

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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CG HOUSE BILL INCLUDES OFFSHORE ANTI-FOC MEASURE

The House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure cleared the Coast Guard Authorization bill on Wednesday after augmenting it with provisions affecting mariners. The bill authorizes Coast Guard funding levels for two years and aims to improve Coast Guard mission effectiveness. Among other items, in a provision supported by maritime unions including the M.E.B.A., it also strengthens Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment (SASH) prevention, response, investigation, and accountability in the maritime industry.

Committee members okayed the bill and sent it to the full House for a vote, but not before tacking on an amendment that targets flag-of-convenience vessels serving in the U.S. offshore trades. Committee members voted 58-2 to add 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 encapsulated in a recent Senate bill introduced by Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and mirrored in the House in a bill co-sponsored by Reps. Garret Graves (R-LA) and John Garamendi (D-CA). Rep. Garamendi noted, "Our bipartisan bill 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."

GOVERNMENT TO STEP UP FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-COMPETITIVE SHIPPING PRACTICES

The White House announced that it is increasing its pressure to combat the outsized power of foreign-controlled ocean carriers who have helped exacerbate the supply chain crisis and fed into oppressive ongoing inflation.

Ocean shipping drew a rare momentary spotlight during the State of the Union address to the nation on Tuesday night as the President criticized the anti-competitive practices by foreign-owned shipping alliances that have maximized profits during the COVID era at the expense of domestic consumers.

He said, “I’m a capitalist, but capitalism without competition isn’t capitalism. It’s exploitation—and it drives up prices. When corporations don’t have to compete, their profits go up, your prices go up, and small businesses and family farmers and ranchers go under. We see it happening with ocean carriers moving goods in and out of America. During the pandemic, these foreign-owned companies raised prices by as much as 1,000% and made record profits. Tonight, I’m announcing a crackdown on these companies overcharging American businesses and consumers.”

In July, on the heels of a Presidential Executive Order, the Federal Maritime Commission and the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice inked an MOU to better fuel cooperation in their oversight and enforcement responsibilities of the shipping industry. Now, FMC and DOJ announced strengthened measures to continue that commitment and declared their intentions to target the anti-trust immunity of shipping alliances and better promote competitiveness which has been stifled through the years by significant carrier consolidation over the last two decades.

Giving the cooperative effort more teeth in the new initiative, DOJ will help enforce violations of the Shipping Act and related laws. The FMC will provide the Antitrust Division with support and maritime industry expertise for Sherman Act and Clayton Act enforcement actions. The White House issued a Fact Sheet this week ticking off how shipping cartels have consolidated their market power and taken advantage of American businesses and farmers resulting in exponential profits including a record 2021, a year in which foreign carriers recorded bigger profits than they made during all of 2010-2020.

The fact sheet states, “Since the beginning of the pandemic, these ocean carrier companies have been dramatically increasing shipping costs through rate increases and fees. They increased spot rates for freight shipping between Asia and the United States by 100% since January 2020, and increased rates for freight shipping between the United States and Asia by over 1,000% over the same period. Oftentimes cargo owners are charged fees—known as “detention and demurrage” fees—even when they can’t get access to their containers to move them. The FMC estimates that from July to September of 2021, eight of the largest carriers charged customers fees totaling \$2.2 billion—a 50% increase on the previous three-month period.”

UPCOMING CONTRACT TALKS WITH MATSON FOR HORIZON VESSELS; INPUT, PARTICIPATION SOUGHT

M.E.B.A. will soon provide notice to Matson Navigation and their wholly owned subsidiary, Horizon Lines, LLC, concerning our intention to negotiate a new Collective Bargaining Agreement. Negotiations will cover Deep Sea and Port Engineers for the three D-7 Class vessels serving Alaska – the MATSON ANCHORAGE, MATSON KODIAK and MATSON TACOMA.

The M.E.B.A. team, led by Executive Vice President Claudia Cimini, is seeking Rank & File input and participation. Contact Seattle Patrolman Kevin M. Cross at kcross@mebaunion.org with your input. Rank and File Committee volunteers should include their available dates. Collective bargaining works best when we work together collectively.

ANOTHER NEWBUILD POISED TO START S.I. FERRY FLEET SERVICE

The second of three newbuilds joining the Staten Island Ferry fleet this year has been commissioned and will begin service as soon as this spring. The SANDY GROUND, the second Ollis Class Staten Island Ferry built at Eastern Shipbuilding in Panama City, FL, was delivered in December and was commissioned at a ceremony on Friday. The vessel honors one of the nation's first black settlements – located on Staten Island, which also served as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

The first vessel in the class, the M/V STAFF SGT. MICHAEL H. OLLIS, entered service a few weeks ago. The final Ollis-class ferry, the DOROTHY DAY, is expected to be commissioned later this year. Each vessel is a state-of-the-art, 320', 9,980 HP, 4,500-passenger boat requiring a crew of 16. The M.E.B.A. represents Captains, Assistant Captains, Engineers and Mates on the ferries.

CHEERS TO CHIEF TODD BILODEAU – MLL MARINER OF THE YEAR

M.E.B.A.'s Todd Bilodeau, Chief Engineer on the Maersk Line, Ltd. vessel MAERSK HARTFORD, has been named as MLL's "Licensed Mariner of the Year" attesting to his outstanding proficiency and professionalism, in a year where there were many worthy nominees.

Todd is a Maine Maritime Academy graduate and has worked for MLL since 2007. The company said he "was instrumental in the [Hartford's] safe operations and lent his expertise on an electrical project which will result in the safer handling and stowage of refrigerated containers onboard an entire class of containerships."

The company also honored an Unlicensed Mariner of the Year – SIU's Eduardo Barlas who serves as the AB on the MAERSK COLUMBUS. The MAERSK DURBAN was honored as MLL's "Ship of the Year. All winners receive a cash award and MLL swag. Congratulations!

LABOR CALLS FOR QUICK CONFIRMATION OF SUPREME COURT PICK

Labor unions applauded the selection of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace the retiring Justice Stephen Breyer. Judge Jackson is currently a Circuit Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. She has authored almost 500 opinions as a judge including several prominent decisions siding with labor unions after Government regulations were foisted on them to restrict their rights.

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said that, "Working people need a champion on the bench who will defend and protect our civil rights, including our right to organize in the workplace. Judge Jackson has a strong legal track record of fighting on behalf of working people, including during her tenure as an assistant federal public defender in Washington, D.C., and we are confident that she will bring that leadership to the highest court in the land. "

AFSCME President Lee Saunders said, "Working people have gotten a raw deal from the Supreme Court in recent years. The court has been part of a rigged system that has silenced our voices, rolling back our rights and freedoms while putting a thumb on the scale in favor of the super-wealthy and large corporations. At a moment when we must empower workers, making it easier to organize and stand together in strong unions, it is critical that the next Supreme Court justice interpret the law accordingly."

M.E.B.A. SCHOOL ADDS ADDITIONAL WARTSILA TRAINING COURSES

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School announced the scheduling of additional Wartsila training classes to its 2022 course schedule, to be conducted over the next few weeks. Last week they scheduled a three-day Wartsila Level 0 2-Stroke “ABC” training class that is currently in session until the end of the week.

This week, they announced a Wartsila Level 1 RT Flex Training Class that will take place from March 8–10, 2022 (Tuesday to Thursday). Two more Wartsila Level 1 “ABC” RT Flex Training Classes will take place at the School from April 5-7 as well as April 12-14 (both run from Tuesday to Thursday). Topics covered for the three scheduled courses will include Introduction to 2-Stroke Flex Engines; Engine components; Engine basics: Fuel rail system, Servo oil, Control oil; Flex view program; and Basic principle WECS (Wartsila Engine control System). To sign up for these courses you need sailing experience on RT Flex engines or the Level 0 course.

Applications can be sent through the CMES website, faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to applications@mebaschool.org

RETAILERS NERVOUS AHEAD OF LONGSHORE TALKS

To avoid additional supply chain disruptions, the National Retail Federation is encouraging the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) to begin contract negotiations well before the June 30 contract expiration. The ILWU is currently preparing for upcoming talks, with wages and automation seen as top issues.

NRF wrote to ILWU and PMA leadership urging both groups to begin negotiations early in order to reach a contract agreement that would ensure continued cargo growth for the region. NRF warned that a delay in contract negotiations would negatively impact retailers and other stakeholders that rely on West Coast ports and may force retailers and other shippers to reevaluate their use of U.S. West Coast ports.

Another letter sent to the Administration from 49 trade associations that includes, among others, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the North American Meat Institute, asks the White House to facilitate and shepherd talks to ensure that existing supply chain issues aren’t further exacerbated. “The outcome of these negotiations could effectively determine the future of U.S. supply chain competitiveness,” they stated. “We have the time and knowledge to avoid a self-inflicted wound to the nation’s pandemic recovery.”

AMP CITES UNPRECEDENTED CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR JONES ACT

Newly-elected American Maritime Partnership (AMP) President Ku’uhaku Park told attendees at an online U.S.-flag shipping forum that support for the Jones Act among Members of Congress is at an all-time high. Park, the senior V.P. at Matson was recently installed to a two-year term to lead AMP, which is a broad-based coalition representing U.S.-flag vessel operators and allied interests, including the M.E.B.A. and the American Maritime Congress. He was addressing attendees at the Capital Link Jones Act & U.S. Flag Shipping Forum.

“I’m happy to report that overall support for the Jones Act in Congress and the Administration has never been higher than it is today,” he said. “An overwhelming majority of the Members of Congress in both parties and in both chambers support the Jones Act. In addition to the Congress, this

Administration is extremely supportive of the Jones Act. President Biden strongly supported the Jones Act during the campaign and then reiterated his strong support publicly almost immediately upon taking office.”

FIRST UNIONIZED REI AFTER SUCCESSFUL VOTE AT SOHO LOCATION

REI employees at its SoHo (Manhattan), NY location voted 88-14 to be represented by the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), becoming the first among the outdoor equipment co-op’s 165 stores to organize. The NLRB conducted the one-day in-person election which is expected to be certified within a few days. The 116 affected workers are comprised of full- and part-time sales specialists, technical specialists, visual presentation specialists, shipping and receiving specialists, certified technicians, operations leads, sales leads, and shipping and receiving leads.

RWDSU President Stuart Appelbaum said, “The workers of REI SoHo are ready to negotiate a strong contract that will allow them to uphold the co-op’s progressive values while providing the top-notch service REI customers have come to expect. With a seat at the table, workers can make working at REI safe and sustainable for years to come.”

MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, March 7 – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300.

Tuesday, March 8 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, March 9 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; **Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register now at mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, March 10 – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, March 11 – Honolulu@1100.

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*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.