

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **CONTINUED CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION TO P.R. JONES ACT WAIVER**

Another wave of lawmakers have voiced their opposition to a 10-year Jones Act waiver sought by Puerto Rico. The island is a longtime opponent of the Jones Act and often employs false or misleading arguments to support their case. Puerto Rico requested the decade-long waiver to permit shipment of U.S. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the U.S. territory aboard foreign-flagged LNG carriers. The initiative is said to be part of Puerto Rico's push to convert most of its power generators from diesel fuel to natural gas. 19 Members of Congress penned a letter to President Trump last week urging that the waiver request be denied and saying that it is "unnecessary and in direct conflict with existing law." Granting a waiver, they say, "would help foreign entities, harm our American maritime base, and risk our military readiness."

The letter was signed by House Members Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.), John Garamendi (D-CA), Don Young (R-AK), Brian Babin (R-TX), Peter King (R-NY), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Garret Graves (R-LA), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Tom Graves (R-GA), Ralph Abraham, MD (R-LA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Clay Higgins (R-LA), Lee Zeldin (R-NY), Michael Guest (R-Miss.), Mike Bost (R-IL), David B. McKinley (R-WV), Bradley Byrne (R-AL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA).

They pointed out that the Act can only be waived in the interests of national defense – which doesn't appear to be the case with the Puerto Rico request. In lieu of a waiver, they suggested to President Trump that "we should look toward recapitalizing an American-built LNG carrier fleet. This option is consistent with your "Buy American, Hire American" agenda."

The letter was dated March 13 and sent three weeks after a similar communication criticizing the waiver was forwarded to Homeland Security Department Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen by ten members of Congress from the Florida delegation. Leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee also expressed their opposition to the waiver request in a letter sent to DHS in early February.

### **SUPPORT THE JONES ACT!**

Members, applicants and retirees are invited to let Congress know how important the Jones Act is to the nation's economy and national security. A pair of web links will help you easily cobble together and dispatch a message to Congress urging them to stand up for this important statute that helps keep the U.S.-flag fleet afloat.

There are frequent challenges to the tried-and-true Merchant Marine Act of 1920 by ignorant or unknowledgeable sources who typically recommend paring down, waiving or repealing the Act. Their arguments are mirrored by overseas shipping interests who would love to replace American workers and gain access to the U.S. domestic maritime trade.

The loss of the Jones Act would give the green light to open up our coasts and inland waterways to foreign ships and mariners. While U.S. ships and seafarers are subject to strict Coast Guard licensing and documentation standards that ensure that safe practices are adhered to, our foreign counterparts are not.

Navy League has an easy, pre-formatted (but editable) Jones Act letter that you can sign onto and send to your Congressional delegation in a few clicks. You can get to it by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/y3ysgpk4> Another Jones Act letter, set up by the American Maritime Partnership, achieves the same effect. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y2yd72y7> to get to the AMP letter. Five minutes of your time can really make a difference.

### **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF U.S. SEAPORTS CONTINUES TO CLIMB**

A nationwide ports economic impact study has found that the contributions of America's seaports to the nation's economy have risen dramatically over the last few years. The study by Martin Associates titled "National Economic Impact of the U.S. Coastal Port System" found that between 2014 and 2018, the total number of jobs supported by cargo moving through America's deep-draft ports increased by more than one-third ... from 23.1 million jobs to 30.8 million. Also, the total economic value that U.S. coastal ports provide in terms of revenue to businesses, personal income and economic output by exporters and importers rose 17 percent ... from \$4.6 trillion to \$5.4 trillion. This accounted for nearly 26 percent of the nation's \$20.5 trillion economy in 2018, which is the same 26 percent ratio as five years ago when the total U.S. GDP was \$17.4 trillion. They noted that this is an indicator that the value of cargo activities at U.S. ports remains a key factor in America's economic vitality.

Since their last report in 2015, Martin Associates found that Federal, state and local tax revenues generated by port-sector and importer/exporter revenues rose nearly 18 percent ... from \$321.1 billion to \$378.1 billion; Personal wages and local consumption related to the port-sector increased by more than a quarter ... from \$1.1 trillion to \$1.4 trillion; and the average annual salary of those directly employed by port-related businesses rose from \$53,723 to \$62,800 ... a 17 percent increase. "The sizable growth over the past five years in the number of jobs that American deep-draft ports support, the wages those jobs pay, and the tax revenues that are collected from the cargo activities at these ports is really quite impressive," a Martin Associates spokesperson noted. "It's a testament to overall economic importance of our nation's seaports."

### **STUDY SAYS ROGUE WAVES GETTING MORE EXTREME**

Research led by the University of Southampton suggests that 'rogue' waves are occurring less often, but becoming more extreme. Scientists have, for the first time, used long-term data from a wide expanse of ocean to investigate how these rare, unexpected and hazardous ocean phenomena behave. Their findings are published in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

Waves are classed as 'rogue' when they are over twice the height of the average sea state around them. From trough to peak, past observations have put some at over 30 meters high. The fiercest are capable of damaging or sinking ships, can wound or kill crew members and on occasions have swept people off the shoreline and out to sea.

A team of engineers and oceanographers from the University of Southampton, together with researchers from The National Oceanography Centre examined over 20 years of information (sourced between 1994-2016) from 15 buoys which provide surface data along the US western seaboard – stretching from Seattle in the north, to San Diego in the south. The data showed instances of rogue waves vary greatly, depending on the area of sea and time period focused on. On average though, the team found instances of rogue waves (across the two decade window) fell slightly, but that rogue wave size, relative to the background sea, increased by around one per cent year-on-year. The scientists showed rogue waves are more prevalent and of greater severity in the winter months and, intriguingly, are happening with increasing frequency within calmer background seas.

### **SNUG HARBOR STILL ASSISTING MARINERS IN NEED**

Though Sailors' Snug Harbor (SSH) no longer owns or operates a retirement facility for mariners in Sea Level, NC, Staten Island, NY or anywhere else, they still continue to assist mariners in their home communities. The non-profit organization financially aids retired mariners with a proven need of assistance. The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor (SSH) was incorporated in 1806 as the result of a bequest made by Captain Robert Richard Randall, a wealthy New York merchant. Today, Snug Harbor offers support to career mariners who can demonstrate they have a need for financial assistance and meet the following requirements:

- 2555 days of deep sea time, at least 5 years on U.S.-flagged ships or 14 years working on inland waters;
- 65 years of age or older (exceptions may be made if mariner is disabled);
- Proven need for financial assistance;
- An individual with at least \$50,000 in assets will not be eligible (primary residence excluded);
- All public benefits available to a mariner must be accessed (if eligible). For example, VA benefits, Medicaid, food stamps etc.

If you have any questions or are in need of assistance, please call the Snug Harbor Mariner Counselor at 1-888-257-5456. The web site [www.thesailorssnugharbor.org](http://www.thesailorssnugharbor.org) has a link to our application. If you do not have access to a computer, please call and one will be sent to you.

### **APPLICATION PACKETS, ASSORTED DOCS ON M.E.B.A. WEBSITE**

Members and applicants should make use of the “Documents & Member Notices” section of the M.E.B.A. website to find important and updated forms that may save you a trip to the hall or expedite your visit. On the site, you’ll find application forms for Deep-Sea, Government Fleet and the various bargaining units. You’ll also find Group Seniority Card application forms, Sailing Time Verification & Transmittal forms and Change of Bargaining Unit Affiliation forms. In addition, the M.E.B.A. By-Laws, Constitution and Shipping Rules are there as well as many other important documents including the Database Update Form and the Recommendation Form - (*Reminder: two recommendation letters are needed from a Senior officer who sailed with the Applicant for at least 60 days.*)

To get there, go to the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) and scroll down to the large “Documents & Member Notices” box on the right side of the main page or go directly to [www.mebaunion.org/documents-and-notice/](http://www.mebaunion.org/documents-and-notice/)

## **NEW CLASS OF MSC SHIPS TO BE NAMED AFTER NAVAJO NATION**

Navy Secretary Richard Spencer announced that a new class of Navy Towing, Salvage, and Rescue ships that will sail for the Military Sealift Command, will be named after the Navajo Nation. “The Navajo people have fought and served our armed forces with honor and valor in nearly all major conflicts since the birth of our nation, so it is fitting and right to name a new class of ship in their honor,” said Secretary Spencer.

During World War II, the Navajo Code Talkers, Marines Corps service members under the Department of the Navy, fought in the Pacific Theater transmitting top secret messages. By the war’s end, over 400 Code Talkers were trained for this essential service. In the invasion of Iwo Jima alone, Code Talkers sent over 800 messages without error. Major Howard Connor, who was the Code Talkers’ signal officer at Iwo Jima, said, “Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima.”

The new class of vessels will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships which were constructed in the early 1980s. The first ship of this class will be named USNS NAVAJO and designated T-ATS 6. Each additional ship in the class will be named in honor of prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

## **REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, April 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, April 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, April 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, April 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, April 12 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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). Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org)*