

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"

M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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NATIONAL MARITIME STRATEGY GUIDANCE ISSUED

House and Senate lawmakers on both sides of the aisle released its "Congressional Guidance for a National Maritime Strategy" that provides a "comprehensive vision" for planning guidance, strategic objectives, and actionable steps to revitalize the nation's maritime sector. They note, in an era of great power competition, aging infrastructure, and the threat of high intensity war, Congress must adopt a maritime strategy vital to U.S. national security and the world. Unfortunately, such a comprehensive strategy has yet to be produced.

The document underscores the pressing necessity for wide-ranging measures to address the challenges posed by China to American competitiveness on the world's oceans. It identifies maintaining access to the sea as a national security requirement and outlines a series of steps to ensure that capability. These include incentivizing U.S.-flag shipping, restoring commercial shipbuilding capacity, and expanding the advanced maritime workforce required to build, operate, and maintain our ships.

"Congress and the U.S. military must rebuild our domestic commercial shipbuilding and maritime industrial base so we can continue to project American sea power abroad during peacetime or war," said Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA). "American shipyards and mariners are ready, willing, and able to do the job but can no longer be expected to compete against heavily subsidized foreign competitors in mainland China and elsewhere. Our maritime strategy must support American manufacturing and correct our nation's longstanding trade imbalance with foreign countries." You can read the full report [here](#).

MSC FLEET CONTINUES RENEWAL

The Military Sealift Command continues to welcome newbuilds into its fleet with the delivery of the John Lewis-class fleet replenishment oiler USNS EARL WARREN this week.

Delivery from San Diego's NASSCO shipyard followed the successful completion of Integrated Sea Trials to test the readiness and capability of the ship and to validate requirements.

NASSCO also had a christening ceremony last weekend for the USNS ROBERT E. SIMANEK, an Expeditionary Sea Base (ESB). The ship is named for Private First-Class Robert Ernest Simanek, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for shielding fellow Marines from a grenade at the Battle of Bunker Hill during the Korean War.

ESBs are highly flexible platform vessels designed to support multiple maritime-based missions supporting the deployment of forces, equipment, supplies, and warfighting capability.

Civilian Mariners in the MSC fleet are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

CROWLEY DROPS COVID VACCINATION REQUIREMENT

Gulf Coast Vice President Adam Smith has announced that after months of discussions, the M.E.B.A. has reached an agreement with Crowley to drop mandated COVID-19 vaccinations for crewmembers aboard the MTL/Hapag vessels.

Crowley encourages the booster for ship crews but no longer requires it as part of a member's fitness-for-duty assessment. The requirement had been in effect since 2021, though the Union successfully negotiated generous incentives for vaccinated M.E.B.A. mariners serving in the fleet.

The announcement follows similar recent policy changes in other deep-sea fleets including APL, Matson and Maersk Line. As always, the M.E.B.A. will continue fighting on behalf of our membership to better their working conditions at sea and ashore.

BIPARTISAN HOUSE COALITION URGES FULL MSP FUNDING

Representatives Trent Kelly (R-MS), Joe Courtney (D-CT), and Rob Wittman (R-VA) along with nearly 70 House lawmakers are urging House appropriators to include full funding for the Maritime Security Program in the forthcoming Fiscal Year 2025 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations bill.

The Members dispatched a letter to the House Appropriations Committee praising the value of the program and calling for the full \$318 million. The letter cites recent testimony from General Jacqueline Van Ovest, Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), emphasizing the critical importance of MSP toward our national security, "with the assured access provided by the 60-ship U.S. flag sealift vessel Maritime Security Program, and increased funding to preserve the operational readiness of the U.S. government-owned ships in the Ready Reserve Force, we will bolster our ability to conduct operations at sea and meet DOD requirements with the most useful capacity while maintaining a U.S. flag presence in international trade."

Lawmaker requests for FY25 funding were significantly delayed this year due to several 'continuing resolutions' and looming government shutdowns in the midst of partisan gridlock. Full funding for MSP has enjoyed strong bipartisan support over the years and will be subject to negotiations by congressional leaders before government funding is scheduled to expire on September 30, 2024. The letter can be viewed on the M.E.B.A. homepage.

ITF SAYS DUBAI-BASED COMPANY ABUSED MARINERS ACROSS ITS FLEET

In what they called “the worst case of serial seafarer abandonment ever seen,” the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) condemned Dubai, UAE-based Middle East Marine LLC for its systematic abuse and neglect of over 100 seafarers.

ITF said mariners from India, Indonesia and Myanmar endured appalling conditions, such as food shortages and lack of clean drinking water. They had their passports and medication withheld, were denied access to medical care when sick, and did not receive their rightful wages. ITF condemned these actions as violations of human and labor rights.

One Indonesian seafarer said, “My salary hasn’t been paid for more than three months – but there are some crewmembers unpaid for as long as seven months. The company did not supply provisions and fresh water – sometimes we were just fishing for survival. All crew members are getting depressed, and our families are getting in debt to survive.” Another noted, “My mental state is not good due to the company treating us like this.”

The company’s vessels are reportedly registered in Palau. ITF called on the UAE Government and Palau maritime authorities to do something to end the suffering and uphold international maritime and human rights law. They have not yet received a response.

“Seafarers’ lives are not collateral for any company,” said Steve Trowsdale, ITF's Inspectorate Coordinator. “Middle East Marine is a stain on the global maritime industry.”

STUDY DETAILS ENVIRONMENTAL COST OF SHIP SCRUBBERS

With tighter regulations on ship air emissions, numerous shipowners have implemented exhaust gas cleaning systems, commonly referred to as scrubbers. These systems enable the continued utilization of economical residual heavy fuel oil. Nonetheless, scrubbers generate substantial quantities of acidic and contaminated water, which are subsequently released into the sea. A new study released by the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, found that these emissions caused pollution corresponding to socioeconomic costs of more than \$730 million between 2014 and 2022 in the Baltic Sea alone.

At the same time, the researchers note that the shipping companies' investments in the much-discussed technology, where exhaust gases are “washed” and discharged into the sea, have already been recouped for most of the ships.

The study has been prompted by the ongoing discussion of a potential ban on scrubber water discharge. The issue is on the agenda at multiple levels within the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and is also being discussed at the EU level as well as on national levels.

REP. SAM GRAVES HONORED WITH SALUTE TO CONGRESS AWARD

The International Propeller Club of the United States honored Congressman Sam Graves (R-MO) on Tuesday night at their annual Salute to Congress event. The award is presented to Members of Congress who demonstrate a keen awareness of the importance of all segments of the maritime industry to the economic, homeland and U.S. national security. Rep. Graves is the Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and has been a strong supporter of our industry and issues throughout his career. M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Government Affairs

Director Erick Siahaan were in attendance as were American Maritime Congress President Fair Kim and AMC Government Affairs Manager Caitlyn Tierney.

ITF, BLACK BALL FERRY PHOTO COMPETITIONS

For those who have fallen into a funk after the American Maritime Congress wrapped up its photo contest earlier this year, perk up! Two more newly announced photo contests could net you fabulous prizes.

The International Transport Workers' Federation opened up its "ITF Photo Prize 2024" seeking "captivating and compelling photos that provide a real and authentic glimpse into the daily lives and experiences of transport workers. We want to see your daily grind, your triumphs, and the often unseen challenges you tackle every day." The contest runs until August 12th. The first prize winner will take home a cool \$2500. Second place is good for \$1250, Third is worth \$625 and fourth place will rake in \$250. An additional "People's Choice" award winner will scoop up a prize of \$1875. Winners will be announced during ITF's World Congress meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco on Oct. 17. For more, and to submit photos, visit <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/photoprize>

Another photo contest is taking place at M.E.B.A.-contracted Black Ball Ferry Line. They are looking for the best photos of the Black Ball ferry MV COHO as part of their "Calendar Contest." They will select 13 winners whose photos will populate the cover and each month of the 2025 calendar and are giving away 17 free trips to photo contestants. The contest runs through the end of this month. Visit <https://cohoferry.com> for more.

APPLICANTS REMINDED OF REQUIREMENTS NEEDED FOR MEMBERSHIP

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 list qualified applicants who have fulfilled the obligations in their application packet (including sea service documentation and initiation fee) 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 upcoming June 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.

APPLICANTS/MEMBERS IN DUES ARREARS TO BE DROPPED

Members or applicants two or more years in arrears on their dues or service charges will be DROPPED from the membership or applicant rolls in June. The drop list issued by the District Investigating Committee (DIC) will be included in the June membership meeting packet (week of June 3). Members/applicants slated to be on the DIC Drop List can rescue their membership and return to good standing if they address their arrearage in time. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters immediately to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing. Members and applicants can also make payments online, the quickest way to catch up. Visit the M.E.B.A. homepage at www.mebaunion.org.

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

Friday, May 10 – **Honolulu@1100**

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; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

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

Friday, June 7 – **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. 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.