

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **MSP, FOOD AID FUNDING GET BOOSTS IN OMNIBUS**

Congress has averted a partial Government shutdown by passing an Omnibus Agreement that funds the Government until September. The 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act represents a \$1.163 trillion compromise spending bill. Importantly, the Maritime Security Program will be funded at the full \$300 million (60 MSP vessels) for Fiscal Year 2017. In addition, Food Aid will be funded at a higher-than-expected level and adequate spending will be allocated to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Maritime Administration's Marine Highway Program, and other critical port and transportation investments.

### **EROSION OF SEALIFT CAPABILITY PREVENTS SUSTAINMENT OF OVERSEAS FORCES, SENATE TOLD**

The erosion of U.S. shipping and the American mariner pool has damaged U.S. sealift capability and will prevent sustainment of a prolonged military operation overseas, the head of the U.S. Transportation Command told a Senate Committee this week. USTRANSCOM is responsible for the global, joint movement of combat units and sustainment cargo.

TRANSCOM Commander General Darren McDew informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that the U.S. can initially marshal the organic military resources to deploy sufficient forces and the requisite equipment into a war zone. However, he said we face critical challenges after the first 30 days regarding resupply efforts that would expose vulnerabilities in our depleted stockpile of suitable ships and aircraft along with the workforce to sustain surge operations.

"We do not have the capability I wish we had," the General told the Committee. "The initial force can be brought by organic fleets, and then we would have to see what we can do after that." Sen. John McCain, who chairs the Committee, noted that the General's answer was "not comforting" to his committee.

General McDew understands the military is dependent on the American Merchant Marine to help project U.S. power overseas. However, he pointed out the aging and loss of capacity has threatened the nation's strategic sealift capability putting future operations at risk. "While the U.S. flagged commercial fleet remains the most effective means for us to obtain the necessary sealift capability to meet national defense needs," he said, "we are considering a range of options to ensure that we retain

the ability to deploy a decisive combat force at the time and place of our choosing. Those options may include new approaches to preserving essential capabilities in the Ready Reserve Force, which among other options, may include non-US built vessels.”

The General is a strong supporter of the Maritime Security Program and Jones Act and has called the U.S. Merchant Marine “the backbone of our overseas deployment.” But he has also said that if the nation chooses not to encourage a strong U.S.-flag fleet then we, as a country, will be forced “to rely on other countries to deploy our combat power.”

### **ILWU MEMBERS TO CONSIDER CONTRACT EXTENSION**

ILWU members will consider a three-year extension of their contract with employer Pacific Maritime Association that would ensure stability on the docks until July 2022.

At a San Francisco meeting late last week, ILWU delegates from 29 West Coast ports recommended that the proposal for the extension be forwarded to membership for discussion and a ratification vote. That process is expected to take several months.

“One of the ILWU’s guiding principles is that the rank-and-file members will make the best decision when they have the facts and an opportunity to decide for themselves, and that’s how this will be decided,” said ILWU International President Robert McEllrath. “The rank-and-file membership always have the final say on any contract – including this non-precedent-setting proposed extension,” he noted.. The proposed extension raises wages, lowers the minimum retirement age, and increases employer contributions to worker pension plans.

Along with the M.E.B.A., the ILWU is part of the Maritime Labor Alliance (MLA) that also includes the ARA, IBU, ILA and the MM&P. The six-union alliance fights to protect MLA member jurisdictions, working conditions and labor rights.

### **DIAMOND JUBILEE FOR THE SS JOHN W. BROWN**

2017 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the JOHN W. BROWN, the celebrated Liberty ship. The BROWN is homeported in Baltimore, Maryland and still sails the waters of our nation as a memorial to the intrepid merchant mariners who served America in World War II and other conflicts.

The ship was launched on Labor Day, 1942, sliding down the ways of the Bethlehem-Fairfield shipyard on the Patapsco River. Built for the U.S. Maritime Commission, the JOHN W. BROWN began her service for the War Shipping Administration, making thirteen voyages during WWII during which the ship and her crew carried critical wartime cargo and American troops to various ports.

Following war service, the JOHN W. BROWN continued to serve the needs of the nation and the U.S. Merchant Marine community as a floating vocational high school for the New York City Board of Education, preparing students for maritime careers. During the ship’s long tenure as a training vessel, one instructor and Vice Principal of the vessel was William C. Van Loo, father of Bill Van Loo, current Secretary-Treasurer of the M.E.B.A. “I spent hours on that ship as a kid,” Bill noted. “It was practically like my home.”

JOHN W. BROWN began a third career as a historic ship in August of 1988. Following a three-year restoration in Baltimore, Maryland, the ship was returned to her 1944 configuration. The Liberty ship

underwent U.S. Coast Guard sea trials in 1991 then began sailing to numerous East Coast and Great Lakes ports conducting “Living History” cruises.

Based on the design of a British tramp steamer and modified for rapid wartime production, Liberty ships were built using assembly line techniques. Though British in conception, the design was adapted by the U.S. for its simple, low-cost construction. Liberty ships came to symbolize U.S. wartime industrial output as they were mass-produced on an unprecedented scale.

They were the workhorses of World War II and were built in 13 states by 15 companies in 18 shipyards. The first of 2,710 Liberty ships, the PATRICK HENRY, was launched in September 1941. Construction of the Liberty vessels was vital to the war effort and essential to replace the large number of merchant ships sunk to enemy action, mostly submarines. American shipbuilders delivered the no frills Liberty ships averaging around thirteen ships per week. The expected life span of the vessels was five years. Arguably the most important cargo ship of WWII, the Liberty ships carried more than two-thirds of the war materiel transported by sea to places where the goods were need in the Pacific, Atlantic, the Arctic and Mediterranean.

Built as wartime expedient, the JOHN W. BROWN sails on to commemorate the rich heritage of America’s resourceful maritime history. The JOHN W. BROWN is maintained by a group of talented and dedicated volunteers. The ship is available for a wide range of Baltimore community events, training purposes and historic cruises. Along with the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN, which is homeported in San Francisco, California, the JOHN W. BROWN is the last of the operational Liberty ships.

Bill Van Loo said that “walking through the engine room and moving aft next to the shaft of the vessel reminds me of all the engineers who have stood watch in peace and war over the years as merchant mariners and in service to our country.” He concluded by noting that “the JOHN W. BROWN has served our nation and the maritime community in peace and war for 75 years – a remarkable accomplishment.”

For more information on the JOHN W. BROWN or the JEREMIAH O’BRIEN visit [www.ssjohnwbrown.org](http://www.ssjohnwbrown.org) and [www.ssjeremiahobrien.org](http://www.ssjeremiahobrien.org)

### **HIRONO IS SALUTED WITH PROP CLUB HONOR**

Senator Mazie Hirono was presented with the prestigious “Salute to Congress” award at a DC area event on Tuesday. The event drew a hearty maritime industry crowd including M.E.B.A. officials and staff along with American Maritime Congress representatives. The annual honor is reserved for Members of Congress who demonstrate consistent support for the U.S.-flag Merchant Marine and American maritime industry. The International Propeller Club selected Sen. Hirono as this year’s recipient for her steadfast support of U.S. shipping – she has been a friend to the M.E.B.A. and industry and fervently supports the Jones Act, Maritime Security Program, cargo preference, and other essential pro-U.S. shipping laws and statutes.

Past Salute to Congress recipient Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) provided an introduction at last night’s event and praised the nation’s first female Asian-American Senator as a maritime champion. Sen. Hirono, in her remarks, again heaped praise on the industry and reiterated how MSP and the Jones Act reinforce our national security. She pointed out that, because of this, “it’s strange” that the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee doesn’t support these important statutes (making reference to noted-Jones Act opponent Sen. John McCain). Sen. Hirono, who sits on the Armed

Services Committee, Select Committee on Intelligence and Veterans' Affairs Committee among others, vowed to continue working with U.S. shipping advocates and to keep fighting for a strong U.S.-flag industry.

### **ICS REPORT IS A GOOD PRIMER ON INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING**

The newly released annual review emanating from the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) provides a good summary of issues affecting international shipping giving readers an "insider's view." Nicknamed "All You Need to Know about Shipping But Were Afraid to Ask," the review is available by visiting [www.ics-shipping.org/ics-annual-review-2017](http://www.ics-shipping.org/ics-annual-review-2017). The document explores the complex legislative and economic landscape, regulatory challenges dealing with CO2 emissions and ballast control, seafarer employment standards and the resurgence of Somali piracy among other issues.

### **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, Vacation). 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.

### **REMINDER: INCLUDE ALL DOCS WHEN FILING FOR VACATION PAY**

Members are reminded to be thorough when submitting an application for Vacation Pay at the halls and/or with the Plans Office and include all required documents, including Coast Guard Discharges and pay vouchers. Pay vouchers are used to track Social Security Tax maximums, to track wages as Medicare Tax increases and to check for any overlap days that can be identified. As detailed on the application itself, the following documents must be submitted along with your application:

- A copy of the stub portion of your last vacation benefit check.
- Coast Guard discharges and pay vouchers covering all employment since your last vacation.
- Pay vouchers must cover the entire period of employment and show all wages and tax deductions.
- Pay vouchers covering any periods of unearned wages since your last vacation.

***Failure to submit proof of all accumulated work performed to the date of application could result in the permanent loss of vacation benefits earned on the employment not submitted.***

You may also need to submit:

- A Carry Over Vacation Form from your last vacation – if applicable.
- An original copy of the Converted Overtime Worksheet, if applicable, regardless of whether or not you are applying for converted overtime vacation.
- A letter from an authorized Union official granting permission for early return or excess sailing, if applicable.

*If prior written permission is not obtained and an Officer returns to work early, they will be subject to a penalty which is loss of vacation benefits for the next six months of employment (180 days).*

You can contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore prior to sending an application. They can be reached at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

*Monday, May 8* – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

*Tuesday, May 9* – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

*Wednesday, May 10* – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

*Thursday, May 11* – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

*Friday, May 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; [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org). For publication and related inquiries contact: Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org)*