

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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In this issue//Jones Act Repeal Bills in Wake of Granted Waivers//M.E.B.A. Work on Nuclear Ship SAVANNAH//Congress Looks to Restart Cruises to Alaska//Mariners Honored During Virtual Maritime Day Observance//Openings for CMES BST Revalidation Course in Late June//Donations Needed for Upcoming 4MF, G&W Fundraiser//

LAWMAKERS PROMOTE REPEAL BILL TO SHIP AMERICAN JOBS OVERSEAS

Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT) and Rep. Tom McClintock (R-CA) have introduced bills that would repeal the all-American Jones Act and allow foreign interests to swoop in and take over maritime jobs currently reserved for U.S. citizens. The "Open America's Water Act" would eliminate the time-tested Merchant Marine Act of 1920 and allow foreign-flagged vessels and mariners to replace U.S.-flag ships and American seafarers in the domestic trades. At press time, foreign entities were licking their lips in anticipation of appropriating American jobs.

Sen. Lee and Rep. McLintock argued that pulling the rug out from under the U.S. shipping industry and outsourcing these jobs to foreigners will provide savings for the average American. "Restricting trade between U.S. ports is a huge loss for American consumers and producers," said Sen. Lee. "It is long past time to repeal the Jones Act entirely so that Alaskans, Hawaiians, and Puerto Ricans aren't forced to pay higher prices for imported goods—and so they rapidly receive the help they need in the wake of natural disasters."

The latest tiresome volley from the Jones Act-hating Senator Lee comes in the wake of the Colonial Pipeline cyber hack that left East Coast gas stations short of supply for a week. Though the pipeline is again operating at full capacity, waivers were granted last week for two foreign-flagged vessels at the expense of Jones Act ships crewed by American mariners. Waivers can only be granted in unusual circumstances when there is a legitimate national defense need and a U.S.-flag bottom is unavailable. Based on current industry data, M.E.B.A. was informed that there were available U.S. vessels and American crews at the time the waivers were granted. The M.E.B.A. made it clear to the White House and the Maritime Administration (MarAd) that several Jones Act-compliant ships were ready and waiting, including some already loaded and in operation, that could have easily been diverted with several others in warm-layup status with crew onboard and already positioned in the Gulf - thus making any waivers unnecessary. The M.E.B.A. is on record with strong opposition to the waiver and expressed its concern that such action by the Biden Administration would be exploited by Big Oil to shore up profit margins to the benefit of the foreign-flag shipping industry. The M.E.B.A. is disappointed by the White House's decision to approve these waivers as they undermine the intended policy set forth under the Administration's 'Buy American' Executive Order. M.E.B.A. will continue to engage industry stakeholders and the appropriate government agencies to monitor shipments made under the waiver while demanding accountability and transparency in the waiver process moving forward.

Further weakening the case for these exemptions is the fact that the beneficiaries of the waivers are on track to make their deliveries to the East Coast after the crisis has already concluded. However, the two lawmakers pointed to the waivers as reasoning that the law should be scrapped. Rep. McClintock said, “Just this week, the Jones Act had to be waived to ensure the East Coast had an adequate fuel supply, much like it is often waived to respond to natural disasters in U.S. territories. The solution is not selective waivers in times of distress – it’s repealing this disastrous law altogether.”

Jones Act opponents including China and the CATO Institute are heartened by the bills as they look to supplant American mariners with their foreign counterparts. CATO cites the granting of the limited waivers as justification that the statute hampers U.S. shipping’s ability to provide relief in times of crisis. The same playbook was in effect following 2017’s Hurricane Maria that devastated Puerto Rico. CATO and others misled the public into believing the statute stymied U.S. relief aid to the island even though there was an overabundance of delivered American relief supplies waiting at Puerto Rican seaports that could not be dispersed on island land routes because of damaged infrastructure.

Whether they believe their own fiction or not, Sen. Lee and Rep. McClintock asserted late last week following the pipeline disruption that “the Jones Act makes it more difficult to provide relief supplies in the aftermath of natural disasters.”

S. 1640 is the Senate version of the bill. The House bill is H.R. 3205.

It is crucial for members, applicants and retirees to continue to help emphasize the importance of the Jones Act to your Congressional delegation and refute those people who have been bamboozled into supporting the arguments of foreign interests.

M.E.B.A. PERFORMING WORK ON NUCLEAR SHIP THROUGH KEYSTONE

M.E.B.A. is back on the N/S SAVANNAH after the Union finalized a new Memorandum of Understanding with Keystone Ocean Services to provide engineers and deck officers, as needed, for the continued maintenance and decommissioning of the historic vessel.

Launched in 1959, the SAVANNAH was the world's first nuclear-powered merchant ship – built to carry cargo and passengers – and was crewed by M.E.B.A. officers back in its heyday in the 1960s. It has been out of service since 1972 and the nuclear fuel has been removed. The Maritime Administration holds the Nuclear Regulatory Commission license for the SAVANNAH and is overseeing the decommissioning of the vessel which is required by 2031. The SAVANNAH was designated a National Historic Landmark and is berthed in Baltimore, MD.

Member Adam Blackwell, a Chief Mate, is currently serving on the vessel to perform the supervisory, oversight and maintenance functions required for the continued preservation of the vessel. MarAd intends for SAVANNAH to serve as a museum ship in some fashion once the power plant is fully decommissioned. However, the agency recently accepted input from the public as to the future disposition of the vessel.

LAWMAKERS LOOK TO RESTART CRUISES TO ALASKA

A bill to restart cruises to Alaska by temporarily relaxing Passenger Vessel Service Act (PVSA) provisions will likely win House approval as soon as this week, which would send it to the President’s desk for signature.

The large passenger vessel industry making U.S. port stops has been sidelined since the beginning of the pandemic. But cruise companies are in the process of implementing new protocols and safety measures that would allow the resumption of service once Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance is satisfied. However, Canada issued an Interim Order in February prohibiting passenger vessels carrying more than 100 people from operating in Canadian waters until February 28, 2022. That Order would ground the normally-bustling cruise ship trade between Washington and Alaska because those foreign-flagged vessels need to make Canadian stops on their voyages to the Last Frontier to satisfy the PVSA. The Act prohibits foreign-flagged cruise ships from directly operating between two U.S. ports.

But last week, Senators passed the “Alaska Tourism Restoration Act (ATRA)” (S. 593) that would allow a temporary workaround to the PVSA by regarding roundtrip voyages between the states of Alaska and Washington (for specified operators) as “foreign voyages” under U.S. law. If passed into law, the temporary measure would remain in place only as long as the Canadian ban is in effect.

Senators Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK) spearheaded the Senate bill and Rep. Don Young (R-AK) is heading up efforts in the House.

MARINERS, INDUSTRY HONORED DURING VIRTUAL MARITIME DAY OBSERVANCE

For the second year in a row – and perhaps the last - the Washington D.C. observance of National Maritime Day was broadcast on YouTube. The 40-minute ceremony can be viewed on the Maritime Administration’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/MaritimeAdministration1950

National Maritime Day, May 22nd (this Saturday), honors mariners who have served our nation in times of peace and war. The day is also a tribute to the maritime industry as a whole and its critical importance to our economy and national security. At the National observance, remarks were delivered by Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command General Stephen Lyons, Coast Guard Commandant Karl Schultz and Acting Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lessley, among others. The presentation also featured quick clips of current maritime academy cadets adding their Maritime Day well-wishes.

General Lyons noted that, “As TRANSCOM Commander, I recognize the important role the U.S.-flag maritime industry plays in our nation’s defense...This is why TRANSCOM and DOD remain strong advocates for a healthy U.S.-flag maritime industry.” He praised the Maritime Security Program, Jones Act and the new Tanker Security Program and called them “important to ensure access to industry capabilities for defense needs.”

DOT Secretary Buttigieg paid tribute to the service and sacrifices of merchant mariners and dockworkers who have kept America moving during these troubling times. “I know that those aboard merchant vessels have felt, over the course of the past year, at times like there has been no end in sight. And yet that didn’t stop our merchant mariners and maritime industry workers in helping to steer the entire country through the challenging waters that we’ve been in. In the midst of a global economic crisis, you kept freight moving, helped industry stay afloat, and sometimes prevented entire economies from going under. In the face of a shortage of medical equipment, you delivered lifesaving protective gear to the frontline medical workers who needed it most. And in a year that saw one climate disaster after another, you delivered critical goods, supplies and hope to those impacted communities.”

He noted that the average consumer doesn't understand the vital role that ships, mariners and port workers have in the delivery of everyday household items. "Yet for over 240 years," he said, "merchant mariners have worked tirelessly, indispensably to connect this nation and the world...At moments like this, on uncharted and treacherous waters, as a country and a society, we turn as we always have to our mariners. That's why we have a duty to protect and support the mariners and the maritime industry workers who have always protected and supported this country. Thank you for everything that you do."

SLOTS OPEN FOR CMES BST REVALIDATION COURSE IN LATE JUNE

There is still space available for students to attend the June 21-25 Basic Safety Training (BST) Revalidation course at the Cahoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School.

Applications may be sent via the CMES website (www.mebaschool.org) , faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to applications@mebaschool.org.

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

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 Calhoon 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 17th 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.

To participate in the disc golf tournament or for further information, contact 4MF Chairman Bill Van Loo at (443) 676-6248 or bvanloo@bvlworks.org

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

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