

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



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

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

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### LABOR-FRIENDLY LEGISLATORS GO TO BAT FOR DOD CIVMARS

Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle helped stave off an anti-labor amendment that would have codified the loss of collective bargaining rights for federal employees as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

At issue was an expected amendment to the NDAA on the House Floor to be introduced by Rep. Bob Onder (R-MO). Amendment #19 would have removed Section 1110 of the existing House NDAA bill that restored collective bargaining rights to Defense Department civilian mariners and other federal workers. As members know, the White House issued an Executive Order in March that stripped collective bargaining rights and union protections from many federal agency civilian employees, including the DOD, affecting those sailing in the Military Sealift Command and Army Corps of Engineers fleets. Executive Order 14251 claimed that removing union rights were necessary "to enhance the national security of the United States." M.E.B.A. believes that the Order was an "overreach" and Union President Adam Vokac noted in a letter to Members of Congress ahead of the House Floor NDAA consideration that CIVMARs employed by the MSC and Army Corps "are a vital component of our military readiness...The U.S. is already facing a national mariner shortage. Undermining collective bargaining rights will only worsen attrition, deter new entrants, and weaken the very workforce responsible for crewing our nation's sealift fleet."

The AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department (TTD) also went into battle mode ahead of the vote urging Members to reject Amendment 19 saying "we firmly believe that all employees deserve workplace protections such as fair pay, equitable treatment, protection against retaliation, whistleblower protections, health and safety standards, and due process in grievance and disciplinary matters. These rights are essential for effectively addressing workplace conflicts, improving employee retention and productivity, and boosting morale."

Several Republicans who understand the importance of collective bargaining rights for working families, including Reps. Mike Turner (OH), Derrick Van Orden (R-Wisc.) and Don Bacon (Illinois), joined Democrats in opposing the amendment and standing up for the rights of the DOD workers who serve our nation. In the end, Amendment 19 was withdrawn and the NDAA passed the House with Section 1110 intact. The Senate must still forward its own version of the NDAA and there is no guarantee that the final reconciled bill will contain the beneficial language that reaffirms the integrity

of the federal workforce. M.E.B.A. and the other unions representing federal workers will continue to fight on behalf of members.

Supporting labor-friendly lawmakers and others who understand the importance of U.S.-flag shipping to our nation's security and economy is the focus of M.E.B.A.'s Political Action Fund. Contributions to the P.A.F. are used to educate Members of Congress, regardless of political party, about the importance of our industry. The P.A.F. enables the M.E.B.A. to foster friendships and solidify political relationships in Congress, the White House and in State Capitols.

The Fund helps our Union succeed in Washington and is crucial in helping to uphold labor and maritime policies and programs that are frequently under attack by uneducated lawmakers and interest groups. It helps advance the interests of the U.S. Merchant Marine through the funding of key maritime provisions including the Maritime Security Program, protecting the Jones Act, as well as our health care and pensions. Without it, qualified American mariners could go the way of the dodo, and the carriage of critical national-interest cargo could be forfeited to foreign mariners and overseas interests. You can support the PAF on the M.E.B.A.'s Member Payment and Update Portal (PUP) that is also used to pay dues and service charges. Visit [www.mcbaunion.org](http://www.mcbaunion.org) to access the portal where you can also view and update your M.E.B.A. records, including contact information, credentials, and sea time.

### **NEW SEATTLE REP. SET TO START IN OCTOBER**

After a thorough interview process, the M.E.B.A. District Executive Committee (DEC) is pleased to announce the appointment of member Patrick Whalen as the new Seattle Representative to supplement member services at our Union hall in Fife. Patrick will be stepping into the role with a start date in late October, once he completes his current assignment at sea. M.E.B.A. thanks all the quality candidates that applied for the position.

A 2016 Kings Point graduate, Patrick sailed on various Military Sealift Command Navy support vessels as an engineer for almost five years before switching out to the deep-sea unit. Since late 2020, he's shipped out on a variety of vessels for Maersk Line and Hapag/Crowley. He's currently serving on the MAERSK CHESAPEAKE where the DEC caught up with him in an online interview.

Patrick brings an abundance of energy and enthusiasm to the position, and his experience sailing with our contracted companies has given him firsthand insight into the needs of our membership. With Patrick's appointment, members can look forward to a fresh perspective, spirited engagement, and a renewed push to strengthen the services and solidarity at our Seattle-area hall.

### **CONTAINERS SPILL INTO LONG BEACH HARBOR**

Dozens of shipping containers spilled from a cargo ship docked at the Port of Long Beach on Tuesday morning, disrupting operations and triggering a large-scale emergency response. The mishap occurred shortly after 9 a.m. at Pier G, located across Queensway Bay from downtown Long Beach. According to port officials, around 75 containers toppled from the Portuguese-flagged vessel MISSISSIPPI as it was berthed at the terminal. The 837-foot ship had arrived from China within the past day. At the time of the incident, a STAX Engineering emissions-capture barge was connected to the vessel and sustained damage when struck by falling containers.

Emergency crews from the U.S. Coast Guard, Long Beach Fire and Police Departments, the Port of Long Beach, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and private contractors rushed to the scene. One minor injury was reported. The Coast Guard is leading an investigation into the cause of the accident. Container losses at sea average over 1,000 each year, according to the World Shipping Council, though incidents inside major ports remain uncommon.

### **NMC POINTS OUT MEDCERT ERRORS**

The National Maritime Center made note of a system error that altered certain medical certificates they issued between July 25, 2025 and September 3, 2025. In some cases, a limitation of “YES” was listed in error. In other cases, a valid limitation or restriction was listed as a “NO” on some certificates. Despite those errors, NMC noted that all medical certificates they issued during this time remain valid. They stated that corrected medical certificates for those mariners affected will be issued during the next month to ensure clarity of limitations and restrictions. Any mariners who received a MedCert during that time period should review their certificates for accuracy.

### **WORLD SHIPPING COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS CARGO INSPECTION DEFICIENCIES**

The World Shipping Council (WSC) released a new report summarizing deficiencies found in government cargo inspection programs, reviving a vital data series that the International Maritime Organization (IMO) discontinued last year. The 2024 report shows that 11.39% of inspected cargo shipments were found to have deficiencies, up slightly from the IMO’s final 2023 figure of 11%. These include mis-declared and undeclared dangerous goods, incorrect documentation, and improper packing – all of which can lead to serious safety incidents, including ship fires. Drawing on port state inspection data, WSC’s report continues a data series dating back to 2011. Under international law, port states may inspect containers to ensure cargo complies with international regulations and standards, including proper declaration and packing of dangerous goods. The World Shipping Council is also developing an industry cargo safety program, which will be launched shortly, to improve cargo screening and inspections. Council President Joe Kramek said, “data like this shows why the Cargo Safety Program is needed. By pairing accurate reporting with better screening, clear standards, and practical guidance, we can reduce risks and protect lives, cargo, and the marine environment.”

### **BALTIMORE HALL CLOSED TOMORROW FOR DEFENDERS DAY**

The Baltimore Union hall will be closed tomorrow (Friday, September 12) in honor of Defenders Day – a holiday in the State of Maryland. The day celebrates the successful defense of Baltimore from the British during the Battle of Baltimore (September 12–14, 1814) during the War of 1812. Mere weeks after the redcoats defeated the Americans at the Battle of Bladensburg then burned Washington DC, the British turned their attention to Baltimore to continue punishing their former colony.

But American General John Stricker and the Baltimore Garrison provided unexpected stiff resistance to the British forces commanded by Major General Robert Ross at the Battle of North Point, the opening salvo of the Battle of Baltimore. Ross was cut down by an American rifleman and the British temporarily broke off their attack to lick their wounds and regroup. This gave the Americans time to better organize their defenses and batten down the hatches during the British naval bombardment of Fort McHenry days later. Maryland lawyer Frank Key, better known today as Francis Scott Key, waited out the night aboard a “truce” ship near the 50-ship British fleet during their 25-hour assault on the American fort. Unable to shatter the recently fortified American defenses, the British broke off their attack as morning approached on September 14<sup>th</sup>.

At the early light of dawn, Key, trying to grasp the situation, looked toward Fort McHenry and saw the Stars and Stripes still waving. The Americans had outlasted the bombardment! In a fit of patriotic euphoria, he feverishly scrawled out an epic four-verse poem on the back of a letter that captured the moment. His poem was reprinted in Baltimore newspapers a week later under the title of “Defence of Fort M’Henry.” Two months later it was redubbed “The Star-Spangled Banner” and it officially became our national anthem in March of 1931.

### **ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11**

Today marked the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93 which crashed in suburban Pennsylvania. September 11<sup>th</sup> of each year is designated as “Patriot Day” to serve as a remembrance of the lives lost on that September morning. On this day, “all departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the U.S. and interested organizations and individuals” are directed to lower flags to half-staff for the entire day.

Among those we lost on that dark day were M.E.B.A. brother John “Jay” Corcoran who was set to ship out on the APL THAILAND when he boarded United Flight 175 on September 11, 2001. Stephen Ward, the son of former M.E.B.A. President Gordon Ward, was working as a public accountant on the 101<sup>st</sup> floor of Tower 1 that day in New York City and was also taken away.

After the towers came down and lower Manhattan was enveloped by a billowing plume of smoke and ash, more than 800 mariners in 150 vessels transported over 500,000 survivors from lower Manhattan across the harbor to safety. M.E.B.A. members helped effect relief and recovery operations during the aftermath of the attack. Mariners on the Staten Island Ferries navigated through an immense cloud of smoke and debris, transporting thousands to safety. Throughout the following weeks, they altered their schedules to accommodate the enormous saturation of emergency and medical services personnel and equipment which they transported with 24-hour-a-day availability. Members in New York Harbor also volunteered their off-hours to comb through the rubble, first in a rescue capacity and then in recovery. Members on the NYC Fireboats rushed to the scene and feverishly doused the escalating flames. Because the water mains in lower Manhattan were wrecked, the fireboat fleet was the only source of water for the first 72 hours. After the initial boatlift, members on the Army Corps of Engineers vessels and the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS COMFORT joined relief and recovery efforts using their skills to placate the misery.

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

Friday, September 12 – **Honolulu@1100**

Monday, October 6 – **Boston@1200. Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, October 7 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, October 8 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, October 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, October 10 – **Honolulu@1100**

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