

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*

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### **22 YEARS OF CLASS: CMES DIRECTOR CHUCK ESER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT**

Next week, Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School Director Charles Eser, better known as "Chuck," will wrap up an exceptional career at the Union's training facility on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The 63-year old Eser recently announced his retirement, and the M.E.B.A. and Union Trustees, at a meeting last month, had an opportunity to extend their congratulations and great appreciation for his outstanding service to the School for the past 22 years.

A Maine Maritime Academy alum who sailed as an engineer in his early career, Chuck spent 15 years as a marine engineer and systems integrator for defense contractors in the Washington DC and Annapolis, MD areas. He joined the CMES staff in June of 2000, under Director Henry Phillips, and served as an Instructor who led or co-taught courses on Gas Turbine, Instrumentation, PLC, Medium-Speed Diesel and Steam. Later on, under Director Joyce Matthews, he took over as Academic Manager, a position he served with distinction for five years.

With the departure of former Director Lou Marciello, in 2009, Chuck became the School's Interim Director, a title he held until 2014 when he was finally anointed as the permanent Director. His admirable 13 year run as Director is second only to original CMES Director Roy Luebbe (20 years).

Under Chuck's steady leadership, and with a coordinated team effort, the School continued its commitment to excellence and ushered in a series of intensive courses and training that keeps our mariners on the cutting edge of ship systems and helps them provide outsized value to operators. The Cadet Internship Program, established during the Eser era, continues to help mold the next-generation of expert M.E.B.A. officers. Chuck skillfully guided the School through the COVID years and helped put the facility on solid financial footing.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac praised Chuck's "professionalism, academic acumen and technical know-how" and wished Chuck the greatest of successes and happiness in his next chapter. President Vokac expressed gratitude for the value the retiring Director has brought to the CMES with his 22 years of contributions that has "helped keep the School on an even keel. Thank you, Chuck."

Eser said that "it's been an unbelievable ride," and praised the Union, his colleagues at the School, past and present, and the top-notch facility he headed up for 13 years. "You really can't find a better organization than this," he said.

CMES Deputy Director Bryan Jennings will be succeeding Chuck while the Trustees begin the search for a permanent replacement.

### **LAWMAKERS LOOK FOR WAIVER FROM CARGO PREFERENCE REQUIREMENTS TIED TO UKRAINE AID**

A pair of lawmakers are heading up an effort to temporarily waive the 50% international food aid cargo preference requirement as Congress looks to supply Ukraine with relief cargoes in its ongoing defense against the Russian invasion. Congress is discussing a supplemental package for Ukraine in response to a White House request for additional military and food assistance.

U.S. Senators Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Chris Coons (D-Delaware), are heading up the effort to bypass the required use of U.S. ships and American mariners for at least 50% of the aid cargoes, in the name of cost savings. The 50% requirement can be waived by the President, Defense Secretary or Congress in the case of an emergency. Senate Concurrent Resolutions 37 & 38 declare a state of emergency that would enable the waiver.

USA Maritime, a coalition of maritime interests (including the M.E.B.A. and AMC), strongly opposes the waiver and called the cost of shipping American, cited by the lawmakers, as “dramatically overstated.” They noted, “All ocean shipping under the Food for Peace program — foreign-flag and U.S.-flag combined — accounts for only 8% of program costs. The premium for using U.S.-flag ships accounts for less than 1% of program costs.”

The coalition also criticized the resolutions as “overbroad.” They noted that they don’t only apply exclusively to Ukrainian relief, “but would waive Ship American rules everywhere. Resolution 37 would waive Ship American rules indefinitely, Resolution 38 would divert cargoes to foreign carriers for an arbitrary three-year period.”

USA Maritime noted that American taxpayer dollars should benefit American workers, “not flag of convenience operators who dodge taxes.”

### **SPECIAL NATIONAL M.E.B.A. CONVENTION**

As announced during last year’s National M.E.B.A. Convention that was constrained to an online format because of COVID precautions, a one-day Special National Convention will be conducted “in person” next month. Special Conventions are provided for in the M.E.B.A. Constitution and have the same force as regular National Conventions but can be conducted without the ceremonial procedures.

The last Special Convention was conducted in May 2016 when Delegates met briefly to amend the Constitution to accommodate the District’s transition to four-year officer terms.

The 20 National Delegates, elected during the 2020 District election, are comprised of a mixture of Union officials and rank-and-file members. COVID restrictions required them to meet by ZOOM in March of 2020 and they fulfilled constitutional requirements. They will gather at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School on June 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss business related to the National M.E.B.A.

The National Executive Committee mirrors the District Executive Committee and is headed up by National President Adam Vokac. The 20 elected Delegates include National President Adam Vokac, National Vice President Claudia Cimini, National Secretary-Treasurer Roland “Rex” Rexha, NEC Member Jason Callahan, NEC Member Adam Smith, Rich Doherty, Jeff Duncan, Nicole Greenway,

Jack Menendez, Max Alper, Kevin M. Cross, John McElhone, Nico Sermoneta, April Fleischer, Erik Barton, Mark S. Collins, Nils Djusberg, Michael R. Doherty, Mark S. Gallagher and Serena Webber-Bey. All have been invited to attend the Special Convention to discuss business and improve the structure and operation of the National M.E.B.A.

### **NEGOTIATIONS FOR CAPE-MAY LEWES FERRY MEMBERS**

M.E.B.A. recently opened up negotiations for a new contract covering our members serving in the Cape May-Lewes ferry fleet. Overseen by the Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA), the ferry system is jointly operated by the States of New Jersey and Delaware. Ferries transit between Cape May, NJ and Lewes, Delaware.

Atlantic Coast VP Jason Callahan led initial talks and was accompanied by Roland "Rex" Rexha, (M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer) and the recently-elected M.E.B.A. CMLF Shop Stewards including John Burke (Deck Officers), Travis Worster (Engineers), Mark Genovese (Deck Unlicensed) and Don Miller (Maintenance). Our agreement with the Authority runs through the end of the year.

### **FULL MSP FUNDING REQUESTED IN HOUSE**

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, a group of 90 bipartisan House lawmakers sent a letter to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) requesting \$318 million dollars for fiscal year 2023 to fully fund the 60 vessels enrolled in the Maritime Security Program (MSP). The letter cites recent testimony from General Jacqueline D. Van Ovost, Commander of the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), stating the importance of MSP.

It noted, "Our organic capabilities are insufficient to meet our military requirements around the globe, and we are absolutely, inextricably linked. So, the Maritime Security program gives us that guaranteed access, and it is a great value for the dollar to ensure that we can have US-flagged, US-crewed ships available to support us into the future."

While the life of the MSP was extended through 2035, the annual letter led by Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Congressman Rob Wittman (R-VA) is an important first step to ensure the program can operate without interruption via enactment of separate funding bills before the fiscal year ends on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **FORMER TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY, MARITIME STALWART NORM MINETA HAS DIED**

Norman Yoshio Mineta, former Member of Congress and cabinet secretary in both the Clinton and Bush Administrations, died this week after a long and distinguished public service career. He was a strong maritime advocate despite initially being known for an aviation focus, and served as Transportation Secretary for five years, the lone Democrat in the cabinet of President George W. Bush. In that capacity he dealt with numerous calamities including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and 9/11, and was cool under fire and lauded for his professionalism. A strong advocate for U.S.-flag shipping and skeptic of Jones Act waivers, he was honored numerous times by our industry for his efforts and resolute support. The son of Japanese immigrants, Mineta was held in an internment camp during World War II. He served as a Councilman, then Mayor of San Jose, CA, becoming the first Japanese-American person to ever serve as a big city Mayor. He is the longest serving Transportation Secretary (5+ years) in the 55-year history of the DOT. Before taking that job, Mineta was Bill Clinton's Commerce Secretary, the first-ever Asian American to serve in a Presidential Cabinet. His career includes 20 years in the U.S. House of Representatives (1975-1995) representing the heart of

California's Silicon Valley. He was instrumental in creating the Transportation Security Agency and was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2006.

Towards the end of his service as Transportation Secretary, he suffered from back trouble that required a prolonged hospital stay at one point. He resigned in July 2006. In his retirement, among other things, he was Vice Chairman for communication consultants Hill & Knowlton, and also joined the Board of Directors of Horizon Lines in 2007. He made his home in Edgewater, MD, where he died on Tuesday at the age of 90. Sen. Roger Wicker introduced a bill last year to rename the Department of Transportation headquarters building after former Secretaries William T. Coleman and Norman Y. Mineta.

### **500 MARINERS STILL STUCK IN UKRAINIAN PORTS**

A persistent push to evacuate over 2,000 international mariners trapped on vessels at or near Ukrainian ports since March has dwindled the numbers, though the job is not yet done. The International Maritime Organization believes there are still almost 500 seafarers from 27 different countries on over 100 vessels awaiting evacuation. The International Chamber of Shipping is trying to keep humanitarian corridors open, including evacuation flights and buses, until the remaining seafarers can be rescued. The 500 are mostly comprised of skeleton crews who remained on board to allow fellow shipmates to be evacuated. The International Labour Organization (ILO), the IMO, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and humanitarian organizations have coordinated deliveries of food, water, and medicines to remaining crew. While some supplies have reached the intended recipients, delivering aid continues to be extremely difficult, particularly in high-risk areas.

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

**Friday, May 6** – Honolulu@1100.

**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.

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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.*

*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](mailto: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](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*