

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
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## **U.S. PROPOSES HEFTY PORT FEES ON CHINESE-BUILT SHIPS**

In an effort to curb China's dominance in global shipbuilding and maritime logistics, the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) has proposed significant fees — potentially reaching \$1.5 million — on Chinese-built vessels entering American ports. The move comes as part of a broader investigation into China's shipbuilding sector, which has expanded its global market share from just 5% in 1999 to over 50% in 2023. According to the USTR's January 16 report, Beijing's heavy subsidies and preferential policies for state-owned enterprises have contributed to this rapid growth, squeezing out private competitors worldwide. Meanwhile, U.S. shipbuilding has sharply declined, with the number of ships constructed annually plummeting from 70 in 1975 to just five today.

Outlined in a *Federal Register* notice released last Friday, the proposed measures include substantial port entry fees and other restrictions. The probe was initially launched in April 2024 at the request of five labor organizations including the AFL-CIO's Maritime Trades Department. In the Section 301 investigation, the USTR found China's acts, policies, and practices to be unreasonable and burdensome on U.S. commerce.

The USTR is inviting comments from any interested person on the proposed actions. They will hold a public hearing about on March 24, 2025, in the main hearing room at the International Trade Commission. The deadline to submit a request to appear at the hearing is March 10, 2025. The deadline for submission of comments is March 24, 2025. The Notice can be viewed [here](#).

The USTR's plan suggests imposing entry fees on vessels operated by Chinese maritime firms, such as the state-owned China Ocean Shipping Co. (COSCO). Another pricing structure would charge \$1,000 per net ton of a ship's cargo capacity. For non-Chinese operators using Chinese-built ships, the maximum fee would be \$1.5 million per port visit. The penalties scale based on a company's fleet composition: those with more than 50% of their vessels built in China would face a \$1 million charge per entry, while those with 25–50% would pay \$750,000, and those below 25% would pay \$500,000. In addition to these fees, the U.S. may apply similar charges to companies with ships currently under construction at Chinese yards and set for delivery within two years. However, USTR has proposed a rebate system, allowing for refunds of up to \$1 million per port entry for U.S.-built ships engaged in international trade.

Beyond financial penalties, the proposal seeks to boost American maritime activity by mandating that a percentage of U.S. exports be transported on U.S.-flagged vessels. Initially set at 1% for the first two years, this requirement would rise to 3% after two years and 5% after three years. Additionally, after three years, at least 3% of exports would need to be carried on ships built in the United States. By the seven-year mark, these rules would require 15% of U.S. exports to move on U.S.-flagged ships, with at least 5% transported on American-built vessels.

## **MARITIME LOOKS TO RESTORE SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Maritime and transportation unions expressed unease with the Trump administration's decision to disband a series of Department of Homeland Security maritime advisory committees, a decision made in late January.

DHS oversees multiple advisory committees that provide guidance to department officials on a range of critical issues. Besides maritime, these panels offer expertise and recommendations in areas such as natural disaster and emergency preparedness, critical infrastructure protection, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. Members on the nine maritime advisory committees affected by this order include credentialed mariners who provide first-hand input to the government concerning safety issues affecting mariners on the oceans and waterways.

The January 20 memo said the decision was made “in alignment with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) commitment to eliminating the misuse of resources and ensuring that DHS activities prioritize our national security.” In vacating the advisory boards, the memo invited outgoing members to “reapply” but didn't make clear the fate of the committees. It noted, however, that “future committee activities will be focused solely on advancing our critical mission to protect the homeland and support DHS's strategic priorities.”

Maritime industry advisory committees affected by the order include the National Maritime Security Advisory Committee (NMSAC) (on maritime security matters); National Offshore Safety Advisory Committee (NOSAC) (safety and environmental issues for offshore mineral and energy operations); National Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee (NMERPAC) (training, qualification, licensing, certification, and fitness of mariners); National Merchant Mariner Medical Advisory Committee (NMEDMAC) (medical certification/medical standards for mariners); National Towing Safety Advisory Committee (NTSAC) (shallow-draft inland and coastal waterway navigation/towing safety); Chemical Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) (safe transport and handling of hazardous materials); Commercial Fishing Safety Advisory Committee (CFSAC) (safety of commercial fishing industry vessels); Great Lakes Pilotage Advisory Committee (GLPAC) (Great Lakes pilotage, including regulations and policies); and the Maritime Advisory Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (MACOSH) (occupational safety & health in maritime industry).

A letter expressing concern with the decision was dispatched to the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation and included signatures from the M.E.B.A., AMO, MTD, SIU, MM&P and TTD. The letter called on the administration to reconvene these important committees that give merchant mariners a seat at the table for important federal discussions. It noted, “the consequences of compromised maritime safety are devastating, underscoring the necessity of continued dialogue between regulators and the professionals who navigate our waters... To ensure the

continued safety of U.S. and global waterways, the voices of those who work in the industry must be heard.”

### **LAWMAKER HONORS M.E.B.A. IN CONGRESSIONAL REMARKS**

Maritime stalwart John Garamendi, a Congressman representing California’s 8<sup>th</sup> District, honored the M.E.B.A. with a statement put forward in the House of Representatives upon the occasion of our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The comments were published in the February 24, 2025 *Congressional Record* in the “Extensions of Remarks” section which read as follows:

Mr. GARAMENDI: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.) on its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. M.E.B.A. has been the steadfast voice of the men and women who power our Nation’s maritime industry, supporting American commerce through their skill, dedication, and solidarity for one and a half centuries. On this milestone, we pay tribute to the generations of maritime professionals who have propelled our Nation’s trade in both peace and war.

Founded in 1875 in Cleveland, Ohio, M.E.B.A. arose from the dangerous working conditions faced by mariners at the time. Shipowners valued profit over safety, leaving workers vulnerable to hazardous conditions. A small but determined group of engineers, led by Garrett Douw, came together to form a union dedicated to creating a safer, more secure, and equitable maritime industry. Their vision laid the foundation for a labor movement that has fought tirelessly for fair wages, job security, and improved safety measures.

M.E.B.A.’s legacy extends far beyond its early struggles. Over the years, its members have answered the call during every major conflict and disaster. From World War II to our engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, from providing humanitarian aid to ferrying people to safety after September 11<sup>th</sup>, their resilience and professionalism in times of crisis are a testament to the values that define the American mariner.

Today, M.E.B.A. continues to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for its members while strengthening the American Merchant Marine. Their contributions are vital to our economy and national security, and their dedication to public service remains as strong as ever.

On behalf of California's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, congratulations to M.E.B.A. on this remarkable 150-year anniversary. May their strength, service, and solidarity continue to guide them for many years to come.

### **M.E.B.A. FEATURED ON “WHAT’S GOING ON WITH SHIPPING” PODCAST**

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac sat down with podcast host Sal Mercogliano last week for an episode of “What's Going on With Shipping?” focusing on the M.E.B.A. upon the occasion of our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sal is an instructor in maritime industry policy, an historian and former mariner who is well-known and respected in the U.S.-flag shipping community. His podcast explores the global maritime industry by analyzing headline topics and uncovering deeper issues in an engaging and accessible style.

President Vokac discussed the M.E.B.A. - past, present and future - along with some of the advantages of the Union that affords talented mariners an attractive and lucrative career. Sal and Adam also detailed some of the current proposals for the growth of the U.S.-flag industry and the efforts being

made to continue to improve the fortunes of American mariners. Check out the 32-minute podcast entitled “Set Sail with the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association on their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.” You can view it by following this link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpfZHW\\_KvoA&t=1295s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpfZHW_KvoA&t=1295s)

### **ILA MEMBERS RATIFY LANDMARK CONTRACT**

The International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) ratified the six-year Master Contract Agreement recently reached with the U.S. Maritime Alliance (USMX), following an overwhelming vote of approval from its rank-and-file members across Atlantic and Gulf Coast ports. The contract, retroactive to October 1, 2024 will run through September 30, 2030. The agreement met with approval by almost 99 percent of voting ILA members.

ILA President Harold Daggett celebrated the contract’s approval, emphasizing its significance. “The ILA stayed strong and unified throughout and successfully won the greatest contract in ILA history and maybe the strongest Collective Bargaining Agreement ever negotiated by any union.”

He described the agreement as the new “gold standard” for dockworker unions globally. Key provisions include a 62 percent wage increase, robust protections against automation, accelerated pay raises for new hires, full container royalty funds restored to the ILA, increased contributions to money purchase plans, enhancements to the ILA healthcare plan, and a resolution to long-standing vacation and holiday concerns.

With the contract now ratified, the ILA said it looks forward to strengthening its partnership with USMX, fostering growth at ILA ports, and expanding its global influence among dockworker unions. The formal signing of the new six-year agreement is scheduled for Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

### **MEMBERS WILL ELECT FINANCIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE NEXT WEEK**

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 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 150<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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](mailto: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.

### **NEW ORLEANS HALLS CLOSED TUESDAY**

The New Orleans Union hall will be closed on Tuesday (3/4) as the city celebrates Mardi Gras. The hall is strategically located near several of the parade routes of the various Fat Tuesday “krewes.”

### **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](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

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

Friday, March 7 – **Honolulu@1100**

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***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](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org). Website: [www.mebaunion.org](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.mebaschool.org). M.E.B.A. Plans is at (410) 547-9111 or [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org)*