

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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FERRY DISRUPTIONS EXPOSE WASHINGTON'S ENGINEER STAFFING CRISIS

The Washington State Ferry system faced widespread cancellations (13 vessels) on Monday (Oct. 5) as a shortage of qualified engineers disrupted service on routes across the system, bringing renewed attention to longstanding concerns over staffing, wages and working conditions for the ferry system's engine-room crews. M.E.B.A., which represents WSF engineers, learned of the cancellations through media reports and rejected any suggestion that it organized or encouraged the engineers' absences, as many overworked and underpaid members called in sick that day.

The current problems the system is experiencing are the result of a decades-long effort by WSF management to cut staffing levels that historically provided a staffing cushion aboard each vessel. For decades, the union's contract required an extra engine-room crewmember beyond the minimum number required by the Coast Guard. That meant a vessel could generally continue sailing when an engineer was unexpectedly absent. M.E.B.A. says management eventually eliminated those additional positions and reduced crews to the legal minimum. Under the depleted system, even a single absence can leave a vessel without enough qualified engineers to sail. Management has increasingly relied on overtime from the remaining engineers to cover vacancies, creating an unsustainable workload.

Engineers are already scheduled to work 84 hours during a typical seven-day workweek. Some have reportedly accumulated more than 1,500 overtime hours in a year, while dozens have exceeded 500 hours. Compensation has become a major factor in retaining qualified engineers.

During the most recent round of contract negotiations, M.E.B.A. sought a 20% wage increase, arguing that ferry engineers are currently paid substantially less than their deck-crew counterparts and as much as 40% less than comparable maritime engineers in public and private-sector jobs. The pay disparity, combined with chronic staffing shortages and heavy overtime demands, has made it increasingly difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel. By contrast, WSF offered a wage freeze, citing dire state budget constraints. Ultimately, the parties went to interest arbitration where the arbitrator sided with the State, ordering a wage freeze and a mid-term wage reopener provision. Accordingly, the parties will be back at the table next year, with reopener negotiations commencing July 1, 2027.

The consequences of WSF's years-long mismanagement were evident Monday, when crew shortages forced cancellations or reduced service on several major routes, including Seattle-Bainbridge, Seattle-Bremerton, Edmonds-Kingston and Anacortes-San Juan Islands. Ferry-dependent residents and

businesses were among those affected, with workers struggling to reach jobs and deliveries delayed. Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson met with M.E.B.A. leadership Monday and called for the ferry system to return to full service, while acknowledging that staffing remains an issue.

Then in another emergency meeting yesterday, M.E.B.A. ferry mariners including our WSF Rep. Eric Winge, met with Gov. Ferguson and WSF leadership to present the workforce's concerns over burnout, fatigue, low morale and what the Union identifies as an underlying compensation gap. The Governor noted that immediate statutory and budgetary constraints prevent an instant, unilateral wage adjustment. However, the Union pressed three key urgent asks: an independent Marine Employees' Compensation survey, enforcement of the statutory requirement that WSF wages be competitive with maritime labor market, and a formal commitment to achieving engine-department wage parity with the deck department. Ferguson expressed agreement, contingent on operational continuity and a return to normal service, and pledged to publicly identify engine-department wage parity as a top administrative priority.

M.E.B.A. wants to continue to work with WSF management to restore reliable service, but argues that doing so will require addressing the underlying staffing and compensation problems rather than relying indefinitely on overtime and minimum staffing levels. For the engineers who keep the ferries' propulsion and mechanical systems operating, Monday's disruptions are not simply a scheduling problem. They confirm that a system cannot expect reliable service when the workforce responsible for safely operating its vessels is stretched to the limit.

REXHA NAMED AFL-CIO COMMITTEE CHAIR

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland "Rex" Rexha has been named by AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler as the new Chairperson of the Federation's Committee on Older and Retired Workers, putting an M.E.B.A. leader in a key position to help shape the labor movement's policies. Rexha is one of 55 Vice Presidents serving on the AFL-CIO Executive Council, a position he was reaffirmed to this summer at the Federation's Convention in Minneapolis. His original election at the 2022 AFL-CIO Convention in Philadelphia marked a historic milestone for M.E.B.A.- the first time in the Union's history that it secured a seat on the Federation's Executive Council. The Council is responsible for setting AFL-CIO policies and goals.

Rexha already brings a strong M.E.B.A. presence to the Council, participating in five of its committees: Energy, International, Legislative, Organizing, and Older Workers & Retirees. These committees provide a forum for unions to further examine issues affecting working people and help shape the Federation's positions. As chair of the Older and Retired Workers Committee, Rexha will help lead discussions and policy efforts involving retirement security, pensions, health care and other benefits important to union members throughout their working lives and into retirement. The appointment represents another important opportunity to ensure that the interests of maritime workers remain part of the broader labor movement's agenda.

MENENDEZ RECEIVES USMMA GOLDEN MARINER AWARD

Longtime M.E.B.A. member and very recent retiree Captain Jack Menendez has been honored with the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's prestigious Golden Mariner Award, recognizing alumni who have devoted at least 50 years to sailing in an unlimited licensed capacity. A USMMA graduate ('76), he was among the first draft of deck officers to man M.E.B.A.'s top-to-bottom contracts in the 1970s. He was the first M.E.B.A. Second Mate aboard both the SS PENNY and the ill-fated SS POET, which

sank with all hands in October 1980. He has also helped shape the next generation of mariners as an adjunct instructor at Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School since 2005 while continuing to sail on his unlimited-tonnage Master's license.

He served as a Naval Special Warfare officer, including deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Following his Navy career, Menendez returned to sea, earning his unlimited Master's license in 2010, sailing the globe on a variety of vessels. He also served as an adjunct instructor at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School for 20 years, volunteered on the SS AMERICAN VICTORY in Tampa and helped pass on his extensive knowledge to cadets on Academy ship training missions. Jack was the Union's M.E.B.A. Norfolk Branch Agent and Government Fleet Representative for a four-year stint beginning in 2021.

He continues his advocacy for the U.S. Merchant Marine through the American Merchant Marine Veterans where he Serves as the organization's National Vice President. Congratulations! Jack Menendez exemplifies the Golden Mariner Award's highest tradition of service at sea and commitment to the maritime industry.

COAST GUARD PROPOSES CHANGES TO MARINER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The U.S. Coast Guard is proposing to eliminate six training and competency requirements for certain Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) endorsements, saying the requirements go beyond international STCW standards and impose unnecessary costs and burdens on mariners. Some of the changes are targeted at small, near-coastal vessels, but others, have a broader vessel-power threshold and could affect mariners working aboard larger vessels. The proposed rule would affect Masters and Officers in Charge of a Navigational Watch (OICNW) on vessels under 500 gross tons operating in near-coastal waters, as well as engineering officers and electro-technical ratings on vessels with propulsion power of 750 kW/1,000 horsepower or more.

Specifically, the Coast Guard proposes eliminating Leadership and Managerial Skills (LMS) training for certain Masters; Bridge Resource Management (BRM) training and a separate Leadership and Teamworking (LTW) competency demonstration for certain OICNWs; Engineering Terminology and Shipboard Operations (ETSO) training for OICEWs and Designated Duty Engineers; and Computer Systems and Maintenance (CSM) and High Voltage Power Systems (HVPS) training for Electro-technical Ratings.

The Coast Guard says the deck requirements are unnecessary on smaller near-coastal vessels because a typical bridge watch may consist of a single credentialed mariner serving as watchstander, helmsman and lookout. For engineering officers, the agency says the knowledge covered by ETSO training is already acquired through broader engineering education, experience, examinations and onboard service. CSM and HVPS training would also be removed for ETRs because those ratings perform such work under the direct supervision of a credentialed officer.

According to the Coast Guard, the proposal could save affected mariners approximately \$6.1 million annually, including tuition, travel, time away from work and administrative costs. An estimated 825 mariners per year would benefit from the changes, with total 10-year cost savings projected at approximately \$42.8 million. The proposed rule would also remove outdated and duplicative regulatory language, including provisions related to transitional requirements that expired in 2017. The Coast Guard said the changes are part of the administration's broader deregulatory effort and are

intended to bring U.S. requirements more closely in line with international STCW standards. Comments on the proposed rule, Docket No. USCG-2025-0392, must be submitted by December 30, 2026.

TANKER RATES SURGE AS GLOBAL SHIPPING FACES NEW DISRUPTIONS

The cost of moving crude oil by sea has surged as security threats around the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb force tankers onto longer routes and tie up available vessels. VLCC rates for voyages from the Middle East to Asia recently topped \$1.2 million per day, compared with roughly \$30,000 in January — an increase of about 3,900 percent. While that figure applies to a specific segment of the tanker market and does not translate directly into a similar increase at the gas pump, it illustrates how quickly geopolitical disruptions can drive up maritime transportation costs.

According to data, VLCCs earned more than \$200,000 per day on average during the third quarter, with longer voyages, ship-to-ship transfers and diversions around threatened waterways helping push rates higher. Shipping analysts expect Middle East oil flows to improve somewhat, but a full recovery may not come until at least mid-2027. The impact could extend well beyond the shipping industry. Crude oil is the largest component of gasoline prices, and oil is traded in a global market. Even when American consumers are not directly dependent on Middle Eastern crude, competition for replacement supplies can put upward pressure on prices.

The situation also highlights the importance of maintaining a reliable U.S. commercial maritime capability. The United States imported about 6.2 million barrels of crude per day in 2025, including roughly 490,000 barrels per day from the Middle East Gulf. Having American-flag vessels and qualified U.S. mariners available to support the nation's energy and seafight requirements provides an important layer of resilience when international shipping lanes are disrupted.

CMES 2027 COURSE SCHEDULE

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School published its 2027 Course Schedule along with the 2027 Course Application form. Applications for these classes will be accepted via the CMES website and U.S. mail. For classes held during January 1 through June 30, applications will be accepted no earlier than November 1, 2026. For classes held during July 1 through December 31, applications will be accepted no earlier than May 1, 2027. Applications sent prior to the acceptance dates will be discarded with no notice sent to the applicant. The course schedule and application forms can be obtained at Union Halls, the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School website (www.mebaschool.org), or by calling the School's Admissions Desk at (410) 822-9600. Announced courses for 2027 follow:

ADVANCED METEOROLOGY - (1-Week Course - 12 students maximum) - February 1–February 5; April 26 – April 30; August 9 – August 13; October 25 – October 29. **ADVANCED PIPE WELDING** - (2-Week Course - 6 students max.) - October 4–October 15. **ADVANCED SHIPHANDLING** - (2-Week Course - 6 students max.) - January 18–January 29; April 12–April 23; August 23–September 3; November 1–November 12. **ADVANCED STABILITY** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - February 8–February 12; May 3–May 7; August 16–August 20; November 15–November 19. **ANTITERRORISM OFFICER LEVEL 2** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - May 17–May 21; November 1–November 5. **BST REFRESHER** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - March 22–March 26; April 26–April 30; July 26–July 30; September 27–October 1. **BST REVALIDATION** - (3-Day Course - 12 students max.) - February 22–February 24; March 8–March 10; April 12–April 14; May 10–May 12; May 24–May 26; June 7–June 9; June 21–June 23; August 16–

August 18; September 13–September 15; October 11–October 13; October 25–October 27; November 15–November 17; November 29–December 1. **CONTAINER REFRIGERATION** - (2-Week Course - 10 students max.) - February 1–February 12; October 11–October 22. **DAMAGE CONTROL/CBRN** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - September 20–September 24. **DIESEL ENGINEERING** - (6-Week Course - 12 students max.) - April 12–May 21. **FAST RESCUE BOAT** - (4-Day Course - 5 students max.) - May 10–May 13. **GAS TURBINE ENGINEERING** - (4-Week Course - 12 students max.) - September 13–October 8. **INDUSTRIAL NETWORKING** - (1-Week Course - 10 students max.) - April 5–April 9; September 13–September 17. **INSTRUMENTATION** - (2-Week Course - 10 students max.) - February 22–March 5; June 7–June 18; October 4–October 15. **LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - May 17–May 21; November 1–November 5. **LNG AS A FUEL** - (5-Day Course - 12 students max.) - January 4–January 8; April 5–April 9; April 26–April 30; June 7–June 11; June 21–June 25; August 16 – August 20; August 30–September 3; September 13–September 17; September 20–September 24; October 11–October 15; October 18–October 22; November 29–December 3; December 6–December 10. **MACHINE SHOP PROFICIENCY** - (2-Week Course - 12 students max.) - March 8–March 19; August 16 – August 27. **MARINE ELECTRIC PROPULSION/HIGH VOLTAGE SAFETY** - (2-Week Course - 12 students max.) - February 22–February 26 HVS only; April 26–April 30 HVS only; May 3–May 14; August 23–September 3 HVS only; October 4–October 15; November 15–November 19 HVS only. **MEECE** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - January 25–January 29; May 10–May 14; August 2–August 6; November 8–November 12. **MSC CONMAR** - (2-Week Course - 12 students max.) - March 8–March 19; June 7–June 18; August 9–August 20; October 18–October 29; November 8–November 19. **PRACTICAL ELECTRICAL TROUBLESHOOTING** - (2-Week Course - 10 students max.) - March 15–March 26; May 17–May 28; September 13–September 24; October 18–October 29. **PROGRAMMABLE LOGIC CONTROLLERS** - (1-Week Course - 8 students max.) - January 4–January 8; April 19–April 23; August 23–August 27; November 29–December 3. **REFRIGERATION** - (2-Week Course - 10 students max.) - January 11–January 22; August 16–August 27. **SMALL ARMS** - (5-Day Course - 12 students max.) - May 3–May 7; September 13–September 17. **STEAM ENGINEERING** - (6-Week Course - 12 students max.) - October 11–November 19. **TANKERMAN DL** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - January 11 – January 15; June 14–June 18 (Live Virtual - 6 students max.); August 23–August 27; October 25–October 29 (Live Virtual - 6 students max.). **TIG WELDING** - (2-Week Course - 6 students max.); February 22–March 5. **WARTSILA FLEX BASIC LEVEL 1** - (3-Day Course - 12 students max.) - January 27–January 29; February 3–February 5; October 20–October 22; October 27 – October 29. **WARTSILA FLEX OPERATOR LEVEL 2** - (1-Week Course - 12 students max.) - February 1–February 5; February 8–February 12; October 25–October 29; November 1–November 5. **WELDING** - (4-Week Course - 12 students max.) - January 18–February 12; April 19–May 14; October 25–November 19. **WELDING PROFICIENCY** - (2-Week Course - 12 students max.) - September 13–September 24.

HALLS, OFFICES CLOSED ON MONDAY TO HONOR COLUMBUS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed on Monday Oct. 12 in observance of Columbus Day and the original Admiral of the Ocean Seas - Christopher Columbus. Christopher Columbus has been described as a visionary who opened up the New World and conversely as a greedy imperialist who engaged in slave trading, genocide and stealing Indian land. Though he never set foot in North America, his celebrated voyages brought him to the Caribbean, Central and South America leading the way to European colonization and ushering in a new era of globalization. Columbus Day remains a federal holiday, while a

number of states and local governments observe the same day as Indigenous Peoples' Day, recognizing the Native peoples who lived in the Americas long before European arrival.

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

Monday, November 2 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, November 3 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Portland, Maine@1200.**

Wednesday, November 4 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, November 5 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, November 6 – **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. 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