

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*



## M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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In this issue//Garamendi-Wicker Bills to Expand U.S.-Flag Fleet Re-Introduced//National M.E.B.A. Convention Goes Virtual//CG Commandant Lauds Merchant Mariners//Two Popular AMHS Ferries Sold; Vessels Readied for Summer Season//"Fair Future for Seafarers" Focus of IMO Campaign//Union-Made Libations//

### **BILL TO BOOST U.S.-FLAG FLEET RE-INTRODUCED**

U.S.-shipping interests are seeking positive momentum for bipartisan legislation re-introduced this week that looks to dramatically increase the size of the U.S.-flag fleet.

Companion bills introduced in the Senate (S. 707) by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and in the House (H.R. 1819) by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) would guarantee that fixed percentages of all exported LNG and crude oil would travel on U.S.-built, -crewed, and -flagged vessels. If enacted, the proposal would grow the U.S.-flag fleet and support thousands of new jobs for American mariners, shipyards, and the domestic maritime industry. Specifically, the "Energizing American Shipbuilding Act" would require that 15 percent of total seaborne LNG exports (by 2043) and 10 percent of total seaborne crude oil exports (by 2035) be transported exclusively on vessels built in the United States.

The initial version of the legislation was introduced in 2016 and has been reintroduced in each Session of Congress since then. It has a fair chance to pass in the House in this Session of Congress. Its prospects in the Senate remains unclear.

If enacted, the bill would spur the construction of dozens of ships, support thousands of new good-paying jobs in American shipyards, and provide a boost to the domestic vessel component manufacturing and maritime industries. According to an estimate from the Shipbuilders Council of America, the Garamendi bill would result in the construction of more than 40 ships: approximately 28 LNG carriers by 2043 and 12 oil tankers by 2035.

M.E.B.A. urges the membership to reach out to their Congressional delegations to co-sponsor the legislation and help improve its prospects for passage.

Congressman Garamendi said, "American shipyards and mariners are ready for the job, and our bill ensures American workers are no longer expected to compete against heavily subsidized foreign shipyards in Korea, China, and elsewhere. Our domestic maritime industry is critically important to the U.S. economy and our national security, and I will work tirelessly until this bill becomes law."

Senator Wicker said, "Strengthening our domestic maritime industry is essential to our national defense. Ensuring the U.S. can move our growing energy exports on American-flagged, American-crewed vessels protects the critical role these vessels play in our national defense and bolsters hundreds of thousands of American shipbuilding and maritime jobs. As foreign nations continue to invest

heavily in their own shipbuilding capacity, the United States cannot allow our own capabilities to dwindle.”

### **NATIONAL M.E.B.A. GOES VIRTUAL**

For the 113<sup>th</sup> time in our Union’s history, M.E.B.A. Delegates converged in “Unity & Friendship” this week at the National M.E.B.A. Convention – as they gave a nod to our past while remaining firmly fixed on the future.

20 elected Delegates carried on a venerated tradition and constitutional duty on Tuesday in the steps of the M.E.B.A. forefathers. This Convention was like no other, however, as circumstances dictated that the Convention be conducted online using the Zoom platform, a concept fantastically alien to the ten founding fathers who gathered 146 years ago to form the national organization that would become the M.E.B.A.

The National M.E.B.A. is an administrative umbrella organization that was restructured in the 1960s to house M.E.B.A. Districts. It has no paid employees and holds no contracts. 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. National Conventions are now conducted every four years, aligned with the District election cycle. The District is governed by its own By-Laws, but is also beholden to the National Constitution and the Constitution for Districts.

During Tuesday’s Convention, National M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac honored the past by briefly recounting the history of our National Conventions and urging Delegates to work together on beneficial changes toward a more perfect Union. President Vokac pointed out that the Union will likely convene an in-person “Special Convention” next year which should provide a more suitable backdrop for Delegates to push ahead with productive National business. Special Conventions are provided for in the M.E.B.A. Constitution and have the same force as National Conventions but can be conducted without the ceremonial requirements of a regular Convention.

During Tuesday’s Convention, a new National Executive Committee was completed to join National President Adam Vokac who was elected to the position by virtue of his victory in the District election. The NEC will mirror the District Executive Committee for the next four years as Claudia Cimini was elected as National Vice President, Roland “Rex” Rexha takes over as National Secretary-Treasurer and the two additional National Executive Committee positions were filled by NEC Members Jason Callahan and Adam Smith.

The Convention format allows for the discussion of District business and each of the DEC members gave an update on news and initiatives within their jurisdictional purview. The 20 elected Delegates include National President Adam Vokac, National Vice President Claudia Cimini, National Secretary-Treasurer Roland “Rex” Rexha, NEC Member Jason Callahan, NEC Member Adam Smith, Rich Doherty, Jeff Duncan, Nicole Greenway, Jack Menendez, Max Alper, Kevin M. Cross, John McElhone, Nico Sermoneta, April Fleischer, Erik Barton, Mark S. Collins, Nils Djusberg, Michael R. Doherty, Mark S. Gallagher and Serena Webber-Bey. All were invited to attend the planned Special Convention next year and to work in the interim on possible resolutions that will further improve the structure and operation of the National M.E.B.A.

## **COAST GUARD COMMANDANT LAUDS MERCHANT MARINE DURING ADDRESS**

During the delivery of his annual State of the Coast Guard address, Coast Guard Commandant Karl Schultz expressed appreciation for merchant mariners, especially for their continued perseverance and reliability during these challenging times. Calling them “the backbone of the marine transportation system,” he offered up a verbal pat on the back for our maritime workforce that continues to persevere and deliver the goods in peace, war and pandemic. Speaking from a hangar in San Diego, the Commandant discussed a range of programs and initiatives helping to keep the Coast Guard mission-ready. He also noted:

“And I have to give a shout out to our credentialed US merchant mariners who form the backbone of the marine transportation system. Last year the Coast Guard made sure these marine operators were categorized as essential workers. Annually they are responsible for \$5.4 trillion of economic activity that America depends on. And throughout this global pandemic, these professionals kept products moving to ensure stores were stocked with medicine and critical supplies. In our nation’s inland waterway system, that includes 12,000 miles of commercially navigable waterways, in some 240 locks, these inland marine highways enable tugs and barges to transport annually 570 million tons of cargo valued at \$230 billion. Think about it, it would take an extra 21 million tractor-trailer trucks on America’s roadways to move the same amount of cargo as U.S. barges do each and every year.”

## **GOODBYE OLD FRIENDS! TWO POPULAR AMHS FERRIES HEADED FOR SPANISH WATERS**

Two popular workhorse vessels that have served the Alaska Marine Highway System since the mid-2000s have been sold by the State to a Spanish buyer for overseas use.

The high-speed AMHS vessels FAIRWEATHER and CHENEGA were purchased by Servicios y Concesiones Maritimas Ibicencas S.A. of Ibiza, Spain for \$5,174,444, which amounted to only half of the State’s asking price. The funds will be used for future AMHS vessel maintenance and construction.

The buyer will employ a heavy-lift ship to pick up the two ferries in Ketchikan and transport them through the Panama Canal to their new homeport in Spain.

The ferry service was built with federal dollars and is part of the National Highway System. Two years ago, massive State budget cuts majorly impacted ferry fleet operations leading to diminished service for Alaskans, many who live in remote locations and depend on the AMHS. The ferry fleet serves as a crucial connector for Alaskan communities spread out over 3,100 miles.

Last year, a slight increase to the operating budget helped marginally improve ferry service in the Last Frontier. This year’s budget for the fleet is largely in line with the one from last year. Only two ferries are currently in operation – the MATANUSKA and the LITUYA though several others are nearing the end of their overhaul work and will rejoin the fleet as the summer season approaches. The State expects six vessels to be available and deployed on runs during the summer season, along with the two already in operation, including the KENNICOTT, LeCONTE, TUSTAMENA and AURORA. The State had earlier made efforts to part ways with the M/V AURORA, but after continued dialogue with informed insiders, including representatives of the vessel mariners, a more rational plan emerged and the ferry will be returned to service for the summer season to serve the communities of Prince William Sound. In late breaking news, the KENNICOTT was entering service this weekend to fill in for the MATANUSKA which demanded an emergency repair. Once repairs are effected, the MATANUSKA would return to service as early as next week.

## **IMO ANNOUNCES CAMPAIGN FOCUS FOR UPCOMING DAY OF THE SEAFARER**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, mariners have faced difficult working conditions including uncertainties about port access, re-supply, crew changeovers and repatriation. The International Maritime Organization's 2021 "Day of the Seafarer" campaign, set for June 25<sup>th</sup>, is calling for a 'fair future for seafarers.' The campaign will discuss issues that will still be relevant to mariners after the pandemic, such as fair treatment of seafarers, fair working conditions, fair training, fair safety, etc. Hundreds of thousands of global mariners are still working at sea beyond their assignments and equal numbers are facing financial difficulties, desperate to relieve crew on ships and start earning wages again. Day of the Seafarer 2021 will provide a platform to advocate for higher standards of working conditions. Mariners will be invited to share their views about their future in seafaring. You can visit IMO's Day of the Seafarer webpage for more.

## **UNION BREWS & BOOZE TO CHASE AWAY THE WINTER BLUES**

Spring is right around the corner though it doesn't feel that way in some parts of the country. Reliable sources report seeing the first buds peeking out of the earth as warmer weather is imminent. We made it this far – we can do this!!! Following is a union-made list that you may have taken advantage of during this week's St. Patrick's Day. It may help get you through the last of the ill-weathered days before the sun shines a little more brightly on you!

**Beer** - Bass (IAM); Beck's (IAM); Blue Moon (IUOE, IBT); Budweiser (IBT, IAM); Busch (IAM, IBT); Butte Creek (IBT); Coors (IBT); Dundee (IBT); Duquesne (IUE-CWA); Genesee (IBT); Goose Island (IBT); Hamm's (UAW); Henry Weinhard's (IUOE, IBT); Iron City (IUE-CWA); Jamaica Red Ale (IAM); Keystone (IAM, IUOE); Killians (IUOE, IBT); Landshark Lager (IAM, IUOE, IBT); Lionshead (IUOE); Mad River (IAM); Mendocino Brewing (IBT); Michelob (IAM, IBT, IUOE); Mickey's (IUOE, IBT); Miller Genuine Draft (UAW, IAM, IUOE, IBT); Milwaukee's Best (UAW, IUOE, IAM, IBT); Natural Ice (IAM, IUOE, IBT); O'Doul's (non-alcoholic) (IUOE, IAM, IBT); Pabst Blue Ribbon (UAW); Red Stripe (IUE-CWA); Red Tail Ale (IBT); Rolling Rock (IAM); Sam Adams (IBT, IUOE, SEIU); Schlitz (UAW); Shock Top (IAM, IUOE, IBT); Steelhead (IAM); Third Shift (IBT). **Whiskey** - George Dickel Tennessee Whiskey (SEIU Firemen and Oilers); Jack Daniel's (UAW); Jim Beam (IBT); Sazerac (UFCW); Seagram's Seven (IBT); Wild Turkey (IBT).

## **APRIL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (All times are local)**

**Monday, April 5** – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

**Tuesday, April 6** – CMES@1430 (*CMES Meeting will be conducted in-person*); Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

**Wednesday, April 7** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

**Thursday, April 8** – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

**Friday, April 9** – Honolulu@1100

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

