

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 23 – June 8, 2023



In this issue//OSG Ship Crew to Receive Medals//Push for U.S. Worker Presence for Offshore Wind Hits Headlines//Longtime Norfolk Plans Employee Retires//WSF Rep. Election//More Rail Unions Win Sick Leave//Majority Leader Scalise Honored by Shipbuilders//Father's Day – the Union Way//

OSG SHIP CREW TO RECEIVE MEDALS FROM MARAD FOR RESCUE

Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Ann Phillips has applauded the crew of the OSG product tanker OVERSEAS LONG BEACH over a recent rescue at sea and approved the award of a medal for their actions.

On March 30th, the crew of the OSG vessel spotted a small craft loaded with a dozen frantic Cuban refugees slogging through their 12th day at sea. On a desperate voyage to Mexico, the migrants ran short on water, food and fuel and someone onboard was in need of medical attention.

The LONG BEACH crew acted decisively and efficiently, diverted their course and came to the rescue of the desperate refugees. In a letter addressed to LONG BEACH Captain Bryan Boldemann, Maritime Administrator Phillips lauded the selfless actions of the vessel's officers and crew. For their "prodigious act of humanitarianism," she was pleased to approve LONG BEACH mariners for the prestigious Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement.

She noted, "Universal human rights are protected in international law, but their effective enforcement is not universal, and the behavior of many would have been to choose the easy way out of a potentially complex situation by turning a blind eye to the existence of a vessel in distress. That is not the way of the American merchant mariner. In keeping with the highest traditions of the American Merchant Marine, Captain Boldemann and the crew of the OVERSEAS LONG BEACH immediately acted with honest concern and empathy for those in distress, and in so doing, saved the lives of 12 distressed persons."

The ship's Deck officers are as yet unrepresented. SIU represents the unlicensed. M.E.B.A. permanents onboard the vessel at the time included C/E Brian Gerrish, 1st A/E Chris Waugaman and 2nd A/E Jonathan DiBacco.

PUSH FOR U.S. PRESENCE IN OFFSHORE WIND INDUSTRY HITS HEADLINES

An initiative to get U.S. mariners involved in the burgeoning offshore wind industry has captured headlines from a well-known news website. An article published by the *Huffington Post* this week wondered whether the aspirations of U.S. shipping community interests throws a monkey wrench into the current administration's clean energy agenda.

As *Telex Times* subscribers know, a House Coast Guard funding bill includes a provision requiring mariners serving on foreign-flagged vessels on the Outer Continental Shelf to be either U.S. citizens or citizens of the nation where the vessel is flagged. Current law requires that all vessels, rigs, platforms, or other offshore structures be manned by U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, but the law has been exploited and a loophole has allowed foreign companies to utilize low-wage foreign mariners for this work, allowing them to skirt U.S. taxes and labor laws. The provision was championed by Reps. Garret Graves (R-LA) and John Garamendi (D-CA) who noted that it “closes an egregious Jones Act loophole so that foreign-flagged vessels are held to the same high standards as US-flagged vessels developing our nation’s offshore energy resources, including for offshore wind projects.”

The article, “An Obscure Bipartisan Shipping Clause Could Derail One Of Biden’s Big Clean Energy Goals” details that oil and gas interests “have used their lobbying and legal might to fight for the narrowest possible interpretation of the Jones Act as it applies to coastal energy projects, arguing that vessels involved in the construction of offshore energy infrastructure are not covered by the Jones Act’s requirements for “transportation” vessels. They have repeatedly succeeded in blocking proposed rule changes that would have expanded the applicability of the Jones Act to more of the vessels involved in offshore energy projects. Those regulatory wins have allowed energy companies to contract with foreign maritime firms whose workers are paid less.”

Maritime labor unions including the M.E.B.A. point out that it is crucial that American workers get in on the ground floor of budding offshore wind efforts so that the U.S. can begin ramping up its workforce to be players in this lucrative new industry.

The article notes, “Not every U.S. shipbuilder or sea vessel has unionized workers, but the two main maritime unions, the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association and the Seafarers International Union, are desperate for the U.S. maritime industry to grow so that they can ensure their members consistent work opportunities and organize unions on new ships.”

M.E.B.A.’s Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan is quoted as saying, “Because of how finite and small [the wind industry] is, we see this as a great opportunity for our union membership. There are provisions in place to ensure union labor is being used to build the turbines onshore.

SIU Communications Director Jordan Biscardo said that, “The best solution to the problem would be for the wind developers to work with us and the rest of the American industry to maximize the use of American mariners so that the impact of a law like this would be minimal to their projects, and to help draft a law that ensures both sides get what they want: a vibrant off-shore wind energy industry, built and maintained by American workers.”

M.E.B.A. continues to fight for long-term opportunities to provide good-paying, pensionable jobs in the offshore wind sector well into the future.

LONG TIME NORFOLK PLANS EMPLOYEE RETIRES

Thanks and congratulations to Rhonda Warman who retired after 18 years with the M.E.B.A. serving as the Plans representative in the Norfolk Union hall. Rhonda was an E-6 Petty Officer First-Class (Navy Reserve) and was a veteran of Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm before she

joined the M.E.B.A. Until 2019 when current Assistant Government Fleet Rep./Dispatcher Ola Lassley was hired, Rhonda also handled M.E.B.A. dispatching responsibilities along with her Plans duties. Norfolk Branch Agent/Govt. Fleet Rep. Jack Menendez, along with members and retirees, threw a party for her during meeting week in May and presented cards, gifts and well-wishes to Rhonda as she leaves to concentrate on family and to enjoy her time off. A photo commemorating that occasion was posted on the M.E.B.A. Facebook site today.

Until further notice, those who usually submit vacation applications or other Plans business through Norfolk should go through the Plans office in Baltimore. They can be contacted at (410) 547-9111. Vacation filings can be sent to them at vacation@mebaplans.org

WSF REP. ELECTION PERIOD

The process has begun to elect an M.E.B.A. member to serve as the Washington State Ferry Representative, a term that runs for four years. The nomination period is open and continues until July 20. Nominated members must be an M.E.B.A. member in good standing, a WSF employee and have a working knowledge of WSF collective bargaining agreements.

Nominations for the position should be sent via US mail to M.E.B.A.'s Seattle Hall in Fife – Attn: Patrolman Kevin Cross or via email to Kevin at kcross@mebaunion.org and cc Jeff Duncan at jduncan@mebaunion.org. Please contact Jeff or Kevin with any questions.

On August 1, paper ballots will be dispersed to M.E.B.A. WSF members aboard the vessels. They will have until October 31 at noon to return completed ballots. Later that day, there will be a Special Meeting to elect a Tallying Committee and that committee will immediately begin to count the votes and report the results.

The elected WSF Representative will begin serving their 4-year term on January 1st, 2024.

MORE RAIL UNIONS FINALLY WIN SICK LEAVE

Norfolk Southern Corporation is the first Class I railroad to have negotiated paid sick leave agreements for 100 percent of its craft workforce, after a pact was reached for union yardmasters. The company reached an agreement with the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers - Transportation Division (SMART-TD) to provide up to seven paid sick days per year. The agreement immediately provides nearly 300 Norfolk Southern yardmasters with four new days of paid sick leave per year while also offering them the flexibility to use up to three additional days of existing paid time off as sick leave.

“Following national labor negotiations, we committed to address quality of life issues for our craft railroaders. With today’s agreement, we make good on that promise,” said Norfolk Southern President and CEO Alan Shaw. “I am proud of our team for working collaboratively with union leadership over the last four months to reach agreements that benefit all of our craft colleagues.”

In related news, Union Pacific Railroad reached an agreement with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) to provide paid sick leave to 5,600 locomotive engineers employed by the railroad. Under the agreement, BLET members will have up to seven paid days to use in the event of illness. Five days will be considered paid sick days with the ability to convert two additional paid leave days for use as paid sick time. The new agreement is effective Aug. 1.

“This agreement is really about health and safety,” said BLET National President Eddie Hall. “It’s not in our members’, the public’s or the railroad’s best interest for engineers to be operating trains when they’re sick.”

Union Pacific now has sick leave agreements in place with 12 of its 13 labor unions, covering approximately 68% of Union Pacific’s craft employees.

MAJORITY LEADER SCALISE HONORED WITH SHIPBUILDER’S AWARD

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-Louisiana) was honored this week for his support of the U.S. shipbuilding and repair industry, a cause he has supported throughout his Congressional career.

The Shipbuilders Council of America (SCA) presented him with their SCA Maritime Leadership Award doled out annually to national leaders who demonstrate support for American ship construction.

Throughout his entire career in Congress Rep. Scalise has been influential in advancing policies that support the domestic shipbuilding industry, including increased funding for the Maritime Security Program and the Jones Act. He is also an ardent supporter of the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard and has pushed for added appropriations for naval shipbuilding as a critical component of the U.S. defense industrial base.

SCA said that Rep. Scalise has also strongly advocated for the industry’s workforce and job training programs to ensure the highly skilled workforces needed are prepared to construct the vast number of vessels in the U.S. fleet – everything from tugboats to aircraft carriers.

“I am honored to receive the Maritime Leadership Award, Rep. Scalise noted. I will continue to fight for common sense policies that reduce red tape for our maritime industry and keep these high-skilled, high-paying jobs in Louisiana.”

FATHER’S DAY – THE UNION WAY

Father’s Day is a great excuse to give a union-made gift for Dad. If he likes tools, sporting goods, or a good bourbon, the list below has you covered. Here’s a starter pack for stereotypical dad interests. If he’s not into any of these, there are thousands of more ideas at the Labor 411 online directory at <https://labor411.org/listing-region/consumer-products/>

Tools - Armstrong (IBEW, UAW); Black & Decker (UAW); Channellock (IBEW, UAW); Craftsman (IBEW, IBT); Eklind Tool Co. (IBEW); Hardcore Hammers (IBEW); Klein Tools (IBEW); Loggerhead Tools (IBEW); Moody Tools (IBEW); Park Tools (IBEW); Rigid (IBT); S-K Handtool (IBEW); SnapOn Tools (IBEW, UAW); Stanley Hand Tools (IBEW); Stilleto Tool Co. (IBEW, UAW); Wilde Tool (IBEW); Wright Tool (IBEW); **Sporting Goods** - American Athletic (UAW); Louisville Slugger (USW); Nordic Track (IBT); Spalding (IBT); Standard Golf (IAM); Top-Flite Golf Balls (IBT); **Bourbon** - Basil Hayden (IBT); Benchmark (UAW); Blanton’s (UAW); Eagle Rare Bourbon (UAW); Elijah Craig (UAW); Evan Williams (UAW); Fighting Cock (UAW); Four Roses (UFCW); Jim Beam (IBT, UAW); Kentucky Gentleman (UAW); Knob Creek (IBT); Old Grand-Dad (UAW); Van Winkle (UAW).

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

Friday, June 9 – Honolulu@1100.

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

Thursday, July 6 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Oakland@1230; Tampa@1300.

Friday, July 7 – 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.