

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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INTERLAKE VESSEL HELPS LAUNCH LAKES NAVIGATION SEASON

The Interlake Steamship vessel STEWART J. CORT helped inaugurate the 2019 Great Lakes shipping season with a midnight transit through Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan's Poe Lock. The Poe is one of the four parallel locks on the St. Marys River that make up the Soo Locks, allowing vessel traffic between Lake Superior and the lower Great Lakes. The 1,000 foot freighter was first in line at the Lock when it opened at 12 a.m. on Monday March 25th signaling the start of the season as the Great Lakes fleet thaws out and gets back to work.

The locks were officially closed on Jan. 15 and underwent critical repairs and maintenance during the 10-week long winter shutdown. Extensive work was performed on the Poe Lock including weld inspections and repairs on the upstream gate, replacement of anchorage links for the dewatering gate, minor repairs and inspection on the intermediate and downstream gates, and underfloor drainage cleaning.

The Poe is the oldest of the four parallel Soo locks dating back to 1896. The other three are the Davis Lock (1914), Sabin Lock (1919) and MacArthur Lock (1943). The MacArthur Lock recently underwent repairs to the filling and emptying valve bulkhead slots and replacement of anchorage links for the dewatering gate and intermediate gate. A formal periodic inspection was also completed. The MacArthur Lock, located on the south side of the Poe, will continue undergoing maintenance until mid-April.

U.S. DELEGATION URGED TO USE CHINA TALKS TO SECURE ROLE FOR U.S. SHIPS IN LNG TRADE

Senator Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Congressman John Garamendi (D-CA) have urged U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to make sure U.S.-flagged and crewed vessels play a key role in the transportation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports to China.

They note that recent reports indicate an agreement to end the retaliatory tariffs between the U.S. and China will include substantial commitments by the Chinese to purchase U.S. LNG exports. A letter sent by the pair of lawmakers urges the administration to use this opportunity to create new jobs in America and reinvigorate the U.S.-flag international fleet.

“The United States should seize every opportunity to bolster our domestic maritime industry,” Sen. Wicker said. “As we pursue stronger trade agreements with China and other nations, I urge the administration to consider supporting the American merchant marine fleet by requiring liquid natural gas and crude oil exports be transported by U.S.-flagged and crewed vessels.”

“America is on pace to be the third largest producer of LNG exports by 2020. If we don’t use these trade negotiations to require our LNG exports to ship on U.S. vessels, the United States will continue exporting its LNG on foreign-flagged ships manned by foreign crews,” noted Rep. Garamendi.

“The U.S.-flag international fleet has declined 60% since 1991 to just 80 vessels,” he continued. “These negotiations give us the opportunity to reenergize American shipyards and rebuild our nation’s dwindling merchant fleet, which provides a vital economic stimulus and critical sealift capacity for our military. I look forward to establishing a dialogue with the administration on this matter, and I thank Senator Wicker for leading the effort in the Senate to grow the U.S.-flag fleet.”

The letter has been posted on M.E.B.A.’s website (www.mebaunion.org) or can be visited directly at: <https://tinyurl.com/y5pdan5w>

Last Congress, Sen. Wicker and Rep. Garamendi introduced the “Energizing American Shipbuilding Act.” The legislation would guarantee that fixed percentages of all exported LNG and crude oil would travel on U.S.-built, crewed, and flagged vessels starting in 2025. 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. Sen. Wicker and Rep. Garamendi plan to reintroduce the bill this Congress.

HOUSE COMMITTEE PUSHES THROUGH BILL TO PROTECT COAST GUARD PAY DURING SHUTDOWNS

A House Committee has advanced legislation to ensure that active-duty Coast Guard members and agency civilian personnel will not be deprived of a paycheck during any future Government shutdown. The Coast Guard was the only unfunded military service during the recent partial government shutdown since the agency falls under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – not the Department of Defense (DOD) where the other military services are housed. The DOD was funded before the shutdown. DHS was not. During the 35-day shutdown that ended in January, about 42,000 active-duty Coast Guardsmen along with around 1,300 agency civilians continued working without a paycheck. Another 7,400 Coast Guard civilians were furloughed.

The “Pay Our Coast Guard Parity Act,” is a bill co-authored by Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Sean Maloney (D-NY) and Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and was co-sponsored by a bipartisan group of lawmakers. The bill was passed by the T&I Committee this week.

“Tens of thousands of American service members went without pay during the shutdown simply because of departmental jurisdiction – that’s a disgrace and it can never happen again,” said Chairman Maloney. “This legislation would guarantee that Coast Guard personnel will receive pay for their work just like the brave personnel who protect our country in any other branch of the armed services.”

The Committee also passed a bill introduced by Rep. Maloney that would require a Coast Guard report on the effects of climate change on agency facilities and operations. “We know climate change is going

to wreak havoc on DOD facilities per the department’s own report – you don’t have to be an expert to recognize that Coast Guard facilities along our shorelines will also be threatened,” said Chairman Maloney. “The question is not if the Coast Guard will be affected – the question is how serious the threat is and what steps we can take to protect our installations.”

Rep. Maloney’s bill will require the Commandant of the Coast Guard to put together a report within one year identifying which of its installations are most vulnerable to threats posed by climate change, including rising sea levels and increased flooding. The report would also include recommendations regarding possible methods to mitigate these threats. Additionally, the legislation would require the report to assess how the effects that increasing humanitarian needs resulting from climate change would impact the Guard’s mission, and methods of mitigating these growing demands. Last year, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) required the DOD to assemble a similar report on its department. The report, released in January, found that the majority of critical installations were threatened by climate change. Because the Coast Guard falls under DHS jurisdiction, it was not required to put together its own report.

FUTURE MSC EPF COULD BE HIGH-SPEED HOSPITAL VESSEL

The U.S. Navy announced a \$261.8 million modification to an awarded contract for two Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) vessels being built at Austal USA that will serve in the Military Sealift Command fleet. The engineering change proposal modification would allow at least one of the future newbuilds (EPF-13 & EPF-14) bound for the MSC fleet to be constructed as a high-speed “ambulance” or hospital vessel.

Formerly known as Joint High Speed Vessels (JHSV), the 338-foot EPFs are versatile, non-combatant, transport ships used for fast intra-theater transportation of troops, military vehicles, and equipment. They have the capability to carry out a wide range of operations, including non-combatant evacuation operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. Crews of the Military Sealift Command EPF fleet are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

MSC has already begun operating ten of the Austal-constructed EPFs with work started on two others being built at the Austal facility in Mobile, AL.

SEAPORTS HONOR REP. DIAZ-BALART

The American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), which represents 140 seaports, has selected U.S. Congressman and House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee Ranking Member Mario Díaz-Balart (R-FL) as 2019’s “Port Person of the Year” for his stalwart advocacy of the port industry. Each year, AAPA presents its Port Person of the Year award to an individual or individuals who have made significant contributions to the port industry.

“In his more than 16 years in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressman Díaz-Balart has consistently championed legislation to benefit our nation’s ports,” said Kurt Nagle, AAPA’s president and CEO. “Through both words and deeds, he’s demonstrated a keen understanding of how ports play a central role in driving our nation’s economy and creating good American jobs.”

A recent Transportation Institute study revealed that the maritime industry is responsible for almost 66,000 Florida jobs. Statewide, these jobs generate more than \$3.7 billion in worker income, and contributes more than \$14.6 billion annually into the Florida economy.

Rep. Díaz-Balart, who also co-chairs the Florida Ports Caucus, is now serving his ninth term representing Florida's 25th Congressional District. In the fiscal 2019 T-HUD appropriations bill, he negotiated language which resulted in nearly \$293 million in first-ever funding being appropriated for the Port Infrastructure Development Program within the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration. The program's goal is to fund infrastructure improvements that enhance U.S. port competitiveness and the ability of coastal seaports to effectively handle the movement of goods in America's supply chain, which are used by U.S. manufacturers, farmers and consumers.

RAFFLE BENEFITING THE G&W FUND – GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

You can purchase tickets now for an ongoing raffle benefiting the Good & Welfare Fund. A 50/50 Raffle to help strengthen the fund is open to anyone who wants to purchase a ticket. The drawing will be held on October 8th and will take place at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School during the regular membership meeting.

5,000 tickets were printed and sent out to the Union halls as well as the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School. They are being sold for \$2 apiece. Anyone purchasing \$50 worth of tickets will be mailed an M.E.B.A. T-shirt. Those who purchase \$100 worth of tickets will earn both a shirt and an M.E.B.A. hat. \$50 and \$100 purchasers will also receive M.E.B.A. pins.

The raffle winner will receive 50% of the proceeds (*as much as \$5,000!!*) with the other half going to the Fund. Ticketholders do not need to be present at the drawing to win. Every ticket that you buy puts another dollar into the Good & Welfare Fund.

M.E.B.A. members are encouraged to support this important cause. The Good & Welfare Fund assists active and retired members and their families in times of crisis. It helps remove some of the sting and burden of unexpected tragedy and lends a hand to those within the M.E.B.A. family. This is a wonderful cause, but we must constantly strengthen the fund to allow additional assistance to members and retirees in times of hardship. The G&W Fund is exempt from Federal Income tax, so consider making a contribution. In addition, you can support the Fund on the M.E.B.A.'s electronic payment portal that is also used to pay dues and service charges as well as contribute to the Political Action Fund. Visit www.mebaunion.org to access the portal.

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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