

# 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 19 – May 13, 2021



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### **QUESTIONABLE JONES ACT WAIVER GRANTED DESPITE OPPOSITION AS EAST COAST REELS FROM HACKED PIPELINE**

As part of efforts to replenish East Coast gas stations following the ransomware cyber hack of Colonial Pipeline, the Homeland Security Department has granted a "temporary and targeted Jones Act waiver" among other relaxations of fuel transportation rules designed to blunt the impact of the shutdown.

Colonial Pipeline was reportedly able to restart operations last night but says it'll take several days for the supply chain to return to normal levels. The company's output accounts for almost half of the East Coast's fuel supply. They move about 2.5 million barrels of gas, heating oil, diesel and jet fuel per day from the Gulf Coast.

Earlier in the week, the Maritime Administration made its rounds to determine if sufficient U.S.-flag tanker capacity was available to help make up the shortfall. The M.E.B.A. is on record with the White House asserting that any temporary Jones Act waivers in this case are "unnecessary," and stated that there is already existing capacity of U.S. vessels and American crews available to move refined oil products.

The Jones Act requires that goods shipped between U.S. ports be carried on U.S.-flagged and U.S.-built ships with American crews.

However, it does not appear that any of the available Jones Act tankers - not currently in active service - were broken out to assist in the effort before the waiver was granted. The American Maritime Partnership said that, "It is expected that any tanker delivery will take five to six days to arrive, and the voyage from Houston to New York Harbor is even longer (approximately eight days). The industry questions the need for such a waiver as not a single Jones Act tanker or ATB has been diverted to address shortages on the East Coast."

Authority to approve Jones Act waivers belongs to the Department of Homeland Security. U.S.-flag shipping interests have repeatedly pointed out that they do not object to a Jones Act waiver as long as there is a legitimate and necessary national defense need.

In yesterday's announcement, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas stated that "in the interest of national defense" he had approved "a temporary and targeted waiver request to an individual company."

The recently-passed National Defense Authorization Act further tightened up the issuance of Jones Act waivers to avoid exploitation by foreign-flag vessels. In particular, a national defense waiver must be tied to a legitimate national defense need. Non-defense waivers are time-limited, and all waivers are now subject to public reporting requirements by any foreign vessel using the waiver to operate in American domestic markets.

### **M.E.B.A., MM&P LETTER TO CONGRESS: PANAMA SUPPRESSING DISSENT ABOUT UNSAFE CANAL CONDITIONS**

M.E.B.A. & MM&P sent a letter to Members of Congress late last week about the ongoing suppression of Panama Canal workers trying to air concerns about safety conditions.

Two weeks ago, an overabundance of police were sent to violently stifle workers who tried to air their concerns about unsafe working conditions on the Panama Canal. Those workers, including members of M.E.B.A. and MM&P affiliates were silenced by Panamanian police with rubber bullets and teargas and several were hauled off to jail.

M.E.B.A. affiliate Union de Ingenieros Marinos (UIM), which represents Canal engineers, has been outspoken about Panama Canal Authority (ACP) cost-cutting safety shortcuts that have created a more dangerous workplace. MM&P affiliate Union de Capitanes y Oficiales de Cubierta (UCOC), a Panama Canal union representing tugboat captains, says its members are being targeted by the ACP, (the Government agency responsible for Canal operations) for speaking up about serious safety concerns.

M.E.B.A.'s President Adam Vokac along with MM&P President Don Marcus sent letters to key Senate and House leaders informing them of the volatile situation on the Canal that has the potential to upset the smooth flow of cargo. They pointed out that Canal workers are toiling in increasingly hazardous conditions with few safety nets. They also let Members know that workers attempting to broadcast their worrisome situations are being subjected to heavy-handed resistance and thuggery.

The union presidents noted that, "Working conditions have deteriorated dramatically with the advent of the new Panama Canal, the COVID-19 pandemic and the refusal of the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) to meaningfully address these issues. Unsafe ship-handling procedures implemented in the Canal locks, inadequate ship assist tugs, and a depleted and fatigued workforce are positioning massive LNG vessels any one of which has the potential to make the recent Suez Canal blockage appear inconsequential."

The Senate version of the letter can be viewed on the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mcbaunion.org](http://www.mcbaunion.org)).

## **UNION WILL MATCH G&W CONTRIBUTIONS DOLLAR-FOR-DOLLAR; “SWAG BAG” AT STAKE**

M.E.B.A.’s homegrown fund that helps members in times of need will get an added boost from every donation made this year after the Union announced that it will match contributions made to the Good & Welfare Fund dollar-for-dollar - up to \$10,000. The top G&W contributor between now and December 31<sup>st</sup> will earn the coveted M.E.B.A. “Swag Bag” – a bag stuffed to the gills with fabulous M.E.B.A. prizes worth an estimated \$200.

The Good & Welfare Fund assists active and retired members and their families in times of crisis. It helps remove some of the sting and burden of unexpected tragedy and lends a hand to those within the M.E.B.A. family. This is a wonderful cause, but we must constantly strengthen the fund to allow additional assistance to members and retirees in times of hardship.

The Union is looking to give a shot in the arm to the Fund that has been a blessing for members, applicants and retirees who have needed a helping hand. The Fund has aided members after Hurricanes Sandy, Katrina and Harvey, the California wildfires and medical emergencies that have taken their toll on family finances.

You can contribute to the G&W Fund anytime. But right now would be the best time now that the Union has pledged to make your generous contribution really pack a punch. The Fund is exempt from Federal Income tax. You can make a contribution at a Union hall or support the Fund through an electronic payment made using the link on the M.E.B.A. website ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)).

## **OAKLAND TEAM SWINGS FOR THE FENCES AS OWNER LOOKS TO FORCE CITY’S HAND ON ILL-ADVISED BALLPARK**

The billionaire owner of the Oakland A’s, along with Major League Baseball, has informed Oakland, CA lawmakers and officials that it needs to approve a “\$12 billion residential and commercial waterfront development project” along with a new baseball stadium - inconveniently located on the industrial working waterfront - or the team will relocate from the city.

The East Oakland Stadium Alliance, a coalition that includes the M.E.B.A., MM&P, ILWU, IBU and many others, have highlighted the folly of the team’s ill-conceived plan for a new taxpayer funded Bay-area baseball stadium at the Charles Howard Terminal. That proposed site is in an already overworked traffic area, and the additional traffic ushered in by a new stadium there would interfere with ongoing port and vessel operations. The Alliance called the plan a threat to public safety and said it would present transportation conflicts and impair smooth vessel operations, among other things.

The Alliance has urged planners to focus instead on building a modern ballpark at the current Coliseum site in East Oakland which already possesses the necessary transportation logistics network that the proposed site lacks.

The Alliance issued a statement saying they want the team to remain in Oakland but agree with local sports editor Tim Kawakami’s comment that he doesn’t “see the municipal validation in kowtowing to a billionaire who won’t spend much of his own money to build a new stadium that will make him many more billions.”

The Alliance said “the City of Oakland should not be fooled by the falsehood that sports teams are revenue generators or that a massive public subsidy for the next four decades will yield high returns

and benefit the West Oakland community—especially for a project that threatens maritime industry at the Port of Oakland, one of the City and region's most valuable economic drivers.”

### **SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE SURVEY ON NEW YORK CITY GUESTHOUSE FOR MARINERS**

The Seafarers International House (SIH), a charitable organization that provides mariners and travelers with hospitality, social assistance and advocacy, has a short online survey they'd like you to fill out. The quick one minute survey will help the SIH determine how to best serve the needs of seafarers who want to stay in the New York City area. SIH has partnered with an organization providing transitional housing at their existing guesthouse and they are exploring additional locations for “mission-based” guests.

You can fill out the survey at <https://tinyurl.com/SIHNewYorkPoll>

### **KEEP DONATIONS COMING FOR 4MF, G&W FUNDRAISER AT SCHOOL**

As mentioned in last week's issue, the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) will host a Fundraiser and Disc Golf Tournament in mid-June to benefit the Memorial Park at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School. As you know, the Memorial was created to honor fallen seafarers who have delivered the goods and answered the call of this country since 1775. The event will take place on June 17<sup>th</sup> and will include a silent auction, a 50/50 raffle, a disc golf tournament, music and fun.

Donations of auction items are appreciated. If you have an item of value that you feel could raise money for this great cause, please contact the Foundation. The proceeds from this auction will help usher in additional improvements and necessary maintenance of the Memorial. Contributions made to the 4MF are tax deductible. Some of the donation items will help supplement the Good & Welfare fund. The G&W fund is used to help active and retired members and their families in times of need.

Please contact 4MF Chairman Bill Van Loo for further information at (443) 676-6248 or [bvanloo@bvlworks.org](mailto:bvanloo@bvlworks.org)

### **APPLICANTS MUST PROVIDE HQ WITH REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION TO QUALIFY FOR UPCOMING VOTE ON MEMBERSHIP**

A letter recently sent by the Headquarters Membership Department, details the outstanding requirements needed to be fulfilled by M.E.B.A. applicants in order to qualify for membership. Such letters are sent two times a year in the weeks preceding the release of the twice-a-year District Investigating Committee Report. DIC reports contain a list of qualified applicants who have fulfilled the obligations in their application packet (including sea service documentation and initiation fee) and are current on their service charges. The reports are put before members for a vote at the June and December meetings. Once members approve the report, listed applicants become members and the Membership Department informs them of their new status.

Qualified applicants who are trying to make membership must provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next DIC report. The DIC will meet in the next two weeks before the June membership meeting to formalize their report. **To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.**

Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements. Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. M.E.B.A. Headquarters does not, and cannot, update an Applicant's record with sailing time/years of service unless that Applicant submits the required paperwork, i.e. discharges, sea service letters, documentation of employment, to HQ, by e-mail, fax, or mail or via your local Union hall. For further information you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org).

In addition, the DIC report will include a list of members or applicants that have been in dues or service charge arrears for two or more years. Once the membership votes on the report, those members and applicants will be DROPPED from the rolls. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing.

**JUNE MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – ALL *REGULAR* MEETINGS ARE IN-PERSON**  
*(All times are local)*

**Monday, June 7** – Boston@1200; Seattle-Fife@1300.

**Tuesday, June 8** – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

**Wednesday, June 9** – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; *Online Headquarters “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No voting)*

**Thursday, June 10** – L.A.-San Pedro@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

**Friday, June 11** – *King Kamehameha Day (Honolulu Hall Closed)*

**Monday, June 14** – Honolulu@1100

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



*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). Visit us on Facebook. 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.*