



Message from the President

M.E.B.A. Representation & Benefit Plans

When becoming a Union member you have a right to expect your dues are spent appropriately and focused on priorities. In the case of the M.E.B.A. and as stated in our National Constitution:

“ARTICLE TWO, Objects and Jurisdiction, Section 1. The objects and purposes of this Association shall be to elevate and maintain the rights and advance and safeguard the economic and working conditions of its members and otherwise labor for their better protection and advancement. To these ends, the Association encourages and authorizes the support, both by its affiliates and members, financially and otherwise, of social, civic, and charitable, educational and political activities and participants.”

In 1986 I made application to the M.E.B.A. and have been paying dues now for 30 years. When I graduated from college my immediate goal was to join the M.E.B.A. for a number of reasons:

- 1.) M.E.B.A. opens doors to work opportunities with numerous employers.
- 2.) M.E.B.A. provides contractual, legal and political representation.
- 3.) M.E.B.A. provides Benefit Plans for Pension, Medical, Vacation and Training.

The M.E.B.A. has a diverse membership, located around the country and the world. While our members have a high level of knowledge, training, skills and experience, it is apparent there are some in our Union who are misinformed about our Union’s organization, our M.E.B.A. Plans, the benefits they provide and lastly, the distinction between the two.

I think it’s important to remind all M.E.B.A. members and applicants of what the Union provides, with regards to representation and benefits, in return for the dues we all pay into our treasury.

M.E.B.A Headquarters in Washington DC - Our HQ plays a significant role working on behalf of the membership to ensure that our job base and industry survive. Many of us certainly don’t need to be reminded of the fact our industry has experienced a steady decline over the years. Those working in the industry for a number of years have had front row seats. While our Union has not always been 100% successful when battling against the decline of our industry, our job base would most certainly be in a worse state without our existence.

The M.E.B.A.’s presence in Washington, DC is not by happenstance, but as with other unions has been part of a strategy to ensure our Union’s voice would be heard with the strongest impact on Capitol Hill. Past President Jesse Calhoun had the foresight to advocate for the purchase of the “Hall of the States” building at 444 North Capitol St. in late 1976 by the M.E.B.A. Pension Plan – and that is where our M.E.B.A. Headquarters has been ever since.

The Union rents our HQ office space from our Pension Plan Trust and is the workplace for elected officials and staff that includes the President, Secretary-Treasurer, Legal, Contracts and Political representatives, Membership, Communications, I.T. and Accounting Departments and other necessary M.E.B.A. staff. In addition, the M.E.B.A. HQ subtlets to the American Maritime Congress (AMC), a non-profit educational and research group representing the Union as well as M.E.B.A.-contracted U.S.-flag vessel operating companies in the international and domestic trades.

Political Action Fund - On the political front, while AMC is an educational office, they cannot lobby for our Union. That is where our legislative efforts and Political Action Fund (PAF) becomes important. Our Government Affairs Director Matt Dwyer is a registered lobbyist, and along with the other maritime union lobbyists, works to keep our issues front and center with decision makers in Washington, DC. When you are asked to contribute to the M.E.B.A. PAF from your wages, you should know those contributions, along with the collective lobbying efforts of all the maritime unions, act to benefit our industry and our job base. PAF dollars are only used to help elect Members of Congress who support the US Merchant Marine.

Our hard work has paid off with regard to the recent Maritime Security Program (MSP) stipend increases, but these achievements did not materialize without months of effective groundwork and education from many. To a large degree, the MSP increases are the result of the collective political and legislative efforts of the maritime unions, which includes the efforts of the M.E.B.A. in Washington, DC.

Union Branch Offices and Hiring Halls - In addition to HQ, the M.E.B.A. provides Union hiring halls strategically located in close proximity to ports around the country and manned by elected Union officials and/or representatives.

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President's Message continued

Your Union dues pay for HQ operation, along with Union hall operation and personnel to an extent. The Joint Employment Committee (JEC), which receives contributions from our negotiated contracts, also pays for a portion of the hiring hall expenses to cover operation and maintenance.

The M.E.B.A. owns our hiring halls in Jersey City, NJ, Tampa, FL, New Orleans, LA, Houston, TX, Oakland, CA and Seattle, WA. In addition, we share space and rent with the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (IOMM&P) at Union halls in Boston, MA, Norfolk, VA, Jacksonville, FL, Tampa, FL, Los Angeles, CA, Oakland, CA and Cleveland, OH. We also have hiring halls in Baltimore, MD, Charleston, SC and Honolulu, HI.

Representation - Union representation comes in many forms, i.e. contractual, legal, political, etc. It should be said that there is a lot of work accomplished behind the scenes to represent our members. Members may think solely of contracts and negotiations, but contract grievances are considerably important when it comes to contract disputes that may affect all members in a particular bargaining unit or under a long standing CBA. Legal representation is extremely important and necessary when dealing with contract language interpretation, jurisdiction and the myriad of other issues.

After Headquarters and Union hall operational costs, Union officials, representatives and staff personnel costs, our next largest cost is for legal expenses. It goes without saying without standing up for what past and present M.E.B.A. members have earned and worked for over the years there is much we stand to lose. If necessary, the M.E.B.A. will utilize arbitration to enforce our contractual rights, but this does not come without legal expense.

The M.E.B.A. has a finite amount of resources and has to allocate those resources on a priority basis. Therefore the Union must make choices with respect to the utilization of our officials, representatives and staff we employ when representing our membership. If there are any services provided to our membership that are underestimated or underappreciated, it is the work done to represent the Union and our members contractually, legally and politically.

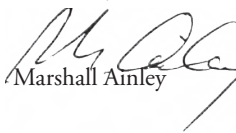
M.E.B.A. Plans – Pension, Medical, Vacation, Training

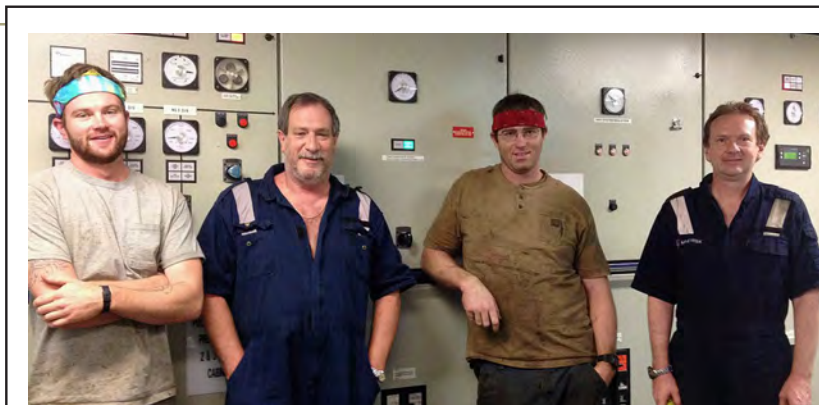
- Our M.E.B.A. Plans is a distinct and separate entity from our Union's operation. The funding for our M.E.B.A. Plans comes directly from contributions through our Collective Bargaining Agreements and are a component of total labor cost (TLC). Increases in contributions to our Plans, whether Pension, Money Purchase Benefit, Medical, Vacation, Training or the JEC and AMC accounts, must be negotiated. The Plan Trusts and other accounts are administered by the Plans Administrator and staff at M.E.B.A. Plans offices in Baltimore, MD. Plans staff are assigned and responsible for various functions under each separate Plan Trust. There are also Training Plan personnel at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School as well as Vacation Plan offices and personnel in a number of our outposts.

The M.E.B.A. Plans also employs legal counsel, USCG legal aid, actuaries, accountants and financial consultants to ensure compliance with our collective bargaining agreements and the law. The Plans are overseen by a Board of Trustees which is comprised of 6 Union officials and 6 employers. The M.E.B.A. Plans can also be contacted in writing, via telephone or e-mail.

I believe there needs to be more understanding of the stated purpose of our Union's organization and our M.E.B.A. Plans. More importantly I don't believe all are aware of the services and benefits provided to our members. I recommend and encourage all to be proactive and take the time to learn more about our Union's organization, our contracts, our M.E.B.A. Plans and what they provide so we will remain strong as an association. The word "association" by definition is "*an organization of people with a common purpose and having a formal structure.*" In order to make our Union work most effectively and efficiently for all, our membership needs to be continually educated about our association and our common purpose.

Fraternally,


Marshall Ainley



Members aboard the MAERSK ATLANTA keep the engine room on the MSP containership purring. Left to right are 3rd A/E Kenneth Nilsen, C/E Mike Ryan, 1st A/E Louis Lincoln and 2nd A/E Mark Gimle.