

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"
Number 48 – November 27, 2025



In this issue – Carriers Consider Red Sea Return//WSF Hybrid-Electric Ferry Construction Delayed//WSF Trying to Move Retired Boats//Upcoming Holiday Parties//Last Chance for Applicants to Make Membership This Year//Vacation Benefits – 2025 Year-End Closing//Thanksgiving Closings//

MAERSK, HAPAG-LLOYD EYE RETURN TO RED SEA, SUEZ ROUTE

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd have issued an update regarding the evolving situation in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandab Strait, and Suez Canal area and alluded to the possible return of their ships in those volatile regions. Yemen's Houthi movement recently called an end to its attacks against commercial vessels in those areas that ramped up after the October 2023 Israel-Hamas hostilities. Though the vital corridor is the fastest and most sustainable route between Asia and Europe, shipping traffic has plunged demonstrably as companies have routed their vessels around the Cape of Good Hope to avoid attacks and safeguard crews.

Many observers believe the continued Houthi presence in key shipping corridors doesn't lend enough clarity to the future safety of shipping in the region making it difficult for companies to rely on assurances from Houthi militants when crew, vessels, and cargo are at stake.

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, partners in the Gemini Cooperation, released a joint statement addressing recent speculation about the timing of a return to Suez-based East-West sailings. Although both companies ultimately aim to resume Suez transits, they report that there is no specific timetable for doing so. The Suez Canal Authority previously announced that Maersk would return to Suez routes as soon as December, but the subsequent company release leaves the timeline unclear, offering no definitive return date.

The carriers noted that the progress of the Gaza ceasefire and other regional developments are being monitored closely. Detailed security assessments are ongoing, and any decision to resume Red Sea passage will be made only when conditions are deemed safe for crews, vessels, and cargo. Should a return to Suez become feasible, Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd said they will coordinate carefully to ensure minimal disruption and maintain the Gemini network's focus on schedule reliability.

WSF HYBRID FERRY CONSTRUCTION SLIDES DOWN THE CALENDAR

The first of three hybrid-electric ferries in Washington State's efforts to modernize its ferry fleet will now arrive a year later than originally planned. The contract, awarded in July to Florida-based Eastern Shipbuilding, came in hundreds of millions of dollars below the competing bid from Washington's own Nichols Brothers Boat Builders. In exchange for that lower price, the state agreed to extend Eastern's timeline: instead of a 2029 delivery, the first boat is now scheduled for August 2030, with

two more following in 2031 and 2032. It marks the first time in more than five decades that Washington has gone out of state to procure new car ferries.

Washington State Ferries faces mounting pressure to stabilize service levels and replace aging vessels. The agency said the cost difference outweighed concerns about added delays. Eastern Shipbuilding declined to elaborate on its longer schedule, but said its proposal reflected decades of experience constructing complex vessels.

Washington's long-term plan calls for expanding its fleet from 21 to 26 vessels and eventually fielding 16 new plug-in hybrids. The new ferries will rely on large battery arrays supplemented by diesel generators, with the goal of sharply reducing fuel use and emissions. Whether the state can complete its ambitious hybrid-electric transition by 2040 remains an open question, as lawmakers in both parties have raised concerns about cost and schedule feasibility.

TWO RETIRED WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES UP FOR SALE

Washington State is once again trying to find homes for two long-retired ferries — the 144-car HYAK and the smaller 87-car KLAHOWYA — after more than a year on the market with no takers. Both vessels come with no minimum bid, but state officials warn that buying one is far from simple.

WSF Deputy Executive Director John Vezina pointed out that finding purchasers for retired vessels is a complicated process. Any buyer must clear a maze of approvals, including a Coast Guard towing plan and environmental sign-off. Vezina said that most walk away once they learn how much work is involved.

The two aging ships, retired after becoming too costly to maintain, have been stripped of key parts such as navigation gear and even the HYAK's horn — now used at Seattle Kraken games. A previous buyer from Ecuador paid \$200,000 for two retired ferries only to have the deal collapse amid towing problems and deportations of the tug crew.

WSF leadership says they want the ferries gone to free up space at the Eagle Harbor shipyard, but a backup plan is already forming: recycling the vessels. The trouble is that there's no local shipbreaking yard for vessels this size, and WSF has no budget to dispose of them. British Columbia is considering building its own recycling facility, but that wouldn't be ready in time for these ferries.

Potential buyers may also be wary of the region's checkered history with retired ferry projects — from the ill-fated KALAKALA restoration to abandoned hulks left decaying on shorelines. Maintaining a decommissioned ferry is pricey too. One current owner pays more than \$200,000 a year just for moorage and insurance. Still, there are success stories. The retired ELWHA now serves as a floating office in Everett, while the HIYU and SKANSONIA operate as event venues on Lake Union.

Vezina says the WSF is determined to avoid seeing the HYAK or KLAHOWYA become derelict monuments. "We don't want these boats abandoned on Washington beaches," he said.

UPCOMING HOLIDAY PARTIES

December 4 - **M.E.B.A. Headquarters & the American Maritime Congress (D.C.)** – Beginning at 5:30 on the HQ Rooftop.

December 5 – **Seattle** – At the hall from 1300 to 1600

December 8 – **Boston** – At the hall after the 1200 membership meeting.
December 9 – **Charleston** - 1630 at Holy City Brewing (1021 Aragon Ave.).
December 10 – **New Orleans** – at the hall at 1500.
December 11 – **Los Angeles (San Pedro)** – 1400-1600 aboard the SS LANE VICTORY (2400 S. Miner Street, Berth 52 in San Pedro).
December 11 – **New York/New Jersey** – At the hall after the meeting (around 1400).
December 11 – **Norfolk** - At the hall after the meeting (around 1400).
December 11 – **Baltimore** – At the hall 1200 to 1700.
December 11 – **Tampa** – At Gaspar's Grotto (1805 E. 7th Ave.) from 1500 to 1800 (Wear ugly sweater).
December 12 – **Oakland** – At the hall from 1230 to 1600.
December 12 – **Jacksonville** - At Pat's Lounge (4870 Highway Ave.) from 1400 to 1700.
December 11 – **Honolulu** – At the hall from 1000 to 1400 p.m.
December 12 – **Houston** – At the hall from 1800 to 2200.

LAST CHANCE FOR APPLICANTS TO MAKE MEMBERSHIP THIS YEAR

Qualified applicants trying to make membership in December must make sure they provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the upcoming District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The DIC meets twice a year to review applicants for membership and will finalize their report next week that will be voted on by members the following week during the regular December membership meetings (December 8-12).

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. Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements should forward their information to Headquarters. Applicants have been mailed letters from HQ referencing the missing requirements needed for that applicant to make membership. Referenced documents must be submitted to HQ before the DIC finalizes their report at the end of November if the applicant wishes to be considered for membership during this review period.

If you have questions about your status, you can contact the Membership Department at membership@mebaunion.org. All questions about service charge payments should be directed to the M.E.B.A. Accounting Department at accounting@mebaunion.org. Qualified applicants who fail to make the deadline will have to wait another six months – until the June 2025 report – to make membership.

VACATION BENEFITS – 2025 YEAR-END CLOSING

Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2025 in the Plan Office is Wednesday, December 17, 2025.

- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2025 will be made on 12/18/2025 and the funds will be deposited into bank accounts on 12/22/2025.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/17/25 at 12:00 PM EST will be paid in the order received beginning 1/2/2026.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2025 must file before this deadline. Remember, Thursday, December 25, 2024 and Thursday, January 1, 2026 are holidays and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify the specific holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

Split Your Vacation Payments between 2025 and 2026

You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2025 and a second in 2026. The 12/17/2025 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner **MUST** be a continuous vacation period.

Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at Vacation@mebaplans.org or by phone at 800-811-6322 if you have any questions.

THANKSGIVING CLOSINGS

All Union halls and offices are closed today for Thanksgiving Day and remain shuttered tomorrow, Friday, November 28. All halls and offices are back to their normal schedule on Monday.

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

Monday, December 8 – **Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

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

Wednesday, December 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, December 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, December 12 – **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. Website: www.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. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org