

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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TAX FAIRNESS BILL WOULD PUT MORE MONEY IN MARINERS' POCKETS — AND STRENGTHEN THE U.S. FLEET

Bipartisan legislation driven by the M.E.B.A. and the American Maritime Congress would give U.S. mariners a tax break long enjoyed by Americans working overseas and foreign-flag seafarers. The American Mariner Tax Fairness Act (H.R. 10153), was introduced this week by Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA.), Tom Suozzi (D-N.Y.), Nicole Malliotakis (R-N.Y.) and Brendan Boyle (D-PA.). The bill would extend the federal foreign earned income exclusion to qualifying U.S. merchant mariners working aboard U.S.-flag vessels in international trade. For mariners who spend months away from home operating ships that carry America's foreign commerce, the legislation could mean significant tax savings while making a career at sea more financially attractive. The bill would apply to qualifying U.S. citizen mariners who spend at least 90 days during a 12-month period working aboard qualifying U.S.-flag vessels engaged in foreign trade. The exclusion would apply to income earned during qualifying periods of service.

For M.E.B.A. members and other American mariners, the legislation addresses a longstanding inequity: U.S. mariners working in international commerce generally pay full U.S. income tax on their wages, while foreign mariners frequently receive favorable tax treatment from their home countries. At the same time, Americans working in many other professions overseas can already take advantage of the foreign earned income exclusion.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac called the disparity a national security vulnerability and said the bill would finally bring mariners into line with other Americans working abroad. "Recruiting and retaining mariners is one of the most pressing national security vulnerabilities facing the maritime industry today, and this bill addresses it head-on," Vokac said. "The American Mariner Tax Fairness Act simply extends the same treatment already given to other Americans working abroad to mariners sailing in international waters, bringing us in line with how every other major maritime nation treats its seafarers." President Vokac credited Reps. Fitzpatrick and Suozzi for their bipartisan leadership and said the legislation advances a key objective of a strong U.S. maritime policy.

The American Maritime Congress, which has worked in tandem with the M.E.B.A. in advancing the legislation, also praised the bill. AMC Executive Director Elizabeth O'Connor said, "This legislation corrects a longstanding inequity in how the tax code treats the men and women who crew America's oceangoing merchant fleet. U.S. merchant mariners spend months at a time away from their homes and families, sailing the vessels that move our commerce and that our military rely on to project and

sustain forces overseas. Making U.S.-flag careers more financially competitive is not just a benefit to AMC's members - it is a national security necessity. Our sealift capability depends on having enough credentialed American mariners ready to crew these ships when the nation calls on them, and this bill is a meaningful step toward keeping that workforce strong."

The legislation is also gaining broad support throughout organized labor and the maritime industry. The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) strongly endorsed H.R. 10153, noting that American mariners currently "pay the full weight of U.S. income tax on wages earned in international commerce," while many foreign counterparts sail largely tax-free. TTD President Greg Regan said the bill would close that gap and put U.S. mariners on a more equal footing with both foreign seafarers and other Americans working abroad. TTD also pointed to an important development: the legislation directly addresses a recommendation contained in the Administration's recently released Maritime Action Plan, which calls for allowing income earned by U.S. merchant mariners aboard U.S.-flag vessels on international routes to be excluded from gross income.

USA Maritime likewise endorsed the bill, emphasizing the importance of putting American mariners on a level playing field with their foreign competition. "This bill will help provide greater parity by providing American mariners with similar tax treatment as mariners on foreign flag vessels have been enjoying for decades, if not longer," USA Maritime Chair Brian Schoeneman said.

With the United States facing a shortage of qualified mariners and working to rebuild its commercial fleet, making U.S.-flag maritime careers more attractive is critical. A fairer tax system can help keep experienced mariners in the industry while encouraging a new generation of Americans to choose a career at sea. For M.E.B.A. and other U.S.-flag shipping interests, the bottom line is clear: If America wants American ships, American cargo and a stronger maritime industry, it must make sure American mariners have compelling reasons to stay in the profession and new mariners have greater incentives to join it. The American Mariner Tax Fairness Act would help make that possible by giving U.S. mariners a more competitive tax treatment and strengthening the economic case for choosing a career at sea.

Though the Congressional session is winding to a close as the elections approach, U.S. shipping interests are looking for H.R. 10153's potential inclusion in an end of the year spending bill or tax legislation, following the November elections.

M.E.B.A. SI FERRY CREW MAKES PRE-DAWN RESCUE OF BROOKLYN BRIDGE JUMPER

A Staten Island Ferry crew rescued a 24-year-old man from the waters near Whitehall, NY early Wednesday morning after spotting him in the darkness while approaching the terminal. The crew of the ALICE AUSTEN was traveling northbound at approximately 4:20 a.m. when members saw the man in the water. The ferry slowed immediately, life rings were thrown into the water, and the crew deployed its rescue boat. Crewmembers were able to bring the man aboard before continuing to the Whitehall Ferry Terminal, where he was turned over to emergency medical personnel. The New York City Department of Transportation said the crew responded according to established emergency procedures and credited its alertness and rapid response, particularly given the overnight conditions. The man was transported by EMS to Bellevue Hospital in stable condition.

It was later determined that the man apparently jumped from the Brooklyn Bridge and had been carried by the current toward the Whitehall area. The ALICE AUSTEN, an older-class Staten Island Ferry, is equipped with a rowboat for rescue operations rather than the motorized rescue boats used aboard newer vessels. The successful recovery therefore required the crew to quickly identify the person in the water, slow the ferry and launch the rescue boat in darkness.

M.E.B.A. NY/NJ Patrolman Kenny Smith credited Capt. Thomas Harvey, the mate, lookouts and deckhands aboard the ALICE AUSTEN for their quick response. He said the successful rescue underscored the value of the emergency drills ferry crews routinely conduct, particularly in preparing them to respond quickly under difficult conditions. Patrolman Smith said spotting the man in the darkness and rapidly launching the rescue operation were especially challenging. The rescue involved M.E.B.A. members along with deckhands represented by Atlantic Maritime Group.

AFL-CIO: LABOR UNIONS MUST HARNESS THEIR POWER

Heading into Labor Day, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler used her fourth annual “State of the Unions” address to highlight the economic pressures facing working people and call on the labor movement to harness its growing strength heading into the 2026 midterm elections. Shuler pointed to high costs for groceries, housing, child care and gas, noting that 94% of workers surveyed said things are too expensive and four out of five said their paychecks are not keeping pace with the cost of living. She also pointed to a resurgence in organized labor, noting that nearly half a million workers joined unions last year - the highest level of union membership in 16 years. She said the AFL-CIO’s goal is to organize 2 million more workers over the next five years while continuing to fight for better wages, housing, health care, retirement security and good union jobs. With the midterm elections approaching, Shuler urged union members to mobilize their families, coworkers and neighbors behind candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to working people.

Also this week, President Shuler was named to the 2026 TIME100 AI, recognizing her leadership in ensuring workers have a voice in how AI is developed and used in the workplace. Shuler, who founded the AFL-CIO Technology Institute in 2021, has helped lead the labor movement’s response to AI, including efforts to secure worker protections in union contracts and advance pro-worker policies. Under her leadership, the AFL-CIO and its affiliates launched the Workers First Initiative on AI to promote technology that benefits workers as well as employers. “There is no worker and no industry this does not touch,” Shuler said. “We will build a future that works for all of us.”

DREDGE CEO: JONES ACT WAIVER SHORTCHANGES AMERICAN MARINERS

A recent opinion piece in *The National Interest* arguing that increased petroleum movements demonstrate the Jones Act constrains U.S. energy flows drew a sharp rebuttal from Dredging Contractors of America CEO William Doyle, who argues that the temporary waiver is doing little for American consumers while giving foreign vessels access to U.S. domestic trade. In an August 20 opinion piece, Max Pyziur and Matthew Sawoski pointed to increased petroleum movements under the waiver as evidence of previously suppressed demand. Doyle disputes that conclusion, arguing that the surge is instead being driven by changes in U.S. refining capacity, global supply disruptions and the economics of international petroleum markets. More importantly, Doyle argues that the waiver has effectively opened American coastwise trade to foreign-built, foreign-owned, foreign-operated and foreign-crewed vessels, while excluding U.S.-flag carriers from business that would otherwise support American ships and mariners. “That is not America First,” Doyle wrote. “It is a foreign giveaway of American business, cargo, and maritime jobs.” Doyle also questioned the national-defense

justification used to grant the waiver. He pointed to examples of foreign vessels moving petroleum between U.S. ports and asked, “How does moving asphalt from Louisiana to Connecticut aboard a Chinese-built, Chinese-flagged, Chinese-owned, and Chinese-operated vessel advance United States national defense?”

He argued that emergency Jones Act waivers should be reserved for situations in which national defense genuinely requires additional shipping capacity and qualified American vessels are unavailable - not as a means of replacing available U.S. vessels and mariners with foreign shipping. Doyle further challenged claims that the waiver is benefiting American consumers. Despite the increased foreign vessel movements, gasoline and diesel prices remain substantially higher than before the energy crisis. “The foreign vessel movements may be easy to count,” he wrote. “The promised savings for American motorists, truckers and businesses have not appeared at the pump.”

With the Trump Administration simultaneously calling for more U.S. mariners, American ships and expanded domestic shipbuilding, Doyle said that continuing the waiver sends the opposite signal by shifting American cargo to the foreign-flag fleet. He pointed out that strengthening the American maritime industry requires putting American ships and mariners to work - not creating new opportunities for foreign fleets at their expense.

LABOR DAY MOVIE NIGHT

As Labor Day approaches, it's time to wheel out our still in-progress list of movies that put working people, the workplace and the labor movement front and center. From hard-fought strikes and bitter battles with bosses to stories of solidarity, sacrifice and workers discovering the power they have when they stand together, these films remind us why unions matter. Space limitations allow us to include only the movie titles in this newsletter, but the full list is available on the M.E.B.A. website's main page, along with a one-sentence synopsis of each of these labor-themed films. These movies may span generations and genres, but they offer a reminder of the struggles, sacrifices and victories that shaped the American labor movement. Following is the list of labor-themed feature films and documentaries, arranged chronologically by year of release.

Feature Films

“Strike” (1925); “The Grapes of Wrath” (1940); “The Devil and Miss Jones” (1941); “How Green Was My Valley” (1941); “On the Waterfront” (1954); “Salt of the Earth” (1954); “The Pajama Game” (1957); “The Garment Jungle” (1957); “I’m All Right, Jack” (1959); “The Organiser” (1963); “The Molly Maguires” (1970); “The Working Class Goes to Heaven” (1971); “Boxcar Bertha” (1972); “Bound for Glory” (1976); “Blue Collar” (1978); “F.I.S.T.” (1978); “Norma Rae” (1979); “The China Syndrome” (1979); “The Triangle Factory Fire Scandal” (1979); “The Revolt of Mother” (1979); “9 to 5” (1980); “Outland” (1981); “Silkwood” (1983); “The Killing Floor” (1984); “Gung Ho” (1986); “Comrades” (1986); “Matewan” (1987); “10,000 Black Men Named George” (1992); “Hoffa” (1992); “Newsies” (1992); “Germinal” (1993); “The Burning Season: The Chico Mendes Story” (1994); “Brassed Off” (1996); “Justice on Wheels: The Diana Kilmury Story (Mother Trucker)” (1996); “A Bug’s Life” (1998); “Cradle Will Rock” (1999); “Billy Elliot” (2000); “Erin Brockovich” (2000); “Harlan County War” (2000); “North Country” (2005); “Made in Dagenham” (2010); “Pride” (2014); “Sorry to Bother You” (2018); “At War” (2018); “Support the Girls” (2018); “Sorry We Missed You” (2019);

Documentaries

“Native Land” (1942); “Union Maids” (1976); “Harlan County U.S.A.” (1976); “The Wobblies” (1979); “With Babies and Banners” (1979); “The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter” (1980); “The Willmar 8” (1981); “Miles of Smiles: Years of Struggle” (1982); “Roger & Me” (1989); “American Dream” (1990); “At the River I Stand” (1993); “A. Philip Randolph: For Jobs and Freedom” (1996); “Reprise” (1996); “The Fight in the Fields” (1997); “Live Nude Girls Unite!” (2000); “Bread and Roses” (2000); “American Standoff” (2002); “Still the Enemy Within” (2014); “American Factory” (2019); “Fight Like Hell” (2023);

HALLS, OFFICES CLOSED MONDAY FOR LABOR DAY

M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed on Labor Day - Monday, Sept. 7th, but will reopen on Tuesday. Union halls which usually have their regular membership meetings on the Monday of meeting week (Boston & Seattle) will instead conduct their meetings on Tuesday, September 8th at the regular time. Labor Day is observed on the first Monday in September to pay tribute to the contributions and achievements of everyday working families. The first Labor Day holiday was celebrated in New York City on Tuesday, September 5, 1882. Following the deaths of 13 workers during the Pullman Strike in June of 1894, President Grover Cleveland made reconciliation with the labor movement a top political priority, and Labor Day become a federal holiday in 1894.

OSG RATIFICATION VOTE AT UPCOMING MEETINGS

There will be a ratification vote next week on a recently reached tentative agreement with Overseas Shipholding Group covering 13 OSG vessels including three ships in the Tanker Security Program. Contract talks were headed up by Gulf Coast V.P. Adam Smith and Tampa Branch Agent Nicole Greenway supplemented by rank-and file input and assistance.

The Salient Points of the new tentative agreement have been distributed to the ships and will be available at the meeting along with the T.A. Members are strongly urged to attend one of the thirteen membership meetings taking place this coming week (September 8-11 – see below) at the M.E.B.A. Union halls. Those who cannot attend in person have the option of signing up for the Online HQ Informational-only meeting on Wednesday (9/9) at 1300 [Eastern] conducted on the Teams platform.

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

Monday, September 7 – **Labor Day – Halls Closed**

Tuesday, September 8 – **Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Portland, Maine@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Wednesday, September 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, September 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, September 11 – **Honolulu@1100**

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