Strissel who put together the wildly successful event. Bill Van Loo also contributed to the success of the Reunion and helped raise money for the M.E.B.A. Good & Welfare Fund and the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF). He later dazzled attendees by joining the live band for a few numbers in full Elvis attire. Organizers hope to do another Reunion in the summer of 2025. All M.E.B.A. members, applicants and retirees as well as their friends and families are invited.

### **U.N. ADOPTS HIGH SEAS TREATY**

On Monday, all 193 Member States of the United Nations took a significant step by adopting the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Treaty (BBNJ), a landmark pact commonly known as the High Seas Treaty. This historic event marks the first-ever legally binding international agreement that governs activities in the vast expanse of the high seas. The treaty establishes crucial regulations aimed at safeguarding the environment, preventing conflicts related to natural resources, shipping, and other pertinent issues in areas beyond any nation's jurisdiction. The agreement signals a big step forward toward addressing the effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution on our world's oceans.

Until now, there has been a notable absence of such laws governing the high seas. Consequently, numerous individuals and organizations have faced immense challenges in their conservation efforts within these areas, which can be likened to a lawless frontier of exploration, overfishing, oil exploration, and deep-sea mining. With the U.N.'s adoption of this measure, there is widespread optimism that it will serve as a definitive turning point, providing much-needed structure and protection for these vast stretches of our planet.

Overall, the accord addresses key concerns related to the conservation and sustainable management of the oceans, aiming to strike a balance between economic interests and the protection of marine ecosystems. The Treaty will go into effect only if it is ratified by at least 60 U.N. member nations.

### **SENATE COMMITTEE LOOKS INTO AMAZON WORKER ABUSES**

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), initiated a Committee investigation into the questionable safety record in Amazon warehouses as well as the company's dubious treatment of workers injured in those warehouses. Sen. Sanders noted, "The company's quest for profits at all costs has led to unsafe physical environments, intense pressure to work at unsustainable rates, and inadequate medical attention for tens of thousands of Amazon workers every year."

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters has pointed out that the notoriously anti-union Amazon employs one third of the warehouse workers in the U.S. but is responsible for half of all workplace injuries in the sector. IBT says that Amazon employees sustain serious injury at five times the national average and injury rates at Amazon facilities are nearly 80 percent higher than all other employers in the warehousing industry.

"Amazon is one of the most valuable companies in the world worth \$1.3 trillion and its founder, Jeff Bezos, is one of the richest men in the world worth nearly \$150 billion," Sen. Sanders stated.

“Amazon should be one of the safest places in America to work, not one of the most dangerous. If Amazon can afford to spend \$6 billion on stock buybacks last year, it can afford to make sure that its warehouses are safe places to work. If Amazon can afford to pay you \$289 million in total compensation over the past two years, it can afford to treat all of its workers with dignity and respect, not contempt. The time has come for Amazon to stop willfully violating workplace safety laws with impunity and commit to changing its operations to protect the health and safety of its workers.”

### **NMC SAYS CREDENTIALING DELAYS HAVE BEEN RESOLVED**

Technical difficulties with credential production equipment that resulted in delays earlier this year have been resolved, the National Maritime Center (NMC) reported. NMC announced that the production and issuance of Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs) has returned to a normal 2-3 business day timeframe. They noted that mariners can expect to receive a status update e-mail at each stage of the application process, including credential issuance.

For more, you can visit the website at [https://www.dco.uscg.mil/national\\_maritime\\_center](https://www.dco.uscg.mil/national_maritime_center) or call 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

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

Monday, July 3 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, July 4 – **Independence Day – All Halls Closed**

Wednesday, July 5 – “**Bloody Thursday**” - **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; 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 6 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Oakland@1230; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, July 7 – **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.*