

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 HONORED WITH CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

Congress presented its highest honor to World War II merchant mariners at a ceremony yesterday in the U.S. Capitol building's Statuary Hall. Ten WWII seafarers, all in their 90s and older, were on hand during the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal, a long overdue honor.

Republicans and Democrats put aside their political differences and wholeheartedly heaped praise on these "greatest generation" mariners. Lawmakers delivering remarks at the ceremony included House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Reps. John Garamendi and Joe Courtney who each voiced their admiration and thanks for the sacrifices of seafarers. WWII mariners suffered the highest casualty rate of all the services during the war as they kept the supply lines open so our forces could achieve victory. It took until 1988, supplemented by efforts from the M.E.B.A. and American Maritime Congress, for WWII mariners to be legally recognized as veterans. They were granted healthcare rights at Veterans Affairs' hospitals as well as burial flags, but because they weren't eligible for the original benefits under the G.I. Bill, they did not receive college tuition subsidies, home loan guarantees, pensions, or other provisions.

The one-hour ceremony culminated in the presentation of the gold medal which will be placed on display in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the Academy in Kings Point, NY. The WWII mariners on hand, who were mostly teenagers during their war service, received duplicates. They included William Balabanow, Gerard Driscoll, James T. Lindsey, Charles A. Mills, George Offenhauser Sr., Bob Ross, James Sciple, Jack Laub, George Shaw and Dave Yoho. Several of the WWII honorees continue to collect M.E.B.A. pensions for their service. Charles Mills and Dave Yoho ceremonially accepted the gold medal and Yoho also delivered emotional and rousing remarks honoring mariners. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac was among the few invited guests attending this momentous event.

Congressman John Garamendi, who spearheaded legislation for the honor, said, "This gold medal is a symbol of our nation's deep gratitude for the valor and sacrifice of the World War II merchant mariners, and American merchant mariners throughout history. They do the dangerous and difficult job of transporting and equipping our military around the world. While there are many current threats facing our nation, I take pride in knowing our merchant mariners stand ready to support and defend our homeland and inspire future generations of mariners to do the same," he concluded.

The American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMMV), led by President Dru DiMattia, an M.E.B.A. retiree, brought together the contingent of WWII mariners and their entourage for a series of events this week including a visit to M.E.B.A. Headquarters for a reception following the Gold Medal Ceremony. When the veterans shuffled off the bus in front of our building, inquisitive onlookers, who just learned who these elderly men were, burst into a spontaneous round of applause.

M.E.B.A. was greatly honored to host the ten WWII veterans in a wonderful celebration on the Headquarters rooftop with the U.S. Capitol serving as the backdrop. Newly sworn-in Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Ann Phillips also spoke at the gathering and a camera crew was on hand to record the remarkable event.

Following the reception, the mariners gathered in our Headquarters conference room for a few more hours, while more interviews were conducted and sea stories were swapped.

REP. JOE COURTNEY SALUTED FOR SUPPORT OF U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING

On Tuesday, on the outskirts of Washington D.C., the International Propeller Club recognized Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT) for his support of U.S.-flag shipping. Since 1985, the Salute to Congress event has honored lawmakers who have demonstrated consistent support for the maritime industry and the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine. The event took place at the Army-Navy Club in Arlington, VA and was attended by M.E.B.A. and AMC representatives among others, as well as the ten WWII merchant mariners who were in town to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

Rep. Courtney has been a strong voice on behalf of our industry and was instrumental in the formation of the Tanker Security Program. Recently funded, the TSP will be a fleet of 10 commercial U.S.-flag petroleum product tankers supporting our nation's long-term strategic defense needs. It is the intent of the program to reduce military reliance on foreign-flag commercial vessels while also expanding the qualified mariner pool. Discussing the U.S. maritime industry, Rep. Courtney noted, "They all deserve our full support in Congress, I'll keep working to ensure they have it."

NEW MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR IS ON THE JOB

Rear Admiral (Ret.) Ann Phillips was sworn in as the 20th Administrator of the Maritime Administration a little less than a week after she was confirmed to the post by the U.S. Senate.

"From her distinguished naval service to her leadership on coastal infrastructure, Rear Admiral Ann Phillips has championed America's maritime sector throughout her career," said Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. "Her experience and expertise will be invaluable as we address supply chain bottlenecks, implement the maritime investments in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, ensure the safety and success of midshipmen at the Merchant Marine Academy, and combat climate change in the maritime sector."

As head of the Maritime Administration, Phillips' role is to advise the Secretary of Transportation on commercial maritime matters, including the movement of goods, supply chain, as well as the U.S. maritime industry, environment and compliance, ports and waterways infrastructure, and strategic sealift. She will engage public and private stakeholders in the maritime industry and oversee the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha hosted the new Administrator on our Headquarters rooftop during a ceremony on Wednesday afternoon honoring WWII merchant mariners.

Administrator Phillips said, “I understand the critical role that our commercial Merchant Marine plays in our national and economic security. In my nearly 31-year Navy career, I have witnessed many of the challenges facing our maritime sector and look forward to working with my colleagues to address them. This is an exciting time for MarAd as we work to expand and strengthen America’s waterborne transportation system and workforce.”

DON’T LET CONGRESS FAVOR FOREIGN SHIPS

U.S.-flag shipping interests are being asked to tell Congress that a recent proposal to sideline U.S.-flag ships in favor of foreign vessels is not acceptable.

Senate Concurrent Resolutions 37 & 38 would temporarily waive the cargo preference requirement requiring that at least 50% of international food aid cargoes be carried on U.S.-flag ships. The initial debate revolved around a package of food and military equipment package for Ukraine. Members in the House ended up passing their version of the bill without the offending language but the waiver has not yet been laid to rest. U.S. Senators Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Chris Coons (D-Delaware) led the charge for the waiver in the name of cost savings.

U.S. shipping interests point out that the cost of shipping American, as cited by the Senators, was “dramatically overstated.” They said that all ocean shipping under the Food for Peace program—foreign-flag and U.S.-flag combined — accounts for only 8% of program costs and that the premium for using U.S.-flag ships accounts for less than 1% of program costs. USA Maritime, which represents U.S.-flag interests, said the resolutions wouldn’t exclusively apply to Ukrainian relief. “Resolution 37 would waive Ship American rules indefinitely, Resolution 38 would divert cargoes to foreign carriers for an arbitrary three-year period.”

The Navy League set up a “Voice to Congress” webpage where you can let lawmakers know they shouldn’t bypass U.S. ships and mariners in favor of foreign counterparts. The Navy League is a non-profit civilian organization whose mission is to educate Americans about the enduring importance of sea power and to support the men and women of the U.S. sea services. It advocates for the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and U.S. Merchant Marine. You can visit <https://navyleague.quorum.us/campaign/40368/> where you fill out a few blanks and let Congress know that cargo preference is crucial for our economic and national security!

AGREEMENT TO RAISE GLOBAL SEAFARER MINIMUM WAGE

The minimum wage for international seafarers will inch up following an agreement between shipowners and global mariner unions as part of International Labor Organization talks.

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and International Chamber of Shipping helped coordinate the talks as part of their ongoing missions to raise standards for seafarers around the world, especially those who are vulnerable and exploited by shipowners.

Maritime transport is the only sector with a formally recognized global minimum wage, which has existed for seafarers since 1958.

The agreement applies universally to the rating grade of Able Seafarer and is widely recognized by the global shipping community as contributing to decent work and employment for seafarers, to support themselves and their families, recognizing that the overall well-being of seafarers is inextricably linked to their economic well-being. During the previous round of talks, concluded at the UN ILO in September last year, shipowners and seafarers set the minimum wage to \$648 from July 1, 2022.

As part of the agreement, the ILO minimum basic wage for an able seafarer will be raised to US\$658 as of January 1, 2023. The rate will be increased to \$666 as of January 1, 2024 and to \$673 as of January 1, 2025.

2ND ANNUAL LEROY KOEHLER DISC GOLF TOURNAMENT ON JUNE 17

The M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) will host its second annual Leroy Koehler Disc (Frisbee) Golf Tournament on Friday, June 17th at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. Everyone is invited. The tournament benefits the Memorial Park at the CMES.

As you know, the Memorial was created to honor fallen seafarers who have delivered the goods and answered the call of this country since 1775. The Foundation supporting the Memorial is a section 501(c)(3) entity under Internal Revenue Service rules, so all donations are tax deductible. Leroy Koehler was a greatest generation mariner and consummate Chief Engineer who deeply cared about the M.E.B.A. heritage and made a generous financial contribution to the Memorial Park.

There is a \$25 entry fee for the tournament which will begin at 1300. For further information, contact 4MF Chairman Bill Van Loo at (443) 676-6248 or bvanloo@bvlworks.org

UPCOMING CMES SMALL ARMS CLASS HAS OPENINGS

Members looking for Small Arms certification should know that there are several openings for the upcoming June 13-17 course at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School.

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

APPLICANTS REMINDED OF REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Earlier this month, the M.E.B.A. Headquarters Membership Department sent each M.E.B.A. applicant a letter detailing outstanding requirements needed to be met in order to qualify for – and to be accepted into membership. Such letters are sent two times a year in the weeks preceding the release of the twice-a-year District Investigating Committee Report. DIC Reports contain a list of qualified applicants who have fulfilled the obligations in their application packet (including sea service documentation and initiation fees) and are current on their service charges. The reports are put before members for a vote at the June and December meetings. Once members approve the report, listed applicants become members and the Membership Department informs them of their new status.

Qualified applicants who are trying to make membership must provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next DIC report. The DIC will meet before the June 2022 membership meeting to formalize their report. To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements. Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. ***M.E.B.A. Headquarters does not, and cannot, update an Applicant's record with sailing time/years of service unless that Applicant submits the required paperwork, i.e. discharges, sea service letters, documentation of employment, to HQ, by e-mail, fax, or mail or via your local Union hall.*** For further information you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

In addition, the DIC report will include a list of members or applicants that have been in dues or service charge arrears for two or more years. Once the membership votes on the report, those members and applicants will be DROPPED from the rolls. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing.

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

Monday, June 6 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, June 7 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, June 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; **Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, June 9 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, June 10 – Honolulu Hall Closed (King Kamehameha Day)

Monday, June 13 – Honolulu@1100.

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



*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.