

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **SENATORS WORK ON LEGISLATIVE FIX FOR MSP BUDGET CLIFF, EXTENSION OF PROGRAM**

This week, the Senate Commerce Committee, headed up by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), marked up an authorization bill that would both fix a budget anomaly in the current Maritime Security Program and extend the Program for another 10 years.

The current incarnation of the Program runs until Fiscal Year 2025 and is subject to annual appropriations. However, the MSP has a budget "cliff" in FY 2022 when the annual authorization number shrinks for the Program's final four fiscal years because of a budget scoring anomaly that was necessary at the time of the current Program's inception.

The bill would also reauthorize the Program extending the MSP for an additional ten years - through 2035. The M.E.B.A. is currently working with other maritime unions, employers and industry advocates to maintain and increase the Maritime Security Program authorization and funding for future years.

### **EX-IM BANK RETURNS TO FULL FUNCTIONALITY; RE-AUTHORIZATION BATTLE LOOMS**

The confirmation of three Board members to the Export-Import Bank is good news for U.S.-flag shipping though Ex-Im opponents are sharpening their knives for a re-authorization battle this summer. Senate approval of three new members to the Ex-Im Board restores a quorum at the Bank allowing them to re-establish full operational status.

Confirmed by the Senate were Kimberly Reed, who will serve as President and chair the Board, former Republican Congressman Spencer Bachus III and space industry and Overseas Private Investment Corp. executive Judith Pryor.

The Ex-Im Bank assists U.S. companies with financing the export of U.S. goods and services to international markets. A portion of cargo generated by the Bank is required to be transported aboard U.S.-flag ships. In addition, for transactions above \$20 million, 100% of all cargo financed by the Bank **must** be carried on US-flag vessels. The Bank helps create jobs in this country and turns a profit at no cost to taxpayers.

However Ex-Im had been hamstrung since 2015 when vacancies on the Bank's Board prevented them from fielding a quorum thus forbidding the Bank from approving loans over \$10 million. For four long years, opponents successfully stonewalled the confirmation process for Board nominees successfully keeping the Ex-Im Bank at bay.

Ex-Im opponents, like Rep. Pat Toomey (R-PA), consider the Bank a type of corporate welfare and rail against the Government program, albeit profitable, that they say "picks winners and losers." Those opponents will be pushing hard for a reform of the Bank in the days leading up to the expiration of Ex-Im funding at the end of September. Rep. Toomey noted, "The Ex-Im Bank unreformed is an example of crony capitalism that puts us taxpayers at risk and subsidizes some pretty unsavory characters."

In the meantime, the quorum puts the Bank back in play and revives a much-needed source of cargo, for U.S.-flag shipping.

### **U.S. SHIPPING PUT ON ALERT IN MIDDLE EAST HOTSPOTS**

A revised Maritime Advisory has been issued to warn U.S. shipping interests of risks associated with vessel traffic in waters near Iran. U.S. Maritime Advisory 2019-006 was released in response to reports of the possibility that Iran – or its regional proxies – could instigate an incident against U.S. and partner interests. It warned that commercial vessels, including oil tankers, could be targeted. The Advisory covers the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab-el-Mandeb, and Red Sea.

U.S. flag vessels are advised to report any incidents immediately to coalition naval vessels on VHF Channel 16, the 5th Fleet Battle Watch via phone at 973-1785-3879. USNC.BWC@ME.NAVY.MI should be used to send detailed emails. U.S. flag commercial vessels bound for the Strait of Hormuz in either direction are encouraged to contact the U.S. Navy 5th Fleet Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) Watch at least two days prior to transit at: CUSNC.NCAGS\_BW@ME.NAVY.MIL or 973-3904-9583.

### **TANKER SABOTAGE OFF FUJAIRAH HEIGHTENS ALERT**

The United Arab Emirates announced that four commercial vessels at anchor off Fujairah were damaged in acts of sabotage on Sunday. No injuries or spillage was reported as part of the vessel attacks but official reports were short on specifics, even days later.

It was announced that Saudi oil tankers AL-MARZOQAH and AMJAD suffered structural damage in the attacks that reportedly occurred around 6 a.m. local time on May 12. At least one of the tankers was said to be carrying oil bound for the U.S. Sources stated that the Norwegian product tanker ANDREA VICTORY and the UAE bunker barge A MICHEL were also attacked and suffered damage. ANDREA VICTORY owners said their ship was struck by an unknown object above the waterline that breached the hull. At press time, the only available photos that showed the damage were of the Norwegian vessel. The A MICHEL was seen with a boom around it.

Investigators have not yet revealed their prime suspects and no claims of responsibility have yet been forwarded by any groups. U.S. officials hinted that Iran could not be ruled out as the perpetrator as tensions have been ratcheted up in recent days between the countries. For its part, an Iranian spokesperson denied any involvement, and attempted, without evidence, to blame the incident on its rival Israel.

Meanwhile, the instability in the region continued on Tuesday as Iranian-allied Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed responsibility for drone attacks that damaged a Saudi oil pipeline.

### **HOUSE, SENATE DEMOCRAT BILLS SEEK TO PROTECT WORKER RIGHTS**

House and Senate Democrats have introduced companion bills that would strengthen protections for workers' right to organize a union and bargain for higher wages, better benefits, and safer working conditions. The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act represents comprehensive legislation to battle back against right-to-work laws and include working families as beneficiaries to a strong economy. The House bill was introduced by Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) with 100 co-sponsors. The Senate bill was introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) with 40 co-sponsors. Neither bill is expected to receive any Republican cooperation making it a non-starter in the Senate.

### **KEEL LAID FOR FIRST SHIP IN MSC FLEET OILER PROGRAM**

San Diego's General Dynamics NASSCO has laid the keel for the first in a class of at least six newbuild fleet oilers that will join the Military Sealift Command and provide crucial support to Navy ships.

The keel for the USNS JOHN LEWIS, the first John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler, was laid at a ceremony this week at the yard. The vessel is scheduled for completion in November 2020.

The Lewis-class vessels will provide underway replenishment of fuel and stores to US Navy ships at sea and jet fuel for aircraft assigned to aircraft carriers. M.E.B.A. represents the engineers in MSC's Civilian Mariner fleet.

### **LAST WEEK FOR WSF MEMBER/APPLICANT SURVEY RESPONSE**

Members and applicants sailing in the Washington State Ferry system who have not yet done so, are encouraged to participate in the ongoing online survey concerning a number of important issues. The Union asked over 400 M.E.B.A. members and applicants in the WSF to deliver their input during a 30-day online survey concerning representation issues. The survey affords the opportunity for the M.E.B.A. to help capture member and applicant opinions on how the Union can maximize its functionality and better serve the membership. The survey began on Monday, April 22 and **continues until 0900 (Pacific Time) on May 23<sup>rd</sup>** – a week from today. Survey links were sent to members and applicants in the WSF at their email addresses on file at M.E.B.A. Headquarters.

*A final reminder email will automatically be sent on Monday, May 20<sup>th</sup> by the survey database to all WSF members and applicants who have not yet completed a survey.* Members and applicants sailing for WSF not receiving an email with the direct survey link should contact M.E.B.A. Headquarters and supply a Membership Database Update Form with the Union to ensure that their correct information is on file. Further information can be sought from M.E.B.A.'s WSF Rep. Eric Winge at [ewinge@mebaunion.org](mailto:ewinge@mebaunion.org). Marco Cannistraro at Headquarters can also be contacted about the online survey at [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) or (202) 257-2825.

### **MAKE SURE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IS ON FILE!!!**

Members and applicants should ensure that Headquarters has your e-mail address along with your other contact information. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) located in the "Documents & Member Notices" section. Email addresses are also collected at membership

meetings on the sign-in sheet, but *members must write clearly* as many addresses are typically scribbled illegibly.

Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org) Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you should not assume that info forwarded to Plans is updated in the Union database and vice versa.

### **SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org) (Forms & Documents, Vacation Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or [vacation@mebaplans.org](mailto:vacation@mebaplans.org) for more info.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, June 3 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, June 4 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, June 5 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, June 6 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, June 7 – **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](mailto:mebahq@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)*