

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 25 – June 23, 2022



In this issue//Committee Clears MarAd Reauthorization Bill//M.E.B.A.-Crewed Vessel Harassed by Iranian Attack Boats//Wrap-Up of Special Convention, 4MF Fundraiser//M.E.B.A. Meets with Maritime Administrator//ILWU, PMA Talks Continue//Roughing It, Union-Style//Congressional Report Says Union Workers Are Better Rewarded for Their Toil//

MARAD REAUTHORIZATION BILL APPROVED FOR SENATE ACTION

This week, the Senate Commerce Committee marked up a Fiscal Year 2023 Reauthorization bill for the Maritime Administration that includes a series of provisions aimed at improving U.S.-flag shipping.

It authorizes over \$1.5 billion for critical programs affecting the maritime workforce, shipyards and port infrastructure. A large chunk of the recommended budget for MarAd is for the agency's Port Infrastructure Development Program (PIDP), which is designed to address supply chain issues and alleviate port congestion. The PIDP's funding level was bolstered by the recently passed bipartisan infrastructure law that increases the discretionary grant program to its highest funding level ever.

Among other provisions, the MarAd Reauthorization bill authorizes a National Maritime Strategy study on how to grow the maritime industry by expanding the U.S.-flag fleet while bolstering domestic shipbuilding, maritime trade, training and infrastructure. The bipartisan legislation also recommends full funding for both the Maritime Security Program and Tanker Security Program and would provide flexibility for Coast Guard SA/SH enforcement mechanisms. The bill was sent to the full Senate where it awaits further action.

M.E.B.A.-CREWED SHIP BUZZED BY IRANIAN FAST ATTACK BOATS

An M.E.B.A.-crewed Military Sealift Command vessel performing routine maritime security operations in the northern Arabian Gulf was subjected to provocation efforts by fast moving attack boats operated by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN). The USNS CHOCTAW COUNTY, with M.E.B.A. civilian mariners aboard, is a Joint High-Speed Vessel that supports the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Along with the Navy patrol ship USS SIROCCO, the CHOCTAW COUNTY was approached at a "dangerously high speed" by three IRGCN vessels in the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. The SIROCCO issued a blast from the ship's horn then released a warning flare during the interaction which lasted about an hour. The Iranian boats got within 50 yards of the 5th Fleet vessels before peeling off. A Navy statement said, "The IRGCN's actions did not meet international standards of professional or safe maritime behavior, increasing the risk of miscalculation and collision."

This is the second tense encounter U.S. Navy ships have had with Iranian vessels this year and such incidents have occurred sporadically since the U.S. withdrew from a 2015 nuclear agreement aimed at keeping Iran at bay. U.S. Naval vessels have been instructed to interpret "armed vessels

approaching within 100 meters” of a Navy ship “as a threat and subject to lawful defensive measures.”

Last week, the U.S. issued new restrictions against Iranian petrochemical companies and other entities that are helping the country evade sanctions. However, it is unclear if those new sanctions played a part in Monday’s incident.

WRAP-UP OF SPECIAL CONVENTION, 4MF FUNDRAISER

Elected National M.E.B.A. Delegates gathered at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES) late last week for a Special Convention, a one-day meeting to discuss the business of the National M.E.B.A. Last year’s regular National M.E.B.A. Convention was limited to an online format (Zoom) because of COVID precautions. Special Conventions are provided for in the M.E.B.A. Constitution and have the same force as regular National Conventions but can be conducted without the ceremonial procedures.

The National M.E.B.A. is an administrative umbrella organization that was restructured in the 1960s to house M.E.B.A. Districts. As members know, there is currently only one District under the National M.E.B.A. which is District No. 1-PCD, M.E.B.A. The District holds and controls all the assets of the M.E.B.A. membership whereas the National holds the charter with the AFL-CIO. The District is governed by its own By-Laws, but is also beholden to the National Constitution and the Constitution for Districts. Delegates made non-controversial clarifications and modernization of certain sections in the Constitution and those amendments will be discussed at upcoming membership meetings.

A day before the Special Convention, Trustees and incoming Delegates gathered at the Merchant Marine Memorial to honor newly retired CMES Director Chuck Eser and former American Maritime Congress President Jim Caponiti. A pair of Maple saplings were planted on the Memorial grounds near the ship’s bell and the two men were honored for their stellar years of service in remarks delivered by M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha.

Fundraisers to support the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) were conducted earlier last week, while Trustees were in town, and on Friday, when Delegates were assembled. They proved wildly successful, and thousands were raised for the 4MF. The Memorial honors fallen mariners who helped blaze the proud tradition our members continue today.

The second annual Leroy Koehler Disc (Frisbee) Golf Tournament, to raise money for the 4MF, was well attended and hotly contested by participants vying for inclusion on the winner’s trophy. In the top tier “Eagles Division,” Matt Provencher will once again have his name inscribed on the Memorial Cup, with runners-up Jeff Olnhausen and Kyle Grable narrowly missing out. In the “Sharks Division,” Oakland Patrolman Maxim Alper reigned supreme as the efforts of CMES Interim Director Bryan Jennings and Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha tragically fell short by a few strokes. Many thanks to all who organized, participated and contributed to a great cause. Contributions and money raised for the 4MF helps fund needed upkeep and improvements to this wonderful tribute to M.E.B.A.’s heritage.

M.E.B.A. MEETS WITH MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR

M.E.B.A. met with Rear Adm. Phillips earlier today, the Union's first sit-down with the new Maritime Administrator since she took office in mid-May. M.E.B.A. was represented by President Adam Vokac, Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha and Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan at the meeting at the Department of Transportation building where MarAd is housed. The productive discussion touched on an assortment of issues important to the industry including the mariner shortage, SA/SH, the Tanker Security Program and the Maritime Security Program, among other items of interest.

ILWU, PMA TALKS CONTINUE, STATEMENT ISSUED

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and employer Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) issued a recent statement assuring nervous retailers that the parties are diligently working toward an agreement, although it might take a little time.

The current contract expires at 5 p.m. on July 1 and both parties noted that it is unlikely agreement will be reached by then. They noted that bargaining beyond the expiration date is normal and that cargo operations will continue.

Automation issues are seen to be the major sticking point between the parties. ILWU represents 22,000 dockworkers serving at 29 West Coast ports. The PMA represents shipping lines and terminal operators at those 29 ports. However, both sides said they are committed to working out a fair agreement and stated that "neither party is preparing for a strike or lockout."

"Talks are scheduled to continue on a daily basis until an agreement is reached," the statement read.

ROUGHING IT, UNION-STYLE

Labor 411, a research organization that raises awareness of worker-friendly goods and services, gets "in-tents" this month to equip you with union-friendly items for the great outdoors. With so many amazing national and state parks, great camping is often just a few hours' drive away. Make sure you tell non-union equipment suppliers to "take a hike." Labor 411 helps you answer nature's call and gives you s'more of what you want with the following union-friendly list to make you a happy camper:

S'mores - Honey Maid Graham Crackers (BCTGM); Campfire Marshmallows (IBT); Chocolate – Ghirardelli, Hershey, Cadbury (BCTGM, UFCW); **Grill** - Weber (IUANPW); **Hammocks** - Algoma Net (UFCW); **Outdoor Clothing** - All American Clothing Co. (IBEW); Carhartt (IBT); **Coffee** - USA Coffee Company (UAW); Millstone Coffee (UAW); Eight O'Clock Coffee (UAW); Folgers (UAW); Maxwell House (UFCW, UAW, IBT); **Hot Cocoa** - Swiss Miss (UFCW); Ghirardelli (UAW); **Coolers** - Rubbermaid (IBEW); **Sunscreen** - Coppertone (IBT); Bain de Soleil (AFGE); **Hot Dogs** - Ball Park (UFCW, IBT); Butterball (UFCW, IBT); Farmer John (IBT); Hebrew National (UFCW, IBT); Hormel (IBT); Oscar Mayer (UFCW, IBT); **Beer** - More than 250 varieties of union made beer. Check out the list at Labor411.org

D'UH! CONGRESSIONAL REPORT SAYS UNION WORKERS EARN BETTER WAGES & BENEFITS THAN NON-UNION

A recently released Congressional report from the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) along with the House Education and Labor Committee majority, found that workers in unions are paid much more – and enjoy better benefits – than their non-union counterparts. The findings are not exactly groundbreaking, but reinforce the desirability of a unionized workplace, something that is being sought out more often in the wake of the pandemic.

The report found that unionized workers earn 10.2% more than their non-union peers, while also raising wages and benefits for all workers in their industry. In addition, it found that unionization increases wages by 17.3% for Black workers and 23.1% for Latino workers.

The Committee noted, “Workers get significant economic benefits from labor unions, even if they are not members of a union themselves. While union membership rates among workers remained at historic lows in 2021, the year also witnessed increased union activity and favorable public opinion towards them. The last year has seen historic success of unionization efforts. Unionization took place at the JFK8 Amazon warehouse in Staten Island, New York, at over 110 Starbucks stores across the country and among graduate students at universities. New union organizing reflects a growing awareness of the economic benefits that unions have to offer all workers, including those who are not union members.”

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

Monday, July 4 – Independence Day - Halls Closed

Tuesday, July 5 – Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Wednesday, July 6 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; **Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, July 7 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, July 8 – 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. 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.