

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **EXECUTIVE ORDER SMOOTHS TRANSITION OF MILITARY VETS TO SHIPPING JOBS**

An Executive Order signed this week helps smooth the way for active duty service members and veterans to more easily make the transition into the U.S. Merchant Marine. To supplement the mariner pool, the Order, signed by President Trump on Monday, helps extend credit for veterans' military training and experience toward mariner credentialing requirements. At present, the U.S. Merchant Marine is short of the minimum number of mariners needed to support extended surge sealift capabilities. Both Maritime Administration and the U.S. Transportation Command have grave concerns that sealift operations cannot be sustained beyond the initial surge because of the shortage of qualified mariners.

But retaining a pool of highly trained, qualified, and experienced mariners who can meet the military and humanitarian needs of our country is contingent upon strong cargo preference laws and increased peacetime cargo to help sustain the U.S.-flag fleet in international trade. The Executive Order is a welcome announcement, but there needs to be a commensurate effort to expand U.S. shipping to ensure that our economy and national security reap the benefits in years to come.

The Executive Order states, "A robust merchant marine is vital to the national and economic security of the United States. Credentialed United States merchant mariners support domestic and international trade, are critical for strategic defensive and offensive military sealift operations, and bring added expertise to Federal vessel operations."

The Order directs agencies to, within a year, identify what military training and experience should be counted toward credentialing requirements. It also allows for waiving certain fees such as for Transportation Worker Identification Credentials (TWICs) for active duty service members.

The effort to ease the transition of vets into our industry has been a key issue for the M.E.B.A. over the years. The Union has been part of efforts to extend some of the advantages seafarers receive from maritime academies to military vets trying to enter the shipping arena.

"I think this is a huge step in the right direction," said Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby. He attended the signing ceremony along with Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and the White House's Director of Trade and Industrial Policy Peter Navarro. In addition, a contingent of

mariners were on hand including a pair of M.E.B.A. deck officers sailing for Interlake Steamship - Captain Jeremy Mock of the tug/barge unit DOROTHY ANN/PATHFINDER and Third Mate Jack Brandenburg. Both are former U.S. Marines.

Interlake President Mark Barker said that military veterans “adapt well to the fast-paced, 24-7 demanding nature of the maritime industry, which like the military also requires spending time away from home and loved ones...Based upon our personal experiences at The Interlake Steamship Company, the initiative of hiring former members of the armed services will be a successful undertaking for the maritime industry.”

### **HOUSE & SENATE HEARINGS SPOTLIGHT MARITIME IMPORTANCE**

A pair of Congressional hearings staged on Wednesday at the same time on opposite sides of Capitol Hill spotlighted U.S. shipping while highlighting its vital role to the nation’s economy and national security. Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) oversaw a hearing on “The State of the American Maritime Industry” before the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. Witnesses included representatives from the American Waterways Operators, Shipbuilders Council of America, Sailors’ Union of the Pacific and American Maritime Partnership. The hearing focused on the current state of the domestic maritime industry in anticipation of the fiscal year 2020 budget request as well as priorities for the Coast Guard and Maritime Administration reauthorization bills. The Chairman is a strong advocate for the Jones Act and U.S. shipping as well as a proponent of U.S. shipbuilding. In the last session of Congress he sponsored the Senate counterpart to Rep. John Garamendi’s legislation, the “Energizing American Shipbuilding Act,” that would require a percentage of exported American crude oil and LNG to travel on U.S.-built and U.S.-flag ships. The bills are expected to be re-introduced in this session of Congress at some point. The webcast of the Senate hearing can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/y5wctr35>

Over in the House, Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (D-NY) oversaw his first hearing as Chairman of the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee. The hearing highlighted the effects of the recent government shutdown on the Coast Guard, threats to our national security, and ways to improve maritime safety and support the maritime industry.

Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby testified and provided additional thought about the Presidential Executive Order issued this week that smooths the way for military veterans seeking a transition into the Merchant Marine. He announced that the Order is welcome news to help address a serious problem. Upon further questioning by the Chairman, Admiral Buzby acknowledged that the Order will “be additive and help the situation” but noted that it will “rely on the number of jobs that are out there. It really comes back to ships. We can bring people in, but if there’s not a place for them to be employed, it will only do so much.”

The Maritime Administrator also discussed the role that training requirements play on the shortage of senior level mariners. “The STCW requirements that are on top of the national requirements set forth by the Coast Guard add additional cost and time to mariners as they attempt to maintain and upgrade their license,” Adm. Buzby stated. “So what we see typically happen,” he said, “is at about the 10-year point, as junior mariners are transitioning to the upper ranks of the shipboard hierarchy, they’re faced with a decision to make. If they don’t see employment, they don’t see opportunity for advancement because of a lack of ships [and a] lack of jobs. Some of them are reticent about making that financial and time investment to get these more extensive credentials.”

The Administrator also discussed the aging of the Ready Reserve Force fleet and noted that they recognize the fleet needs to be replaced. They are working on a plan to bring existing capacity into the fleet to replace the older vessels, as the quickest and most affordable short-term strategy. Rep. John Garamendi [D-CA] discussed his “Energizing American Shipbuilding Act,” that he plans to re-introduce in this session of Congress and he asked Adm. Buzby’s opinion on what the bill would mean for the mariner workforce. The Maritime Administrator said, “We believe we are 45 or so ships short right now to meet manning needs. So to the extent that we can generate the cargo...for ships to be available to carry and provide employment for those mariners on those ships...I think that would be a step in the [right] direction. We always talk about how cargo is king – that we need the cargo first before we can get the ships – [oil & LNG] is a natural cargo that exists now. We’re a net energy exporter. We should be taking advantage of it.”

Seafarers International Union Executive V.P. Augie Tellez also testified at the hearing, on behalf of SIU, M.E.B.A., AMO, MM&P and MTD and hit on many of the issues of concern to mariners. He expressed the frustration that the industry must constantly “play defense” against incursions against key statutes supporting U.S.-flag shipping. He implored Congress to make the revitalization of the Merchant Marine a priority. “We need to go on the offense and start trying to find ways to grow the industry,” he said. “We can’t simply rely on maintaining MSP, stopping attacks on the Jones Act and cargo preference, and hope that things turn around. They won’t. Not unless we act. Now is the time for action.” The webcast of the hearing can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/y6b73yto>

### **MARITIME MESSAGE DELIVERED DURING 10<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SAIL-IN**

U.S.-flag shipping interests came out in force yesterday on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. as the industry staged its biggest ever Maritime Congressional “Sail-In.” A cross-section of maritime industry representatives, including unions, companies and other organizations, helped broadcast the importance of U.S. shipping and solicit support for crucial statutes and programs during 195 House and Senate Congressional meetings – on both sides of the aisle.

M.E.B.A. and AMC officials, staffers and an M.E.B.A. retiree (Patrick Bevers) were spread out among 32 Sail-In groups totaling 152 participants. It was the largest Sail-In yet as the event marked its 10<sup>th</sup> installment. The groups had approximately 65 more meetings than the 2018 Sail-In. In cases where the Member of Congress or Senator could not attend a meeting because of a vote or other conflict, a top aide – usually a defense or transportation specialist – would sit in for the lawmaker asking questions and taking copious notes.

Maritime Congressional Sail-Ins help solidify support with lawmakers and remind Congress about the importance of our industry to the economy and national security. M.E.B.A. officials participating included President Marshall Ainley, Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo, Gulf Coast V.P. Erin Bertram, Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan, Seattle Branch Agent Jeff Duncan, Norfolk Branch Agent Tracy Burke and Tampa Branch Agent Adam Smith. Several M.E.B.A. staffers including our Government Affairs Director Erick Siahaan also participated.

Lawmakers were informed about the dire need for increased peacetime cargo to help sustain the foreign trade U.S.-flag fleet. They were reminded that their support of the Jones Act, cargo preference laws and the Maritime Security Program is crucial. Members were asked to sign onto a letter pledging funding support for the MSP and many were apprised of efforts to extend the program another 10 years following its FY 2025 expiration. It is imperative that the program’s future is secured so that participating shipping companies continue to make capital investments in their vessels that participate

in the program. They were told that the MSP has a budget “cliff” in FY 2022 when the annual authorization number suddenly drops off beyond sustainable levels. This was installed into the Program due to a budget scoring anomaly that enabled MSP to be extended but will require lawmakers to better align that number with modern day realities. Lawmakers were also told that the program’s value extends beyond the vessels, since under MSP, the Government also has access to the shipping companies’ logistics network for the shipment of sensitive cargoes. It would cost the nation at least \$65 billion to replicate the global shipping capabilities made available through its commercial partners in the maritime industry.

Members of Congress were also urged to support cargo generating programs that help keep the U.S. Merchant Marine afloat – including the vital mariner pool – such as Food for Peace and Export-Import Bank cargoes. Academy training ships and heavy Coast Guard icebreakers were also topics at some of the meetings. A plethora of hand-outs were given to Congressional offices and this year’s packet included brochures about the Keystone-managed Ready Reserve Force vessel CAPE RAY which was central in the internationally-sponsored destruction of Syrian chemical weapon components several years back. Another brochure highlighted the Central Gulf Lines vessel GREEN COVE for its role in transporting 22,000 metric tons of military cargo to Busan, South Korea for an operation. A third brochure showcased the Waterman Steamship-managed heavy lift vessel OCEAN GIANT for its involvement in the annual resupply missions to the South Pole’s McMurdo Station as part of the Military Sealift Command’s Operation Deep Freeze.

Harkening back to M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo’s comments following the very first Sail-In that took place in May 2010, he noted, “We can’t afford to let our industry become anonymous in the halls of Congress. Without their support, our livelihoods could be legislated out of existence. We’ll keep up our regular visits on the Hill and continue our support of various lawmakers courtesy of our Political Action Fund, but you can’t put a price on the Congressional push made [*during the Sail-In*] by this bombardment of maritime industry emissaries.”

As always, you are urged to write a letter or email your Senators and Representatives to ask them to do the right thing when it comes to the maritime industry.

### **OAKLAND TEACHERS: 7-DAY STRIKE HELPS DISTRICT RECOGNIZE VALUE OF EDUCATORS**

Oakland educators are back at work after a dramatic 7-day strike that helped the District reprioritize their budget to better recognize the value of its educators and school system.

The Oakland Education Association represents nearly 3000 teachers, counselors, psychologists and other key workers at 86 schools within the Oakland Unified School District. The teachers had been drawing some of the lowest salaries for public school teachers, and years of asking administrators to make the school system a priority fell on deaf ears. They were working without a contract since 2017 and it became difficult to make ends meet in the high-cost Oakland area leading to record turnover. OEA also asked for more counselors and nurses to support the needs of students, among other issues. They were rebuffed by the District which blamed rising costs and an untenable budget.

But the union stayed strong and, in a tremendous show of solidarity, tens of thousands in the Oakland community joined them at mass rallies and on the picket lines. The resulting agreement led to 11% salary increases with a one-time 3% bonus. Class sizes were also reduced and the student support

system was beefed up. OEA members soon ratified the agreement and students and teachers went back to school better suited for success.

## **STUDY SHOWS JOB-CREATION, ECONOMY-BOOSTING BENEFITS OF JONES ACT**

A new PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) study reveals the positive effects of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 on job creation and its continued benefit to our economy. The study points out that the statute, more commonly known as the Jones Act, has enabled more than 650,000 current jobs for Americans nation-wide contributing \$154 billion to annual economic growth.

The study was conducted on behalf of the Transportation Institute, a research education association that helps promote our industry. The new figures show that the Jones Act's importance has intensified even more in recent years improving on figures released in 2017 in a similar study. Specifically, the report finds that the Jones Act-enabled maritime industry:

- Contributes more than \$154 billion in total economic output annually
- Creates \$41 billion in labor income for American workers each year
- Adds \$72 billion annually to the value of U.S. economic output
- Sustains nearly 650,000 American jobs, with one shipyard job creating four jobs elsewhere in the economy.

T.I. President James Henry said, "Needless to say, the report underscores just how indispensable the Jones Act continues to be for the security and prosperity of our entire country."

## **NMC UPDATE ON POLICIES TO ALLEVIATE SHUTDOWN'S BURDEN ON MARINERS**

The National Maritime Center has announced an update actions taken to help mitigate the impact of the recently-concluded partial Government shutdown on mariners. NMC states:

- Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC) and Medical Certifications (National Endorsements only) that expire in **December 2018, January 2019, February 2019, March 2019, or April 2019** are extended as valid until May 31, 2019. Mariners who are actively working on expired credentials that meet the expiration criteria must carry the expired credential with a copy of the attached letter.
- The following items that expire in December 2018, January 2019, or February 2019 are extended to April 30, 2019: Additional Information (AI) letters, Qualified Assessor (QA) letters, Designated Examiner (DE) letters, Proctor approval letters, Approval to Test (ATI) letters, and mariner training course certificates.
- For mariners whose 90-day testing cycles were interrupted by Regional Exam Center (REC) closures (starting on December 26, 2018), the days the RECs were closed will not count against the 90-day period.

Questions should be directed to NMC Customer Service Center accessed on the NMC website ([www.uscg.mil/nmc](http://www.uscg.mil/nmc)) or by e-mailing [IASKNMC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKNMC@uscg.mil). You can also call 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

**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; [mehq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mehq@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)*