

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 26 – June 25, 2026



Happy International Day of the Seafarer!

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M.E.B.A. MAKES CASE FOR CLOSING WSF WAGE GAP

At a Seattle press conference last week on Colman Dock, M.E.B.A. officials made the public and press aware of a growing wage gap for Washington State Ferry Engineers that is driving burnout, poor morale, and hobbling the system's ability to retain and recruit credentialed essential staff. Years of inadequate investment in marine engineer wages have left the ferry system struggling with chronic staffing shortages and an approaching wave of retirements. Without meaningful action to close the pay gap for engine room personnel, the state risks undermining its multi-billion-dollar investment in new ferry vessels. No matter how modern, efficient, or environmentally friendly those ships may be, they cannot operate without the highly skilled marine engineers required to run, maintain, and repair them safely.

At the press conference, M.E.B.A.'s WSF Representative Eric Winge said, "The conditions that cause crew shortages and canceled sailings remain unchanged. We will see delays and missed sailings in the summer and unreliability will continue to be an issue if the wage gap between engineers and our deck counterparts is not closed. Pay is higher in the private sector and even in comparable ferry systems in other regions of the country. Washington state is spending billions of dollars on new ferries, but if they don't step up with more competitive pay we won't have enough licensed crew to operate and repair the new hybrid electric vessels when they come into service."

A June 2026 survey of WSF engine room personnel found widespread dissatisfaction, with more than 55% reporting low morale and over 60% saying they are likely to retire or seek employment elsewhere. The survey also highlighted the impact of chronic understaffing and excessive overtime, while a strong majority of respondents said closing the wage gap with deck officers would improve retention, recruitment, and overall respect for engine room crews.

While there have been some positive changes at WSF to ensure more reliable service, the system is struggling to retain and recruit experienced marine engineers needed to run, repair and maintain the ferries. Washington State is required to conduct a salary survey to inform wages for state employees, including marine engineers who operate, repair and maintain Washington State Ferries, every two years.

In 2025, the Washington Legislature passed a bill requiring ferry employee compensation to be competitive with designated comparator jurisdictions, and a recent wage survey conducted by the Segal Group was intended to help assess compliance. However, union officials noted that the survey fails to provide an accurate comparison of WSF engine room wages, citing the exclusion of private-sector and comparable East Coast ferry operators, the omission of the Assistant Engineer classification, and the use of data from ferry systems that do not employ USCG-licensed engine room personnel. They contend these shortcomings undermine the survey's validity and fall short of the law's intent to establish meaningful, equivalent compensation comparisons.

Weighing in at the press conference, M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha said, "the salary survey the state commissioned failed to comply with the legislation to require true comparables for all engineer roles and comparison to wages in similar ferry systems like New York's Staten Island system. It appears the state directed Segal to use cherry-picked data to hide the fact that WSF wages for engine room crew are uncompetitive and below-market rate in the private and public sectors."

MLL FLEET RENEWAL BEGINS IN LATE SUMMER

Maersk Line, Ltd. will begin fleet replenishment later this year to bring down the overall age of its Maritime Security Program vessels. MSP age restrictions require that older vessels be replaced before reaching 25 years of age. MLL issued plans to bring in newer replacement vessels for seven M.E.B.A.-crewed vessels.

In all cases, there will be a short overlap period in which the newer replacement vessel and the older ship will both be operating with M.E.B.A. personnel onboard. Additional certifications will be required for engineers working on these vessels. An All Ports Bulletin was sent to each of the Union halls detailing those requirements. In addition, the APB was sent to all Members and Applicants with emails on file in the M.E.B.A. Headquarters database.

While the plan is still in flux and certainly subject to change, the current status follows. Six of the vessels will be the Aegir-class, built this year, and one will be the San-class. The Aegir-class vessels are dual-fuel, methanol-fueled vessels. All engineering officers on these ships are required to have the advanced IGF endorsement on their license. The San-class features a dedicated 6.6KV switchboard feeding the reefer distribution panels and Main LO pumps on the ship. Engineers on this vessel will need the High Voltage endorsement.

The TAURANGA MAERSK (Aegir) was constructed this year. It will be renamed as the MAERSK MEAD and is scheduled to enter the U.S. fleet later in August. It is planned that the newbuild will relieve the MAERSK DETROIT which will be flagged into Maersk's international fleet.

The MAERSK SAN CLEMENTE (San) was built in 2014 and will be renamed to MAERSK SUPERIOR. It is planned that the vessel will come in sometime in September and replace the MAERSK DENVER.

MAERSK TACOMA (Aegir) is a newbuild that will come into the fleet around September. Its name will change to the MAERSK HURON and the vessel will relieve the MAERSK SELETAR.

The newly constructed TEMA MAERSK (Aegir) will be renamed MAERSK POWELL and enter the fleet sometime before October. It will replace the MAERSK ATLANTA.

The newly built TANGIER MAERSK (Aegir) will be renamed MAERSK CHAMPLAIN and relieve the MAERSK SENTOSA. It is scheduled to enter the fleet around November.

The newbuild MAERSK TIANJIN (Aegir) will be redubbed MAERSK ERIE. It is set to come into the fleet early next year and replace the MAERSK HARTFORD.

Finally, the MAERSK TILBURG (Aegir), still finishing construction, will be renamed MAERSK TAHOE. It is planned that the vessel will join the fleet in June 2027 and relieve the MAERSK KENSINGTON.

M.E.B.A. FAMILY MEMBER AWARDED UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP MONEY

Union Plus recently awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to 181 students representing 42 unions, including one winner representing the M.E.B.A. This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 42 states and one U.S. territory. The M.E.B.A. winner is Abigail Markley Ray of Gig Harbor, Washington. Abigail's father is M.E.B.A. member Alexander Ray who sails in the Washington State Ferry system.

Union Plus programs, which are available to M.E.B.A. members, applicants, retirees and our affiliates, provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services. The M.E.B.A. is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to auto services discounts. The scholarship award program is run every year. Applications for the next awards will be available in September.

“We are honored to recognize this year's Union Plus Scholarship award winners,” Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. “As we celebrate Union Plus's 40th anniversary this year, we are proud to note that the Union Plus Scholarship Program has provided over \$6.2 million in scholarships to support the educational goals of union families.”

SENATORS URGE REINSTATEMENT OF CHINESE PORT FEES

Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) have urged U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer to reinstate Section 301 port fees on Chinese-owned and operated vessels, arguing the measures are critical to rebuilding American shipbuilding and protecting U.S. maritime jobs. The lawmakers noted that China's share of global commercial ship production has grown from less than 5 percent in 2000 to more than 50 percent today, while U.S. shipyards account for only a small fraction of worldwide output.

The Trump administration initially proposed fees on Chinese-owned and operated ships. The prospect of these fees led to a 23.5 percent decrease in orders at Chinese shipyards in just nine months. But after China imposed its own fees on U.S. ships and massive tariffs on critical minerals used in military technology and semiconductors, President Trump suspended the shipping fees and restrictions for one year — so China would drop its restrictions on critical minerals. Within days, the backlog of orders on hand at Chinese ports rose by 25 percent. Even since suspending the fees, the Trump administration has still reiterated the need to “reclaim America’s maritime strength” and generate “demand for U.S.-built ships, shipyards, and mariners.”

In their letter, the Senators emphasized that a strong domestic shipbuilding industry is vital to national security and economic resilience. They called on the administration to restore the fees, maintain them

over the long term, and explain the impact of the suspension on American shipyards, mariners, and maritime workers.

HAZARD PAY AUTHORIZED FOR CIVMARs IN HIGH-RISK WATERS

The U.S. Navy has designated several key waterways in the Middle East and surrounding region as hazard areas, making Civilian Mariners (CivMars) eligible for Hazard Area Premium Pay when operating in those waters. The action recognizes the risks CivMars face while supporting military operations and sustaining vital maritime logistics in some of the world's most challenging environments. The designation is retroactive to Feb. 28, 2026, providing additional compensation for eligible mariners who have served in the affected regions during recent operations. Designated areas include the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, Red Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, which was classified as a hazard area through April 7, 2026.

According to the Navy and Military Sealift Command, the premium pay acknowledges the critical role CivMars play in supporting fleet operations while facing heightened security risks. Hazard pay will be calculated daily based on a mariner's base salary and verified through official ship navigation logs and command endorsements. Additional compensation may also be authorized in cases involving vessel or harbor attacks. Navy and MSC leaders said the measure reflects the service's commitment to ensuring CivMars are fairly compensated for operating in dangerous conditions while keeping military supply lines open and global operations moving.

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