

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 33 – August 15, 2024



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GAO REPORT DETAILS CHALLENGES TO AUTONOMOUS SHIPPING

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a new report citing the potential of autonomous shipping to revolutionize maritime operations but highlights the challenges of the technology regarding its safety and effectiveness for commercial use, including regulatory concerns and risks for cyber-attacks.

"Coast Guard: Autonomous Ships and Efforts to Regulate Them" explores the growth of autonomous ships both in the U.S. and globally. Currently, however, the commercial application of these technologies remains limited, typically requiring human control or the ability for a human to take control if necessary. U.S. and international industry experts interviewed by the GAO spotlighted potential benefits such as enhanced safety, increased efficiency, and greater workforce diversity.

But the report raises concerns about safety risks that uncrewed or fully autonomous technologies might introduce into the maritime sector. These innovations could also complicate the U.S. legal framework, which traditionally assumes that every ship has a crew onboard in direct control. On the international stage, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is working on a regulatory framework for autonomous commercial ships, focusing on issues like safety, training, and legal liabilities. This framework is expected to be adopted voluntarily by member countries in 2025, with mandatory adoption anticipated by 2032.

Within the U.S., the Coast Guard currently regulates the design, construction, and operation of autonomous ships under existing laws. However, the report acknowledges that several factors could hinder the Coast Guard's ability to foster the development and adoption of autonomous ship technologies including limited authority to reduce crew sizes, a lack of domestic examples of autonomous technologies in action, and difficulties in aligning international and domestic regulations. The report says the Coast Guard currently sees no need for new regulations though they have indicated that they plan to keep an eye on this emerging industry, with the intention of developing policy guidance and regulatory standards once the technology becomes more widespread.

The full report is available at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-107059.pdf

ILA RAMPING UP FOR POSSIBLE STRIKE

The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) is gearing up for a meeting in September to review its final contract demands and, if needed, prepare its members for a possible strike at ports along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. The union announced that it will hold a two-day “marathon” session on September 4-5 in New Jersey, where it plans to present its contract proposals to its wage scale committee. According to ILA President Harold Daggett, this meeting will also serve as a platform for the union to devise a strategy for a potential strike if no agreement is reached before the current contract expires on September 30.

“We are preparing our ILA membership for both possibilities,” said the ILA leader. “We will stand strong to win a new contract that adequately compensates our hard-working and dedicated ILA longshore workforce, and simultaneously are preparing to strike at all ports from Maine to Texas come October 1st, 2024, if a new agreement is not reached.”

DEC DECISION HELPS CADET INTERNS GET START ON SHIPPING CAREERS

M.E.B.A.’s annual Licensed Cadet Internship Program hosted by the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School has proven to be remarkably effective in engaging some of the brightest and most talented young mariners. The Union offers an initiation fee discount for those cadets who complete the program in order to entice them into the ranks.

Now, M.E.B.A.’s District Executive Committee has passed a new policy to allow cadets, who have already made application to the Union prior to attending the Cadet Internship program, to count the weekdays spent in the three-week summer program as Group Time. This will further allow these next generation mariners to get a foothold in the Union and more effectively launch their shipping careers.

Those applicable cadets should contact M.E.B.A.’s Membership Department to ensure that their time in the program is applied as Group Time. Summer program cadets who are applying for membership should make sure they submit the letter they received for attending the three-week program to M.E.B.A. Headquarters to receive the initiation fee discount.

LAST WEEK TO CLARIFY ADDRESS BEFORE IMPORTANT MAILING

Members have one more week to update their mailing address (if applicable) before the list is finalized in advance of the September 3 mailing of election ballots. The Union strongly urges all members to make sure Headquarters, not just Plans, has your correct address so that you receive your ballot. There will be a process available to members who do not receive a ballot because of bad address information, but the easiest way to smooth the process is to ascertain that your address information is current ahead of the ballot mailing.

The simplest way to do that is to log into the M.E.B.A.’s online Member Payment and Update Portal (PUP) accessed from the homepage (www.mebaunion.org). Once you log in, you can easily pay your dues, and verify your contact information on file, among other functions. The information displayed in the Member PUP mirrors the Headquarters database. Those who have not used the Member PUP can easily create a new account and select their own password. You can contact Headquarters if you have any difficulty. If you have not received past *Marine Officers*, P.A.F. mailings or other M.E.B.A.

mailings (not M.E.B.A. Plans) at your current mailing address, your information may not be on file with Headquarters and you should update us immediately.

Besides the Member PUP, you can also update your contact information using the address change form available on the M.E.B.A. website found at www.mebaunion.org under the “Members” tab or in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Alternatively, you can send your updated information to Renee Bowman at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org. The Headquarters and Plans Office databases are not shared, so your address information housed by Plans is not necessarily part of the Headquarters database.

UPDATED PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING MMC APPLICATIONS

The National Maritime Center (NMC) has established a centralized e-mail inbox for the submission of certain merchant mariner credential (MMC) applications to streamline the MMC application submission process and better manage the receipt and initial processing of incoming MMC applications. Regional exam centers (RECs) will continue to receive and process MMC applications for Local Limited, Restricted, and First-Class Pilot MMCs. They want you to continue to e-mail, mail, or hand-deliver these applications to the local REC responsible for the routes requested. E-mail is the preferred method for submission of these applications. The e-mail and physical address for each of the RECs is available on the NMC’s Regional Exam Centers webpage.

The NMC is centralizing the submission of all other MMC applications. Again, the preferred method of application submission is e-mail. If you are applying for anything other than a Local Limited, Restricted, or First-Class Pilot credential, please e-mail your application to MMCApplications@uscg.mil. Questions should be directed to the NMC Customer Service Center by using the NMC online chat system, by e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

USMMA PROGRESS EXPLORED IN NEW REPORT

Since 2022, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy has made advances in improving campus facilities and infrastructure, but a recent U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report indicates that the progress is tenuous. The report cites the absence of consistent leadership and a lack of strategic workforce planning as key vulnerabilities that could undermine ongoing efforts. The GAO pointed out two critical concerns: the lack of continuous leadership at the Academy for managing facilities and infrastructure improvements, and the absence of strategic workforce planning to identify the necessary skills and capabilities within the Academy’s Office of Facilities and Infrastructure. GAO says that addressing these issues could provide the Academy with the leadership, resources, and expertise needed to tackle ongoing challenges with campus conditions effectively.

The report catalogs the positive progress at the Academy shepherded in by the Department of Transportation/Maritime Administration. However, the GAO found that the Academy does not have formalized procedures for estimating the costs of capital improvement projects. This shortfall is particularly noticeable in the Academy’s financial projections for two upcoming initiatives — stormwater management and seawall repairs — which fall short of industry best practices. They say implementing strong cost-estimation policies would enable the Academy to more accurately assess the financial needs of its upcoming master plan and prioritize its execution more effectively.

AFL-CIO REPORT DETAILS DIVIDE BETWEEN COMPANY CEOs & WORKERS

CEOs of S&P 500 companies made \$17.7 million on average in 2023, more than 268 times their median worker's income, according to a [new report](#) released by the AFL-CIO. The new Executive Paywatch research, released annually by the AFL-CIO, presents a snapshot of the persistent inequality in the American economy, where the wealthiest corporate executives continue to prioritize their own salaries over the workers whose labor makes the companies' profits possible. AFL-CIO researchers reviewed compensation data for executives at 3,000 companies, including the 500 companies in the S&P 500 Index. They found that it would take more than five career lifetimes for workers to earn what S&P 500 Index company CEOs receive in just one year — even as these corporations continue to raise prices on working people.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Fred Redmond said, “Years of poor policy decisions have favored large corporations at the expense of working people and allowed corporate executives to game the system for their own gain. We need elected leaders who will put people over profits and hold CEOs accountable.”

SENATE BILL WOULD HELP COUNTER CHINA'S OCEAN DOMINANCE

Senators Mark Kelly (D-AZ), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Rick Scott (R-FL) are heading up the Strategic Port Reporting Act, bipartisan, bicameral legislation that would require the U.S. Department of Defense to draft an interagency strategy report to proactively counter the growing threat of the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the oceans.

The PRC has been actively expanding and establishing their global maritime network. Currently, multiple Chinese companies possess ownership shares to key ports in the U.S. and around the world. This investment is a significant risk to our national security interests and to America's access to trade, global supply chains, and overall maneuverability in the maritime domain.

Sen. Scott noted, “Protecting the ports, seaports and infrastructure of the U.S., our allies and trading partners around the globe is critical to our economic independence, U.S. national security and the security of our allies. As our nation faces threats from adversaries around the world and Communist China continues its quest for global dominance, we must eliminate any ownership, influence, or access the Communist Chinese regime may have over our allies' infrastructure and data that can be used against us.”

UNION-MADE SANDWICH MONTH

August is National Sandwich Month! (It's also “Admit You're Happy Month” and “National Goat Cheese Month,” but never mind that). So, make sure you grab yourself a delicious union-made sub, BLT, grilled cheese, or whatever. Here's some help:

Bread – Arnold; Country Hearth; Earthgrains; Franz Bread; Harvest Grain; Manischewitz; Nature's Harvest; Old Country; Sara Lee; Stroehmann; Sweet Harvest; Wonder Bread. **Meats** – Best Choice Ham; Butterball; Empire Kosher; Foster Farms; Hebrew National; Hillshire Farms; Hormel; Manwich; Oscar Meyer; Tyson. **Cheese** – Alta Dena; Hilland; Kraft; Land O'Lakes; Velveeta. **Condiments** – French's; Heinz; Hellman's; Vlasic.

SHIPBUILDERS HONOR SEN. KAINÉ

The Shipbuilders Council of America (SCA), the national association representing the U.S. shipbuilding, maintenance, and repair industry, recently presented U.S. Senator Tim Kaine (D-Virginia) with the SCA Maritime Leadership Award. The award is given annually to national leaders who demonstrate outstanding dedication and support for the U.S. shipbuilding and repair industry.

“Senator Kaine’s commitment to advancing the maritime industry and advocating for the needs of our nation’s shipyards has been instrumental in maintaining and strengthening our industrial base,” said SCA President Matthew Paxton.

LATEST MSC EPF CHRSTENED

Austal USA has christened the latest expeditionary fast transport vessel (known as EPFs) bound for the Military Sealift Command fleet at a ceremony this last week at its shipyard in Mobile, Alabama. The USNS POINT LOMA is named after the San Diego seaside community that has a long-standing naval presence. M.E.B.A. represents the engine officers aboard each of the MSC EPF vessels. This will be the 15th EPF following the delivery of the USNS CODY in January. EPFs are designed to operate in shallow waterways and are capable of a wide range of activities. These versatile, non-combatant transport ships are used for the high-speed transportation of troops, military vehicles, and equipment.

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

Monday, September 2 – Labor Day – ALL HALLS CLOSED

Tuesday, September 3 – Boston@1200; CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Wednesday, September 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org

Thursday, September 5 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, September 6 – Honolulu@1100

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***

The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated 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. For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org. Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram. The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School can be contacted at (410) 822-9600 or www.mebaschool.org. M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or www.mebaplans.org