

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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REINTRODUCTION OF SHIPS FOR AMERICA ACT IS FIRST STEP FOR REVITALIZATION OF U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING, SHIPBUILDING

A cross-party coalition in Congress has rekindled efforts to revitalize America's maritime sector through newly reintroduced legislation aimed at countering China's overwhelming dominance in global commercial shipping. Congressional Members from both major parties, including Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ) and Todd Young (R-IN) as well as Congressmen Trent Kelly (R-Miss.) and John Garamendi (D-CA) reintroduced the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) for America Act. A complementary bill, the Building SHIPS in America Act, was also introduced. That legislation would introduce substantial tax benefits designed to stimulate vessel manufacturing and encourage capital investment in American shipbuilding facilities. Overall, the comprehensive package targets regulatory overhaul, expanded cargo requirements, workforce development initiatives, and financial incentives intended to spark domestic shipbuilding and expand America's commercial fleet. The bills align with the recent White House Executive Order entitled "Restoring America's Maritime Dominance," that calls for the development of a comprehensive Maritime Action Plan.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac noted that, "A resilient maritime industry is the backbone of a strong nation. We are proud to endorse the SHIPS for America Act, which represents one of the most significant investments in the U.S. Merchant Marine in decades and aims to address critical shortfalls in our nation's maritime and shipbuilding sectors that have long been neglected."

The reintroduced legislation establishes new federal maritime leadership positions, including a White House Maritime Security Advisor and a dedicated Maritime Security Board to synchronize policy across government agencies. It also proposes a Maritime Security Trust Fund supported by duties and penalties, particularly targeting vessels affiliated with China and other competitor nations. To strengthen America's freight capabilities, the bill expands the National Freight Strategic Plan to incorporate sealift operations and implements measures against unfair foreign shipping practices. It streamlines hiring for critical maritime positions within federal agencies and directs the Coast Guard to simplify compliance procedures while better aligning with global standards.

Anchoring the legislative package is the Strategic Commercial Fleet Program designed to more than triple America's maritime presence to a robust fleet of 250 internationally-trading U.S.-flag vessels.

While initially allowing some foreign-built ships to accelerate this growth, the measure establishes a clear 2030 deadline after which only American-constructed vessels would qualify. The proposal dramatically strengthens existing cargo preference rules, effectively doubling current requirements by mandating that all federally-owned shipments travel exclusively on U.S.-flagships. A dedicated Ship America Office would coordinate this transformation while aggressively marketing American shipping capabilities to businesses and consumers alike.

Workforce enhancements include modernizing mariner certification systems, expanding educational benefits for maritime professionals, and increasing support for maritime academies, including improvements at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Additional provisions target Military Sealift Command recruitment challenges, incorporating commercial practices into naval shipbuilding, and updating the 1851 Limitation of Liability Act to increase accountability for foreign vessel operators in American waters.

Regarding the legislation, M.E.B.A.'s Vokac pointed out that, "America must maintain its independent ability to import and export cargo, if it is to remain free of foreign coercion in international trade."

The reintroduced legislation also received endorsement from a huge swath of U.S.-flag shipping interests including USA Maritime. USA Maritime is a coalition of U.S. ship operators, maritime trade associations, and labor unions. The organization's Chairman Brian Schoeneman noted that the bill "represents the most comprehensive maritime policy initiative in more than half a century. Now, more than ever, the United States needs a strong, vibrant and growing Merchant Marine, capable of carrying a substantial portion of our foreign commerce and supporting our military in time of war."

M.E.B.A.'s Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha was recently tapped as the Chair of USA Maritime's Strategic Planning Committee. Winston & Strawn maritime and admiralty attorney Charlie Papavizas will take over as the coalition's Secretary-Treasurer. Congratulations!

MSC, GOVT. FLEET MARINERS CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES

In the wake of Executive Order 14251 that intends to strip collective bargaining rights and union protections for many federal agency employees, M.E.B.A. continues to maintain its status as the recognized representative for Engineering Officers in the Military Sealift Command and Army Corps of Engineers at this hour, and contract protections remain intact. The M.E.B.A. is reaching out to our mariners working for MSC and Army Corps to inform them that they can continue to shield their sailing careers by maintaining their membership in the M.E.B.A. Petitioned-for waivers exempting those Government Fleet mariners from the E.O. have not yet materialized. If the order stands and the affected mariners are turned into at-will employees, the Union will provide options for mariners to protect themselves and avenues to reap the benefits of union membership.

Recently, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) discontinued processing union dues through payroll deductions. Even with successful waivers, the payroll deduction system for union dues is unlikely to be reinstated. MSC and Army Corps members are urged to maintain their good standing by using M.E.B.A.'s online payment portal at <https://meba.workingsystems.com>. The Membership Department at Headquarters can provide assistance with any technical issues by phone at (202) 638-5355 or via email at membership@mebaunion.org. Those enrolling in the M.E.B.A. Payment Portal must have an email address on file with Headquarters that correlates to their payment portal i.d., so

make sure the HQ records match. A PDF guide for using the payment portal is being distributed to affected members interested in setting up automatic dues payments.

Payments can also be made in person at any M.E.B.A. Union hall or office. To ensure continuity, members are advised to complete payments through the fourth quarter. For additional information, affected members should check in with M.E.B.A. Government Fleet Representative Craig Moran at the Norfolk Union hall at (757) 440-1820 or govtfleet@mebaunion.org. Assistant Representative Ola Lassley can be reached at the same number or via email at Norfolkdispatcher@mebaunion.org.

UNION EXPANDS AND ENHANCES CONTRACT WITH SHORESIDE EMPLOYER

In a recent agreement with one of our shoreside employers, the M.E.B.A. has added additional Port Engineer opportunities for our members along with an improved wage structure. An Addendum to our contract with Philadelphia Ship Services (PSS) was signed by M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac improving our contract with the marine repair company that supports US and foreign-flag vessels worldwide. In addition to repairs, PSS also offers technical management services to assist customers with machinery inspections, drydock periods and owners' representation during major machinery refits. Our contract with PSS runs through the end of 2032.

PSS offers permanent positions as well as rotary jobs for our members. The company is signed onto our Pension, MPB, Medical, 401k, JEC and Training Plans in the agreement. The new addendum also streamlines fringe benefits under the contract in line with the recent M.E.B.A. Plans modernization (Plans 2.0).

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES PUSH PLAN FOR NEW NAVY/MSC SHIPS

The House and Senate Armed Services Committee are forwarding initiatives under the budget reconciliation process to invest almost \$33.7 billion to build new Navy warships and Military Sealift Command support vessels and ameliorate some of the shipbuilding industrial base's challenges with attracting workers and modernizing infrastructure.

The bill includes \$2.7 billion for Military Sealift Command T-AO oiler ships as well as \$600 million to lease or purchase new ships through the National Defense Sealift Fund. For the shipbuilding industrial base, the bill adds \$750 million for supplier development, \$500 million to incorporate advanced manufacturing techniques, \$500 million in additional dry dock capability, \$450 million to apply autonomy and AI to the shipbuilding process, and \$450 million for maritime industrial workforce development programs, among other initiatives.

The bill includes \$4.6 billion to build a second Virginia-class submarine in fiscal 2027 and \$5.4 billion for two additional Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. It invests in amphibious ships, adding \$2.1 billion for the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock program and \$3.7 billion for the America-class amphibious assault ships. In the area of drone ships, the bill adds \$1.5 billion to expand small unmanned surface vessel production, \$1.8 billion for medium unmanned surface vessel production, and \$1.3 billion for unmanned underwater vehicle production.

CONCERNS OVER WORKPLACE SAFETY IN AMERICA

Despite five decades of workplace safety legislation, American workers continue to face significant dangers on the job. According to the AFL-CIO's 2025 "Death on the Job" report, approximately 140,000 workers died from work-related causes in 2023 — 5,283 from traumatic injuries and an

estimated 135,000 from occupational diseases. The report is based on Department of Labor injury and fatality data – for which 2023 is the latest available year. The report reveals that 385 workers die each day from hazardous working conditions. While the overall job fatality rate decreased slightly to 3.5 per 100,000 workers, certain populations remain disproportionately affected. Black and Latino workers continue to experience higher fatality rates compared to other demographic groups. Industries with the highest fatality rates in 2023 were: Agriculture, forestry, and fishing and hunting (20.3 per 100,000 workers); Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction (16.9 per 100,000 workers); Transportation and warehousing (12.9 per 100,000 workers); Construction (9.6 per 100,000 workers); and Wholesale trade (5.4 per 100,000 workers).

The AFL-CIO report emphasizes that while progress has been made in workplace safety over the decades, much remains to be done. Employers must be held accountable for protecting workers, and current regulatory systems need to be defended against attacks that prioritize corporate interests over worker well-being.

GET YOUR SPOT FOR CAA-M.E.B.A. PICNIC/150th CELEBRATION

The entire M.E.B.A. membership, active and retired, and especially Calhoon graduates, are invited to the Calhoon Alumni Association (CAA) Reunion scheduled for June 27-29 at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. The weekend will also include a celebration of the M.E.B.A.'s 150th anniversary. The Union is in its 150th year as of February 23 and there will be much rejoicing. Information, event fees, and registration forms are on the CMES website located at www.mebaschool.org. Look for the CAA page link.

The weekend kicks off with the traditional Golf Tournament on Friday, June 27 at 1000. There will be an evening muster at the Calhoon Saloon later that evening. The party on the Manor House Lawn will take place all day Saturday, June 28. This is a great family event that you should be sure to sign up for. Direct any questions to caa@mebaschool.org and check out the School website to get the complete lowdown. Take this opportunity to spread the word throughout the M.E.B.A. world as well as to past Calhoon School cadets, instructors, shipmates, friends, and families.

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, May 5 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, May 6 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, May 7 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, May 8 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, May 9 – **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.***