

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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



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

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### **MARAD SEEKING TO PUSH AHEAD ON RRF RECAPITALIZATION**

An industry group primarily made up of shipping companies were summoned by the Maritime Administration this week to aid the push for recapitalization of the Ready Reserve Force fleet.

Along with a handful of Military Sealift Command-contracted vessels, the nation relies on 46 RRF vessels for surge sealift operations. However, the RRF fleet has an average age of 44 years and according to U.S. Transportation Command General Stephen Lyons, can "generate only 65% of the required capacity and is rapidly approaching end of useful life." The need to recapitalize, he said, "is urgent."

Maritime Administrator Rear Adm. Mark Buzby said the current aging sealift fleet demands an inordinate amount of maintenance and repair costs to keep it going. Quite a few of the needed vessels are "on the shelf" without Certificates of Inspection because of their dire need for repair and many of them have deteriorated steel.

Though recapitalizing the aging fleet is dependent on Congressional funding, MarAd is putting a plan in place to phase out the oldest and least capable ships, especially the 26 steam vessels. At the meeting on Wednesday at MarAd's Headquarters in the Department of Transportation, MarAd discussed its used-vessel acquisition plan while issuing a "notional schedule" for vessel acquisition that could lead toward contract awards for RRF replacement vessels as early as the spring of 2020, subject to the availability of funding. MarAd's plan to procure existing commercial vessels into the RRF fleet to replace the older vessels has been identified as the quickest and most affordable strategy.

If the funding can be secured, the plan would involve the replacement of 26 RRF vessels between 2021 and 2048.

### **NLRB ABANDONS PRECEDENT, ALLOWS CONTINUED INCURSIONS AGAINST UNION CONTRACTS**

The National Labor Relations Board, which has been reshaped by President Trump into a unit bent on reversing pro-worker policies, handed another weapon to employers to emasculate workers covered by union contracts. Earlier this week in a party-line vote, the Board abandoned the "clear and unmistakable waiver" standard thus giving an avenue to employers to unilaterally change the terms of a contract without union consent.

Under the “clear and unmistakable waiver” standard, which has been precedent for 70 years and was reaffirmed by the NLRB in 2007, the Board would find that an employer’s unilateral contract change violated the National Labor Relations Act unless a contractual provision unequivocally and specifically referred to the type of employer action at issue. The Board’s ruling will now allow a company to make a unilateral contract change without bargaining as long as the contract doesn’t specifically cover the employer’s disputed action.

The decision is *M.V. Transportation, Inc.* (28-CA-173726; 368 NLRB No. 66).

The Board said that this new “contract coverage” standard “will encourage parties to anticipate and resolve potential labor-management issues through comprehensive collective bargaining and to settle unilateral-change disputes through grievance arbitration.”

The ruling passed in a 3-1 vote, with the lone Democrat on the Board, Lauren McFerran, dissenting. She condemned the ruling saying it paves the way for employers “to unilaterally change employees’ terms and conditions of employment — wages, hours, benefits, job duties, safety practices, disciplinary rules, and more — in a manner that will frustrate the bargaining process, inject uncertainty into labor-management relationships, and ultimately increase the prospect for labor unrest.”

### **WSF VOTE CONTINUES AS CUT-OFF DATE FOR ELIGIBILITY APPROACHES**

Members sailing in the Washington State Ferry fleet must make sure their 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Dues are paid by this Sunday in order to be eligible for the ongoing Online Dues Equity Referendum. The 30-day referendum began on September 1 and continues until midnight on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

But in order to be eligible to participate in the vote, WSF members must be in “good standing” as of September 15, 2019 (at midnight). Most M.E.B.A. members sailing in the WSF are on Dues Check-Off which keeps them current. But the small percentage of WSF “self-payers” whose dues are not current before midnight on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019 will not be eligible to participate in the vote and will not be granted access to the online ballot. As a reminder, members can also pay their dues online from the M.E.B.A. portal (accessed from [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)).

WSF members – not applicants – are deciding whether or not to support a fair and progressive dues increase proposal that would reinforce the Union’s ability to provide sustainable future representation. The proposal has been structured by the District Executive Committee (DEC) to provide for a more equitable dues structure, similar to comparable inland bargaining units that have voted to implement dues increases in recent years. As noted, the vote runs until midnight on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

Members with additional questions should contact WSF Representative Eric Winge at (206) 310-5900 or [ewinge@mebaunion.org](mailto:ewinge@mebaunion.org) or Marco Cannistraro, who can be reached at (202) 257-2825 or [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org).

### **UPCOMING FLOOR VOTE EXPECTED FOR WWII MARINER GOLD MEDAL BILL**

A bill honoring World War II merchant mariners is expected to be put before Members of Congress in the House next week for a Floor vote. H.R. 550, a bill sponsored by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK) would authorize a Congressional Gold Medal honoring World War II merchant mariners.

A companion Senate bill (S. 133), introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), is still in the process of gathering co-sponsors and would benefit from increased attention and support. If the bill passes, which is likely, there is a possibility that H.R. 550 could be taken up by the Senate, passed and put on the President's desk for signature. However, nothing should be taken for granted and our readers are asked to continue efforts to highlight the importance of honoring our WWII merchant mariners.

The Merchant Marine played a heroic and vital role in World War II and the feats and accomplishments of the "Fourth Arm of Defense" are deserving of broader public recognition. The bills' chances for passage can increase with your assistance. You can help drum up support by using this link from the Navy League that will let you send a ready-made letter to your Members of Congress urging support for the bills. Visit [www.votervoices.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/59995/Respond](http://www.votervoices.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/59995/Respond) and help us get this over the finish line!

### **M.E.B.A. TAKES PART IN "CELEBRATION OF WOMEN AFLOAT"**

M.E.B.A.'s Gulf Coast Vice President Erin Bertram was one of the special guests and panelists at a recent "Celebration of Women Afloat" staged at the National Maritime Center in Martinsburg, WV. The event took place in honor of Women's Equality Day in late August.

Among others, besides Erin, panelists included NMC Commanding Officer Capt. Kirsten Martin and the agency's Deputy Director Anne Seither, Cathleen Mauro from the Coast Guard's Merchant Mariner Credentialing office, the Maritime Administration's Laila Linares and Kirby Inland Marine Captain Joy Manthey.

Panelists talked about their careers and how the industry has changed over the years. They also answered numerous questions from the audience. Breakout sessions were held in the afternoon where panelists addressed issues such as pilotage, navigation, maritime unions, the Maritime Administration, National Security Multi-Mission Vessels and the challenges of being women leaders.

### **FUTURE EPF TO BE NAMED AFTER NAVY-LOVING CITY**

The 14<sup>th</sup> planned vessel in the Military Sealift Command Expeditionary Fast Transport fleet (known as EPFs) will be named USNS CODY, after a city in Wyoming. Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said, "The people of Cody are staunch supporters of a strong Navy and Marine Corps team and it is fitting to name a ship in honor of this great city. I am pleased that the spirit of Cody will live on in the future USNS CODY (T-EPF-14)."

The vessel will sail for the Military Sealift Command with M.E.B.A.-represented mariners onboard. Construction will begin in mid-2020 at the Austal USA facility in Mobile, AL.

The Spearhead-class EPFs have proven to be workhorse vessels deployed on high-profile missions around the world. The eleventh EPF in the program, USNS PUERTO RICO, is set to be delivered this fall. The 12<sup>th</sup> EPF, USNS NEWPORT, is still under construction at Austal. Work has not yet begun on EPF 13 which will be named USNS APALACHICOLA. EPF civilian mariner crews are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

The future USNS CODY is the first ship named in honor of the city of Cody, Wyoming. At least 28 other U.S. Navy ships have been named after the state of Wyoming's cities, places and people. The

vessel will be 338 feet long, have a waterline width (beam) of 93.5 feet, displace about 2,362 tons and be capable of 35-plus knots.

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, October 7 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;  
Tuesday, October 8 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;  
Wednesday, October 9 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;  
Thursday, October 10 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;  
Friday, October 11 – Honolulu@1100.

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*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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). Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries 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.*