

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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M.E.B.A. ENDORSES GOP-LED BILL TO SAVE FOOD AID

The M.E.B.A. is on board with a new bill introduced by seven farm state Republican lawmakers that would rescue Food for Peace by shifting the administration of the program to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The White House has made efforts to shut down the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) which administers Food for Peace that provides cargoes for U.S.-flag shipping. The program helps feed countries in need while supporting American agriculture and U.S.-flag shipping.

But now, a Senate bill, headed up by Senators Jerry Moran (R-KS) and John Hoeven (R-ND), along with a House bill headed up by five members, offered up legislation that would preserve the program by shifting it to USDA's oversight. Members involved in the introduction of the companion bill in the House include members Tracey Mann (R-KS), Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Rick Crawford (R-Ark.), Dan Newhouse (R-WA), and David Rouzer, (R-N.C).

"Food for Peace is a critical program for American farmers and has a proven track-record of successfully feeding people all over the world," said Rep. Crawford. "I am encouraged by the Trump Administration taking a fresh look at how we provide foreign assistance, including Food for Peace. I believe a move from USAID to USDA would make program administration more efficient and more in-line with America's priorities. USDA already runs two international food assistance programs that deal with in-kind food donations, Food for Progress and the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program. This makes USDA a natural home for Food for Peace."

Several M.E.B.A.-contracted employers are key transporters of food aid cargoes. However, the U.S.-flag shipping industry has been wary of USAID deliberate efforts through the years to avoid using U.S. ships for food aid and to send cash aid to hungry countries instead of utilizing American farmers and mariners, in contravention of the program's original intent when it was created over 70 years ago.

HEARING HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN U.S. MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE

Members on the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure recently heard testimony from witnesses, including a representative of U.S.-flag shipping interests, regarding critical challenges facing the U.S. maritime industry. At the Feb. 5 hearing “America Builds: Maritime Infrastructure,” lawmakers and witnesses emphasized the importance of strengthening America’s maritime power, addressing labor shortages, modernizing infrastructure, and countering global competition, particularly from China. Key topics included the Jones Act, U.S. shipbuilding, port infrastructure, workforce development, and emerging technologies. Testifying before the Committee were Port of Tampa CEO Paul Anderson, Joe Rella who represented the Shipbuilders Council of America, Tom Reynolds for the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems and Brian Schoeneman, on behalf of USA Maritime. USA Maritime is a coalition of U.S. ship operators, maritime trade associations, and labor unions including the M.E.B.A.

Witnesses at the hearing unanimously defended the Jones Act as essential to national security, economic strength, and for the preservation of critical infrastructure. Schoeneman underscored its importance for economic resilience and national defense. Both the Committee Chair and Ranking Member echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the Jones Act as a foundation of American maritime power. Schoeneman raised concerns about the reduction of U.S. food aid programs, such as Food for Peace, warning that these cuts weaken America’s global influence and create opportunities for China to expand its reach. He noted that U.S. merchant ships rely heavily on government cargo, including USAID shipments, and called for renewed support for these programs. Additionally, Schoeneman highlighted the challenges faced by mariners working with USAID, including instances of being stranded in foreign ports. These issues, he argued, underscore the need for better protections and support for U.S. merchant mariners.

Port infrastructure emerged as another critical issue, with witnesses praising the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act, and SHIPS for American Act for providing much-needed funding. However, witnesses noted that delays in grant distribution and inconsistent investment remain significant challenges. The hearing shed light on labor shortages in the U.S. Merchant Marine, with witnesses and lawmakers attributing the issue to a lack of awareness about maritime careers. Schoeneman noted that many Americans are unaware of the opportunities in the industry, while several Committee lawmakers called for expanded recruitment efforts and workforce development programs. Representative Jeff Van Drew (R-NJ) raised concerns about maritime cybersecurity threats, calling for stronger regulations on autonomous vessels. Reynolds added that unmanned systems should complement, not replace, manned vessels, improving safety and efficiency while preserving jobs.

M.E.B.A.-CREWED VESSELS PART OF ANTARCTIC RESUPPLY MISSION

The M.E.B.A.-crewed OCEAN GLADIATOR, a Seacor/Waterman heavylift vessel, contracted by the Military Sealift Command, will be in the South Pole this week at McMurdo Station to assist in the annual resupply of scientists in Operation Deep Freeze. The MSC has supported the operation since 1955, the year the station was established.

The MV OCEAN GIANT, another M.E.B.A.-crewed Seacor/Waterman vessel, is also part of the mission and completed a cargo offload of supplies at the Station earlier this month. OCEAN GIANT arrived at McMurdo Station Jan. 26, delivering a floating marine causeway system along with 380 pieces of cargo consisting of containers filled with mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies and electronics equipment, and mobile office units; supplies needed to sustain the next year of operations at McMurdo Station, Antarctica. Following the offload, OCEAN GIANT was loaded with 360 containers of retrograde cargo for transportation off the continent. This included trash and recyclable materials for disposal and equipment no longer required on the station.

The M.E.B.A. crew aboard the OCEAN GIANT includes C/E Devin Savoie, 1st A/E David Wagner, 1st A/E David Seltzer and 2nd A/E Adam Belson.

When the OCEAN GLADIATOR arrives, it will begin a cargo offload and retrieve the floating marine causeway. M.E.B.A. crew aboard the OCEAN Gladiator includes C/E Jeff Stanley, 1st A/E Jack Shaffield, 1st A/E Brandon Perdue, 2nd A/E Mitchel Jacobsen, 3rd A/E Victor Mashevsky and 3rd A/E Dylan Hepburn.

M.E.B.A. SUPPORTING LABOR FRIENDLY NY LAWMAKER FOR COMPTROLLER

The M.E.B.A. was joined last week by other unions in supporting a labor-friendly lawmaker for the open Comptroller position in New York City. M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha endorsed Councilman Justin Brannan (D-Brooklyn) in his bid to succeed Comptroller Brad Lander who is campaigning for mayor.

Rexha noted, “Your unwavering commitment to working families, organized labor, and responsible financial management makes you the clear choice for this important office. That is why the M.E.B.A. is proud to support you in this campaign, confident that as comptroller, you will continue to be a tireless advocate for fiscal responsibility, economic fairness, and the dignity of working people.”

Rexha also praised Brannan’s leadership as chair of the City Council Finance Committee, highlighting his role in securing a long-overdue contract for the M.E.B.A. Staten Island Ferry members after more than 12 years without one.

Brannan has also secured key endorsements from the Transport Workers Union and Teamsters Local 831. Brannan emphasized that advocating for labor unions would be a cornerstone of his tenure as comptroller.

CIVMARs ON MSC SHIP HONORED FOR NAVY MISSION EFFORTS

Civilian mariners who crew Military Sealift Command’s fleet replenishment oiler USNS KANAWHA were awarded the Navy Unit Commendation (NUC) ribbon during a ceremony aboard the ship while pier-side at Naval Station Norfolk last week. MSC CIVMARS are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

The crew earned the NUC for their efforts during the ship’s recent deployment to the U.S. Central Command’s area of responsibility. The NUC is awarded to vessels, aircraft or other unit of the Navy or Marine Corps that has distinguished itself by outstanding heroism in action against enemy forces and is the second highest unit award in the U.S. Navy; behind the Presidential Unit Citation.

Portions of the citation that KANAWHA's Crew earned noted, "The Secretary of the Navy takes great pleasure in presenting the Navy Unit Commendation to U.S. Central Command set forth in the following: for outstanding performance in action against terrorist forces from October 19, 2023 to May 30, 2024. The personnel of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and its operational forces combatted highly kinetic and asymmetric threats regional stability," the citation reads. They protected vital global commerce through two strategic maritime chokepoints, defended key allies and partners, deterred aggression, and forged partnerships founded in trust and unity of effort against violations of international law," it continued. "They provided a crucial naval presence in the region at a pivotal moment in history."

While deployed, KANAWHA safely executed, without incident, 111 at-sea replenishments, delivering more than 30 million gallons of marine diesel fuel and aviation fuel, along with 4,696,274 gallons of marine grade oil, transferred 3,389 critical cargo pallets, and transported five personnel while supporting 14 U.S. Navy ships and 12 allied ships from six countries. The ship's engine room is headed up by M.E.B.A. Chief Engineer Able Reyes and includes Cargo Engineer Hesham Mohamed.

MEMBERS WILL ELECT FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE NEXT MONTH

A six-person rank and file Financial Review Committee will be elected at the regular membership meetings from March 3-7 at certain M.E.B.A. Union halls. The FRC, which meets annually, will assemble at M.E.B.A. Headquarters on April 22 to spend three days reviewing last year's Union finances (2024 calendar year). Committee members will be elected at the March meetings in New York/New Jersey, Houston, Oakland, Norfolk, Tampa, and Seattle. The FRC will be comprised of five members as well as one member who will serve as an alternate. Rank and file members elected to the Committee must be in good standing to serve and cannot be an official or employee of the Union currently - or for the year being reviewed (2024).

The elected Union members will travel to M.E.B.A. Headquarters in Washington D.C. on Monday, April 21, 2025. They will begin their work at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 in the Conference Room at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. It is anticipated that the business of the FRC will be completed by Thursday, April 24 with travel home scheduled for Friday, April 25.

REGISTRATION FORMS FOR 2025 CAA REUNION ARE NOW AVAILABLE

The entire M.E.B.A. membership, active and retired, and especially Calhoon graduates, are invited to the Calhoon Alumni Association (CAA) Reunion scheduled for June 27-29 at the Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School. The weekend will also include a celebration of the M.E.B.A.'s 150th anniversary. The Union is 150 years old as of February 23 and there will be much rejoicing. Information, event fees, and registration forms are NOW on the CMES website located at www.mebaschool.org. Look for the CAA page link. The weekend kicks off with the traditional Golf Tournament on Friday, June 27 at 1000. There will be an evening muster at the Calhoon Saloon later that evening. The party on the Manor House Lawn will take place all day Saturday, June 28. This is a great family event that you should be sure to sign up for. Direct any questions to caa@mebaschool.org and check out the School website to get the complete lowdown. Take this opportunity to spread the word throughout the M.E.B.A. world as well as to past Calhoon School cadets, instructors, shipmates, friends, and families.

HALLS, OFFICES CLOSED MONDAY FOR PRESIDENTS DAY

As always, the third Monday in February marks the observance of Presidents Day. M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed on Monday, February 17. The holiday was officially approved in 1968 as

“Washington’s Birthday” in honor of our first President, George Washington (born Feb. 22, 1732). It eventually evolved into “Presidents Day” and became an occasion to also celebrate the birthday of another one of our greatest Presidents – Abraham Lincoln (born Feb. 12, 1809). But on Monday, feel free to also honor the memories of the other two February Presidents - William Henry Harrison (born Feb. 9, 1773) and Ronald Reagan (born Feb. 6, 1911).

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

Monday, March 3 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, March 4 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, March 5 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, March 6 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, March 7 – **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. Website: www.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 Calhoun 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