

# 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 39 – September 25, 2025



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### **M.E.B.A. LNG OFFICERS TAKE PART IN ETC REUNION**

About 25 grizzled M.E.B.A. veterans of the sea were on hand this last Monday at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School to celebrate M.E.B.A.'s proud 23-year history of LNG carriage for Energy Transportation Corporation (ETC). Members crewed all 11 officer billets of the eight Aquarius-class LNG vessels from 1977 to 2000 before the beneficial owners of the vessels won MarAd approval to enlarge their profits by re-flagging the vessels to Marshall Islands registry.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac took part in the event and addressed attendees that included former M.E.B.A. President Larry O'Toole who sailed as a Chief Engineer in the ETC fleet for years. Most of the ship officers at the conference, a few of them still active, got their LNG training at the CMES.

Three special guests were on hand from Hanwha Shipping who discussed the future of LNG carriage and Hanwha's construction of two new LNG vessels. Jake Kim, Sidd Pathare and Heejung Jung gave fascinating and in-depth presentations to the group and fielded a flurry of questions peppered upon them by the engaged group of M.E.B.A. officers who relished the lively exchange and technical shop-talk of the fellow ship enthusiasts. The Hanwha officials spoke highly of the professionalism of M.E.B.A. officers and expressed eagerness to strengthen our growing partnership. Coast Guard Adm. James Watson (ret.) addressed attendees concerning the prospects for passage of the SHIPS Act, an M.E.B.A.-supported piece of legislation that aims to help revitalize U.S.-flag shipping.

M.E.B.A. conquerors of the sea reveled in re-engaging with their former shipmates for this fourth annual LNG ETC Reunion that was organized by former M.E.B.A. ship officer Ed Carr. M.E.B.A. retiree and past Keystone executive Art Sulzer served as a worthy master of ceremonies for the event that explored every aspect of the rise and fall of that epic era of U.S.-flag LNG carriage.

One of the touching segments presented to attendees by Ken Nelson and David Whiteley was a discussion of the many ship rescues effected by LNG officers on the high seas during that era. So many of the ETC officers demonstrated their seamanship and resolve in rendering assistance to refugees, especially in the 1970s after the fall of Saigon in 1975. One such story – that of the harrowing escape from Vietnam of Lauren Vuong and her family was related in a past issue of the *Marine Officer* (read it at <https://tinyurl.com/y5eobfv5>). They detailed Lauren's quest for the ship and the officers who saved her and her family (among over 60 refugees adrift and close to death on a small wooden

fishing boat). Her successful search led to the creation of an award-winning documentary entitled “Finding the Virgo” about not only survival, compassion, gratitude for seafarers and the impact a rescue can have across a life. You can find out more at <https://www.findingthevirgo.com/>

A few photos from the LNG conference have been posted on the M.E.B.A. Facebook site.

### **LONGTIME STEELWORKERS PRESIDENT LEO GERARD - 1947-2025**

Leo Gerard, who led the United Steelworkers (USW) as the union’s international president for more than 18 years, joined the great foundry beyond on Sunday, Sept. 21 at the age of 78. Gerard, who retired in July 2019 as the longest-tenured president in the USW’s history, served the union in numerous leadership roles throughout a career spanning more than 50 years, which began at the age of 18 at a nickel smelter in his hometown of Sudbury, Ontario.

“Leo Gerard spent his entire life fighting for workers across the world, and his impact on the USW, and the global labor movement, has been immeasurable,” said USW International President David McCall. “He inspired countless other workers to carry on the fight for justice and fairness. He will be missed, but we intend to honor his legacy by continuing that work.”

### **BILL EXPANDS OVERTIME TAX DEDUCTIONS TO INCLUDE TRANSPORT WORKERS**

A new, bipartisan bill supported by the M.E.B.A. would expand the administration’s No Tax on Overtime policy to include about three million workers, including mariners, who are currently ineligible for a tax deduction on overtime earnings. M.E.B.A. spearheaded lobbying efforts within the maritime sector to expand the deduction, and collaborated with unions including TWU, the Teamsters, ALPA, and others.

This bill would add to the recently-passed “One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA)” that allows most hourly employees to exclude a significant portion of overtime pay from their taxable income. The new bill would expand eligibility to eliminate federal taxes on overtime pay for a larger share of the workforce, including airline pilots, locomotive engineers, truck drivers, merchant mariners, fire fighters, EMTs, and police officers. Under the bill, they would be able to deduct up to \$25,000 of qualifying overtime pay from their annual income for tax purposes.

Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY-11) introduced the bipartisan legislation along with Reps. Emilia Sykes (D-OH-13), Nick LaLota (R-NY-1), Steven Horsford (D-NV-4), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1) and Tom Suozzi (D-NY-3).

“Railroaders, aviation professionals, seafarers, emergency responders, and other union members put in long hours to keep our country moving and deserve to receive the full tax benefit of their overtime,” said Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) President Greg Regan.

### **LAWSUIT TO HALT HAWAII TAX ON CRUISE SHIPS**

A group of cruise lines and tour companies has sued Hawaii in federal court to block a new law taxing cruise passengers at the same rate as hotel guests.

The law, set to take effect in January, applies the state's 11% transient accommodations tax to cruise passengers and allows counties to add another 3%. It also introduces a 0.75% "Green Fee" to fund environmental projects.

The Cruise Lines International Association argues the law violates the U.S. Constitution's Tonnage Clause, which prohibits states from charging ships for the right to enter a port. The lawsuit claims the tax would add hundreds of dollars to family vacations and push travelers toward other destinations.

Supporters of the measure say it corrects an imbalance by treating cruise ships like hotels, which already pay the tax. Hawaii reported more than 150,000 out-of-state cruise passengers last year, and officials argue those visitors contribute to infrastructure strain without equivalent tax revenue. The state attorney general's office said it is reviewing the lawsuit and declined further comment.

### **MORE ROOM IN UPCOMING 'LNG AS A FUEL' COURSES**

The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School still has room for additional students for upcoming Combined Basic & Advanced IGF Code Operations courses (known as "LNG as a Fuel"). These are Monday through Friday courses. Get your spot at one of the open courses before it fills up:

- October 6–10, 2025
- October 13–17, 2025

Applications can be sent via the CMES website, faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to [applications@mebaschool.org](mailto:applications@mebaschool.org)

### **STOP BY FOR THE 4MF 20-YEAR CELEBRATION AT CMES ON OCTOBER 7**

If you can, make plans to attend the membership meeting at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School on Tuesday, October 7. After the meeting, there will be a ceremony at the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial on School grounds to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Memorial.

As members know, the Memorial Park is shaped like a 600-foot merchant vessel complete with 5-ton anchors, a ship's bell, a bow section with plaques memorializing mariners and friends of the M.E.B.A., and a six-bladed, 22-foot diameter bronze propeller that represents the stern section. The foremast, installed near the bow section, further adds to the effect. Bill Van Loo, who was integral to the construction of the project and remains involved in the continued upkeep of the structure, will deliver inspiring remarks at the observance. A short reception will take place at the Manor House following the event (around 1630).

Members, applicants, retirees and everyone else are strongly encouraged to support the Foundation (the 4MF) which provides upkeep and improvements to the Memorial Park. The 4MF is a section 501(c)(3) entity under Internal Revenue Service rules, so all donations are tax deductible. Donations are always welcome. For more information visit the School's website at [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org) and click on the Memorial link on the home page. You can email [memorial@mebaschool.org](mailto:memorial@mebaschool.org) to get any related questions answered and you can send in a donation or make one at an M.E.B.A. Union hall anytime. You can view a nice 3-minute video about the M.E.B.A. Memorial Park at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDGCxvw9f0g>

## **CG EXTENDS RECENCY REGS , EASING MARINERS' RETURN-TO-SEA**

The U.S. Coast Guard has rolled out a new policy giving mariners more flexibility to maintain or upgrade their credentials, easing the path for those reentering the profession after time away. In its latest policy letter, the Office of Merchant Mariner Credentialing extended the time frame for recent sea service requirements. Mariners applying for national officer endorsements will now qualify if they can show at least three months of service on vessels of suitable tonnage or horsepower within the past seven years, up from three years. This will allow mariners who had taken a short sabbatical from the maritime industry to re-enter the industry and use previously obtained sea service to raise the grade of their credentials without having to re-acquire recent sea service. The policy letter is available on the Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentialing policy [website](#).

## **BILL TO SANCTION RUSSIAN SHADOW FLEET**

U.S. Senators Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, alongside a bi-partisan group of Senators, have introduced a bill to vastly expand U.S. sanctions authorities to target a collection of older, reflagged oil tankers that Russia uses to circumvent existing U.S. sanctions on Russian oil and energy revenues. This collection of oil tankers is known as the Russian shadow fleet.

The Sanctioning Harbors and Dodgers of Western Sanctions or SHADOW Fleets Act would help discourage countries from purchasing Russian oil, which fuels the Russian economy and Putin's war against Ukraine. This bill would help provide authorities with a list of indicators to identify vessels supporting the Russian Shadow fleet, making it easier to find and sanction these vessels sooner. It would establish strict sanctions liability for any ship that engages in a ship-to-ship transfer with a sanctioned shadow fleet vessel and it would further align U.S. and European sanctions.

## **TODAY IS WORLD MARITIME DAY**

The global maritime industry is celebrating World Maritime Day today. Traditionally observed on the last Thursday of September, World Maritime Day was created in 1978 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to highlight the indispensable role of shipping in global trade while promoting maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship. This year's theme is "Our Ocean, Our Obligation, Our Opportunity". The theme underscores the ocean's central importance to the global economy — carrying over 80% of the world's trade.

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

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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