

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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WWII MARINERS TO RECEIVE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

An overdue acknowledgement to our nation's World War II mariners will finally happen in the next few weeks after Congress recently approved the "Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2020." [H.R. 5671]. The bill is being sent to the President for his expected signature.

The legislation authorizes the award of the Congressional Gold Medal to merchant mariners who served during World War II. Once signed into law, a single gold medal of appropriate design will be struck in honor of WWII U.S. merchant mariners on behalf of Congress. It will be placed on display in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the Academy in Kings Point, NY. Duplicates will then be created and made available to the public.

Congressman John Garamendi (D-CA) spearheaded the House bill along with Reps. Don Young (R-AK) and Susan Brooks (R-IN). Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) sponsored the companion legislation in the Senate.

UNION COALITION, CLUSTER OF SENATORS BLAST PUSH TO STRIP UNION RIGHTS FROM DOD WORKERS

M.E.B.A. is part of a coalition of unions biting back against a White House move to strip away collective bargaining rights away from Defense Department workers.

The Federal Workers Alliance (FWA), comprising unions that represent over 300,000 federal workers, are taking issue with a Trump Administration memo to DOD Secretary Mark Esper that delegates authority to Esper to deny union rights of DOD employees, based on "national security." If exercised, the federal government could further subjugate a loyal workforce that has been under consistent assault since Trump began his term in office. Put into practice, the action would affect hundreds of thousands of DOD civilian employees that includes mariners in the Military Sealift Command and Army Corps of Engineers represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

The existing Presidential authority that was delegated to Secretary Esper in the memo, was designed for certain national emergency situations, and outlined in the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act. Secretary Esper told Congress that the memo was not accompanied by a recommendation, but admitted that his own staff was preparing an analysis and its own recommendations before any action is taken.

In a letter sent to House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-WA) and Oversight Committee Chair Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), the FWA said that the memo is part of the ongoing effort to dismantle federal labor unions, peel back protections and transform hardworking employees into at-will workers who can be fired for any reason.

“While [the issuance of the memo] is not surprising,” the letter said, “it remains disappointing that this administration would use the excuse, ‘national security’ as a guise to justify their union busting.” Continuing, the letter said “...Inferring that unions and national security are incompatible as a means toward fulfilling an ideological goal of eliminating collective bargaining rights is an insult.”

The coalition asked lawmakers to work on language for the next Defense bill that would block such an action, and prevent similar efforts that would purge worker rights and protections.

Several Senators led by Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren dispatched a letter to Secretary Esper urging him not to exempt employees from federal labor law. A separate letter from Democratic Senators, that included one Republican – Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) - was sent to the White House and criticized the President’s intended blanket application of the authority. “We all agree that the Department of Defense requires flexibility to respond to the challenges that our nation faces,” the letter stated. “However, collective bargaining is not only compatible with this needed flexibility, but also is a key component in preserving flexibility by giving employees a voice in the system and providing avenues for management to receive feedback.”

MORE SHIPBOARD CORONAVIRUS GUIDANCE ISSUED

M.E.B.A. continues to post the latest documents on our website (www.mebaunion.org) regarding the Coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) relative to shipping. The Military Sealift Command issued a Memo along with interim planning and response guidance that was tailored for release to Masters, Chief Engineers and Shore Staff. The MSC’s Command’s COVID-19 Response Plan and Medical Guidance is available on the M.E.B.A. site for review.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) said the slowdown of manufacturing in China due to the outbreak could result in a \$50 billion decrease in exports across global value chains.

According to UNCTAD estimates, the most affected sectors include precision instruments, machinery, automotive and communication equipment. Among the most affected economies are the European Union (\$15.6 billion), the United States (\$5.8 billion), Japan (\$5.2 billion), The Republic of Korea (\$3.8 billion), Taiwan Province of China (\$2.6 billion) and Viet Nam (\$2.3 billion).

The estimated global effects of COVID-19 are subject to change depending on the containment of the virus and or changes in the sources of supply.

IMO “CARRIAGE BAN” IN EFFECT; OWNERS, OPERATORS IN VIOLATION ARE SUBJECT TO SHIP DETENTION

March 1 marked the onset of the International Maritime Organization’s enforcement of its “carriage ban” which prohibits vessels (without Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems) from carrying non-compliant fuel oils. Ships without scrubbers found to be in violation - carrying fuel containing a sulfur content higher than 0.5 percent – face the prospect of fine and/or detention.

The U.S. Coast Guard stated that it will rigorously enforce the requirements.

International Chamber of Shipping Secretary General Guy Platten said, “Since the introduction of IMO 2020 on 1st January, ships have been given a ‘grace period’ while the industry transitions to low-sulfur fuel. As of 1st March this will no longer be the case. Any ship found in non-compliance faces the prospect of serious fines and even detention.”

Since January 1 of this year, the sulfur content of fuel oil used by internationally trading vessels operating outside designated emission control areas cannot exceed 0.50% - representing an 80% cut from the former 3.50% limit. Ships without scrubbers can meet the requirement by burning costlier low-sulfur fuels.

CMES WORKS WITH ABS ON NEW “LNG AS MARINE FUEL” COURSE

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School has joined forces with classification society ABS Consulting in development of an “LNG as Marine Fuel” course. Envisioned as a series of three-day seminars, the CMES is in talks with ABS on finalizing the curriculum and getting it launched.

ABS has deep experience in all phases of gas-fueled maritime projects and sets the standard for the world’s largest and most advanced LNG-powered ships.

As planned, the course will be offered in both Basic and Advanced configurations. It will address future needs for crew training and assessment of competence and will delve into every aspect of safe LNG-fueled operations.

The CMES is looking to get the course scheduled and available to our membership later this year.

PORT OF BALTIMORE WITHSTANDS CYBER ATTACK

A networked server within a Port of Baltimore facility was hit by a cyber-attack last week, though the Port says there has been no operational impact. The incident, reportedly occurring on February 24th, was characterized as a ransomware cyber security attack. The company’s IT Department was alerted and workers were able to isolate affected servers and remove them from the network.

It appears that outside forces accessed a port vulnerability in the Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) and were able to scan the data system through an administrator’s account. During the attack, malicious ransomware software was uploaded encrypting data replicated to all of the company's domain controllers. The vulnerability was reportedly corrected and IT systems have since been restored. No additional information as to the scope and ramifications of the attack are available at this time.

Suspicious activity and breaches of security, including breaches of telecommunications equipment, covering computer, system and network security measures, should be reported to the Coast Guard National Response Center (NRC) at (800) 424-8802. Their website can be visited at <http://nrc.uscg.mil/>

MARINERS NEEDED FOR CG EXAM WORKING GROUP

Participants in the National Maritime Center's review of U.S. Coast Guard exam questions are being welcomed at upcoming working group meetings. Question reviews are a good opportunity to help the NMC and your fellow mariners make long-term improvements to the exam system.

The Examinations page of the NMC website (accessed at www.uscg.mil/nmc) provides an outline of the process to request membership in the working group. Once on the Examinations page, click "Working Group" to access this information. Requests may be submitted at any time. The following 2020 meetings will take place at NMC Headquarters in Martinsburg, WV:

Deck working group – March 10-12
Engine working group – April 7-9
Deck working group – July 14-16
Engine working group – September 8-10
Deck working group – October 6-8
Engine working group – November 3-5

You can direct any questions to the email address on the Examinations page, or contact the NMC Customer Service Center using the NMC online chat system, e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, April 6 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;
Tuesday, April 7 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;
Wednesday, April 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;
Thursday, April 9 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;
Monday, April 13 – 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. Visit us on Facebook. 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.