

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES
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M.E.B.A. HONORED AT AOTOS AWARDS

The Union was front and center on Friday at a New York City event as M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac accepted the maritime industry's highest honor on behalf of our membership. Selected this year for the Admiral of the Ocean Sea (AOTOS) maritime achievement honors were President Vokac, George Pasha IV (President of M.E.B.A.-contracted Pasha) and Mark W. Barker (President of M.E.B.A.-contracted Interlake Steamship Company). In addition, event host United Seamen's Service annually honors U.S. mariners involved in rescues at sea and singled out two M.E.B.A.-crewed vessels for AOTOS Honored Seafarer Awards.

In his remarks upon accepting the silver statuette of Christopher Columbus - the original "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" - President Vokac recognized the sacrifices made by merchant mariners and the crucial role they play in our nation's economy and national security in peace, war and pandemic. "I cannot let this opportunity pass without rallying support for ships' crews and our brothers and sisters in the longshore unions," he noted. "The last pandemic is slipping from view, but mariners and longshoremen were out on the front line during its height and kept working under worsening conditions while much of America took cover."

He enumerated many of the hurdles the industry still faces and the need to promote and build a more robust American Merchant Marine that will be better equipped to tackle tomorrow's challenges. "We have the opportunity to build a better maritime industry," he said. "The M.E.B.A. and its members stand willing to meet the challenge. As often as possible, let's remember that our collective power brings a responsibility to think big thoughts, take on big issues, and work together creatively to chart the big voyages necessary to make those thoughts a reality."

About 600 people were in attendance including a large loud and proud pro-M.E.B.A. contingent. The crew of the Staten Island Ferry SANDY GROUND was recognized for their parts in saving their vessel and all passengers after a potentially devastating engine room fire. The vessel's M.E.B.A. Captain, Joseph Ajar, attended the AOTOS ceremony and accepted the award on behalf of the crew. During the incident late last year, officers sealed off the engine room and deployed the Novac system to snuff out the flames. The crew acted quickly, strictly adhered to protocol, and extinguished the fire keeping 868 passengers safe. Crewmembers on the SIU-crewed NYC Ferry

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT were also honored at the AOTOS ceremony for responding at the scene and safely offloading passengers.

The crew of the Military Sealift Command replenishment oiler USNS JOHN LEWIS was also honored with an AOTOS Mariner's Plaque. The civilian crew, which includes M.E.B.A.-represented engine officers, assisted in the rescue of the hapless occupant of a crippled sailboat five days adrift off the coast of California late last year.

During his AOTOS acceptance speech, Mark W. Barker emphasized the significance of the Great Lakes supply chain. "The Great Lakes is sometimes overlooked, but it is an essential part of our merchant fleet. How important is Great Lake shipping? The US Department of Homeland Security has said that if our Laker vessel supply chain was interrupted for six months, the entire North American economy would plunge into a recession. The Great Lake steel-making supply chain ranks as one of the nation's most critical supply chains in the world."

He added, "The seafarer's role is crucial in delivering essential raw materials to our manufacturing heartland and the Great Lakes. With a team of over 200 dedicated mariners, we ensure that our customers receive these vital materials to keep our country running. And, as such, we are grateful to the United Seamen's Service for recognizing our efforts and for the invaluable global support provided to the mariner community."

George Pasha, IV, addressed the need to increase the maritime workforce. "We need additional investment in training and schooling of our mariner work force, including funding for high school and pre-high school programs. We need to lower barriers for entry for our seafarers and to allow for our service members to transition into commercial roles more easily. It is crucial for this administration to communicate the significance and value of these well-paying jobs and to actively support the unions and employers in recruiting and retaining these essential positions."

AMHS GETS GOVERNMENT MONEY FOR NEW VESSEL

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced additional grants totaling \$220.2 million – stemming from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law - to further modernize the nation's ferry systems.

In total, FTA awarded 13 grants in eight states and the territory of American Samoa. Federal funding supports projects such as replacing old vessels, expanding fleets, and building new terminals and docks.

This is the second ferry grant package funded by the Infrastructure Law, which has now invested more than \$604 million to expand and improve the nation's ferry service, as well as accelerate the transition to zero emission transportation technology.

The latest grant announcement includes nearly \$131.3 million for the State of Alaska to invest in the Alaska Marine Highway – the M.E.B.A.-crewed ferry system that serves remote locations throughout the state. \$92.8 million of the money is slated to go to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to build a new ferry to replace the 60-year-old vessel MATANUSKA. The new ferry will feature a diesel-electric propulsion system and will serve rural southwest Alaska with more reliable service and fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, \$7.5 million of the new grant money will go to the New York City Department of Transportation to build shoreside terminal infrastructure to enable rapid charging for vessels serving Governors Island, which is only accessible by ferry. The new charging system will reduce emissions, decrease maintenance costs, and improve reliability for riders.

GREAT LAKES GETTING SET FOR WINTER MAINTENANCE

The 80-year old MacArthur Lock at the Soo Locks will close a week from this Sunday (Dec. 17) until April 24, 2024 signaling the first step in the Great Lakes winter maintenance period. The Poe Lock will continue operations until January 15, 2024, or until the cessation of commercial traffic, depending on which occurs first. The operating season is fixed by federal regulation and is driven in part by the feasibility of vessels operating in typical Great Lakes ice conditions.

More than 4,500 vessels, carrying up to 80 million tons of cargo, maneuver through the Soo Locks annually. Iron ore, coal, wheat and limestone are the most frequently carried commodities.

VACATION BENEFITS – 2023 YEAR-END CLOSING

Apply for Vacation and Port Relief Benefits early to avoid the year-end rush.

- **FILING DEADLINE:** The deadline for issuing checks dated in 2023 in the Outports *and* the Plan Office is Monday, December 18, 2023.
- **DIRECT DEPOSIT:** The final Direct Deposit Transfer for 2023 will be made on 12/19/2023 and the funds will be deposited into bank accounts on 12/21/2023.
- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/18/23 at 12:00 PM EST will be paid in the order received beginning 1/2/2024.

Any member who requires that his/her check be dated in 2023 must file before this deadline. Remember, Monday, December 25, 2023 and Monday, January 1, 2024 are holidays and the Outports and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify the specific holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

Split Your Vacation Payments between 2023 and 2024

You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2023 and a second in 2024. The 12/18/2023 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner MUST be a **continuous vacation period**.

Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111 if you have any questions.

RED SEA ATTACKS HEIGHTEN COMMERCIAL SHIPPING CONCERNS

Continued attacks in the Red Sea near Houthi-controlled Yemen have unnerved maritime interests and threatened to destabilize commercial shipping in that area. On Sunday, Houthi militants claimed responsibility for ballistic missile attacks on three commercial ships in international Red Sea waters, in the backdrop of heightened tensions since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war.

The Bahamas-flagged bulk carrier UNITY EXPLORER and the Panamanian-flagged bulk carriers NUMBER 9 and SOPHIE II were reportedly targeted in the attacks and absorbed varying degrees of damage without casualties. In November, the Houthi leader announced that his group was targeting Israeli ships in the Red Sea and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. But Israel denied any connection to these three flag-of-convenience vessels which are connected to 14 different nations.

The USS CARNEY, a Navy destroyer actively patrolling the region, intervened by intercepting and successfully neutralizing three drones while providing assistance to the targeted vessels, as reported by CENTCOM. Given the global reliance on oil from the area, the U.S. Navy has, on occasion, been tasked with safeguarding commercial vessels as part of its mission. Currently, two aircraft carrier strike groups, comprising a total of 10 ships, 130 aircraft, and 9,000 personnel, are actively operating in the Eastern Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Persian Gulf regions, according to official Navy reports. The increased naval presence aims to address the heightened threat level and protect vital maritime interests in the strategically significant waters near the Middle East.

The latest attack prompted the Maritime Administration to issue a Maritime Security Communication with Industry (MSCI) (No. 2023-007A) reiterating the need to exercise caution when transiting through the affected areas and to remain cognizant of evolving threats in the region.

The U.S. and Britain condemned the ship attacks, attributing blame to Iran for supporting the Houthis. Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh refrained from indicating any imminent U.S. retaliation against the Houthis, stating that any action would be at a time and place of the U.S.'s choosing. Iran, on Tuesday, denied any role in the attacks.

SHIPPING GIANTS CALL FOR SPEEDIER GREEN FUEL TIMETABLE

CEOs of five shipping giants, including parent organizations of M.E.B.A. shipping companies, are calling for an end date to fossil fuel-only powered newbuilds while urging the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to speed up regulatory conditions to transition to green fuels. CMA CGM, Hapag-Lloyd, AP Moller-Maersk, Mediterranean Shipping Company and Wallenius Wilhelmsen issued a joint statement at the ongoing UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) that lays out regulatory cornerstones that must be achieved to “underpin the investment within maritime shipping and its ancillary industries that will enable decarbonization to occur at the pace required.”

Among other things, they call for an end date for the construction of fossil fuel-only vessels and a clear GHG Intensity Standard timeline to inspire investment confidence, both for new ships and the fuel supply infrastructure needed to accelerate the energy transition. They are also advocating for an effective GHG pricing mechanism to make green fuel competitive with black fuel during the transition phase when both are used.

REMAINING M.E.B.A. HOLIDAY PARTIES

This has been an active week at the Union halls laden with epic membership meetings and memorable celebrations - but the fun's not done yet!

Members wrapped up their membership meetings at four halls earlier today (L.A. NY/NJ, Norfolk & Tampa) and subsequently began important party business which is presumably still going. But there are still a few M.E.B.A.-sanctioned parties remaining as we go full-tilt into the holiday season.

Here's what's left:

Friday, December 8

- **M.E.B.A. Oakland** members party at the hall from 1-4 p.m.
- **M.E.B.A. Seattle** celebrates at the hall in Fife starting at 12:30.

Thursday, December 14

- **M.E.B.A. Baltimore** parties at the hall from 12-5 p.m.
- **M.E.B.A. Headquarters & the American Maritime Congress** party on the rooftop at 5:30 pm.

Friday December 15

- **M.E.B.A. Jacksonville** parties at Pat's Lounge from 2-5 p.m. (4870 Hwy Avenue)

Tuesday, December 19

- The **M.E.B.A. Honolulu** hall parties at 10 a.m. at the hall.
- **M.E.B.A. Houston** parties from 3-6 at the Karbach Brewery (2032 Karbach Street).

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

Friday, December 8 – **Honolulu@1100**

Monday, January 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, January 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, January 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, January 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, January 12 – **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.