

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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UNIONS ARE FIGHTING FOR SAFE CREW CHANGES

M.E.B.A. has been vigilant in the fight to guarantee safe crew changes for our shipboard members during the pandemic. Now the Union is joining the battle to raise awareness of such issues for international seafarers, many who are worn down by extended tours of duty during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the Nautilus Federation, international mariner unions have joined forces to alert governments to this critical problem that is affecting ship safety and mariner health. Hundreds of thousands of international seafarers remain onboard vessels past their contractually agreed time - some for up to 15 months, due to the closure of national borders and denial of crew changes.

M.E.B.A. is an affiliate of the Nautilus Federation which represents international mariners and shipping professionals with the objective of spotlighting officer issues such as criminalization, fatigue, and the impact of automation. The Federation also includes the MM&P as well as the Officers' Union of International Seamen (OUIS) and M.E.B.A.'s Panamanian affiliate Unión de Ingenieros Marinos (UIM), among many other unions.

"This is a crisis and it has the potential to impact heavily on the safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment," the group said in an open letter written to governments and those in the maritime industry.

The Nautilus Federation welcomed the recent easing of lockdowns and introduction of protocols for safe crew changes supported by the IMO but said crew changes are not happening quickly enough. "Governments need to understand that the time is now – they must be focused on actions to ensure that our maritime professionals at sea and ashore are able to get home and those stuck at home can get back to work." The letter has been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage accessed at www.mebaunion.org.

IMO, ILO URGES ACTION ON CREW CHANGES

The heads of the maritime, labor and aviation organizations of the United Nations have issued a plea for urgent action on crew changes and for keyworker designation so that sea and air workers can be relieved and repatriated in a safe way during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a joint statement, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization and International Labor Organization (ILO) said that from the middle of June 2020, around 150,000 seafarers a month will require international flights to ensure crew changeovers can take place. Half of these seafarers need to be repatriated back home by air, the other half will be joining ships.

The three organizations urge "key worker" designation for seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore energy sector personnel, aviation personnel, air cargo supply chain personnel, and service provider personnel at airports and ports, regardless of nationality. Governments are urged to exempt these personnel from travel restrictions, to ensure crew changes can be carried out and that they have access to emergency medical treatment and, if necessary, to facilitate emergency repatriation.

HISTORIC WWII VESSEL SURVIVES RAGING INFERNO

The WWII Liberty ship SS JEREMIAH O'BRIEN survived a raging four-alarm fire that got within 50 feet of the historic vessel docked at San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf. The flames broke out around 4:15 a.m. on Saturday in a warehouse on Pier 45 reducing the ship's surrounding to ash and blackened rubble. The San Francisco Fire Department responded heroically and fireboats helped keep the advance of the fire away from the O'BRIEN.

Shockingly, given the enormous plume of fire and intensity of the flames, the ship was unscathed. Ship Memorial Director Matt Lasher said, "the fire was so hot it was melting steel" on the pier. If firefighters hadn't been able to mount such an effective response, he noted, it would have "spelled the death of the ship."

However, vessel equipment stored in the warehouse and other pierside assets were taken by the fire forcing the historic ship to seek a temporary home. On Tuesday, the vessel sailed to Pier 35 at the cruise ship terminal.

The JEREMIAH O'BRIEN is one of only two operational WWII Liberty ships - the other is Baltimore's SS JOHN W. BROWN. M.E.B.A. retirees are integral to the JOB's operation. M.E.B.A.'s Dave Nolan is the Chairman of the Board of the National Liberty Ship Memorial that manages the O'BRIEN. Among other M.E.B.A. retirees volunteering their time and efforts to keep the JOB sailing are Jon Eaton, who serves as the ship's Chief Engineer and Port Engineer Dave Winter. The Memorial group is still assessing the toll of the fire and the needs of the ship. Visit <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/SSJEREMIAHOBRIEN> to see how you can help.

PROCESSING MARINER APPEALS DURING PANDEMIC

M.E.B.A. continues to post important notices on our website in the "Documents & Member Notices" section, including Coast Guard/NMC announcements. The Coast Guard's Office of Merchant Mariner Credentialing this week issued a notice about processing mariner appeals as this pandemic continues. It notes that appeals have been delayed because of the circumstances but are being processed in the order that *complete* appeal submissions are received.

Mariners are encouraged to submit appeals documents via e-mail to MMCPolicy@uscg.mil; documents should be in a readable format (avoid .gif, .zip, or camera images). Mailed or faxed appeals may be subject to further delays due to reduced manning within CG-MMC-2 office spaces. Mariners and other interested parties should contact the Mariner Credentialing Program at (202) 372-2357 or

MMCPolicy@uscg.mil with any questions or concerns. Visit the M.E.B.A. website to see the full document.

MARITIME DAY DEBRIEF

The Washington D.C. observance of National Maritime Day is in the books – and on the net – as the first virtual observance of the annual affair was broadcast exclusively on YouTube. The 31-minute observance can be viewed at www.youtube.com/c/MaritimeAdministration1950 Remarks were delivered by Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, Commander of the U.S. Transportation Command General Stephen Lyons and Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Mark Buzby.

The latter half of the program offered a tribute to the Merchant Marine’s heroic role in World War II. Dave Yoho who sailed in the war and has been an ardent spokesperson on behalf of the Fourth Arm of Defense, delivered stirring and emotional remarks discussing the sacrifices of mariners. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War II. U.S. shipping interests were recently heartened that legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to our World War II mariners was finally passed and signed this year after protracted efforts on the initiative’s behalf. In addition, following Yoho’s remarks, the video contains brief but excellent comments from WWII mariners James Monteleone, George Shaw and Capt. Hugh Stephens about their service in the Fourth Arm of Defense.

Finally, TV host Mike Rowe, who is known for his work on the shows “Dirty Jobs” and “Deadliest Catch” among others, delivered remarks. As he wrapped up his comments, he stole the thunder of Rear Admiral Buzby who annually revels in leading Maritime Day attendees in singing the official song of the Merchant Marine. Mike’s rousing version of “Heave Ho! My Lads, Heave Ho!” can be heard towards the end of the broadcast that is available for your viewing pleasure on MarAd’s YouTube channel.

In the annual Presidential Maritime Day proclamation, President Trump noted, “Our Nation’s merchant mariners enable peaceful trade with countries around the world and provide vital sealift support to our Armed Forces. Whether on the ocean or our inland waterways, merchant mariners support our economy by transporting billions of dollars of imported and exported goods. These men and women also sail bravely into combat zones to deliver supplies and weapons to our military men and women, playing a critical role in the success of their mission.”

BIDEN EARNS AFL-CIO ENDORSEMENT

While expressing disgust with the Trump Administration’s war against working families and weak and erratic pandemic response efforts, the AFL-CIO this week endorsed Joe Biden as the next President.

AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka said that, “Joe Biden is a lifelong supporter of workers and has fought his entire career for living wages, health care, retirement security and civil rights. Our members know Joe has done everything he could to create a fairer process for forming and joining a union, and he is ready to fight with us to restore faith in America and improve the lives of all working people.”

Though this administration puffed out grandiose promises to earn the vote of many working families in the 2016 election, AFL-CIO pointed out that Trump’s track record shows he sought to eliminate worker protections, catered to corporate interests and habitually undermined unions.

“Trump’s record of slashing rules designed to protect us on the job, cutting workplace health and safety inspectors to their lowest level in history, and taking away overtime pay from millions of workers are just a few ways working people have been hurt by the current administration,” AFL-CIO said.

The President’s mixed messages and mismanagement in the COVID-19 battle also drew ire in the AFL-CIO statement endorsing Biden. “Worse yet, America’s working families and communities are suffering because of Trump’s delinquent, delayed, disorganized and deadly response to the coronavirus,” the Federation said.

“The path to the presidency runs through the labor movement,” Trumka concluded. “And with the full force and unmatched reach of our political program, we are ready to pave that road for our friend Joe Biden.”

QUALIFIED APPLICANTS CAN MAKE MEMBERSHIP IF THEY FORWARD DOCUMENTATION

Qualified applicants trying to make membership should provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next M.E.B.A. District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The report, which will be voted on at the June membership meetings, compiles a list of those who have fulfilled the requirements of their application. 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 that may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation.

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. The next membership meetings take place from June 8-12. If you are in arrears and want to retain your membership or applicant status, you must contact Headquarters immediately to make payment on your arrearage and return to good standing. The Membership Department can also be contacted by applicants who are qualified to make membership and want to ensure their inclusion on the DIC’s June Report. For further information, you can visit your local Union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org.

HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Through the Job Loss Grant, Disability Grant and the Mortgage Assistance Program, Union Plus is putting money in the pockets of union members in need of assistance during this crisis. Union Plus programs provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services and are available to M.E.B.A. members, applicants, retirees and our affiliates.

Union Plus shortened the Job Loss Grant unemployment requirement from 90 to 45 days to simplify the application process for credit card and personal loan program participants. Since the pandemic hit, more than 700 union members have applied for over \$1.7 million in direct assistance from the Union Plus Hardship Assistance programs. Union Plus is encouraging eligible members to apply. More information on these programs, including eligibility requirements and application process, are available at UnionPlus.org/hardship.

NOAA SAYS ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON WILL BE FIERCE; LESS TO WORRY ABOUT IN PACIFIC

An above-normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season is expected, according to forecasters with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service. The outlook predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal season, a 30% chance of a near-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a likely range of 13 to 19 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA provides these ranges with a 70% confidence. An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes.

In addition to the Atlantic hurricane season outlook, NOAA also issued seasonal hurricane outlooks for the eastern and central Pacific basins. There is a 75% chance of near- or below-normal tropical cyclone activity during the Central Pacific hurricane season this year, they say. For the season as a whole, 2 to 6 tropical cyclones are predicted for the Central Pacific hurricane region. This number includes tropical depressions, named storms and hurricanes. A near-normal season has 4 or 5 tropical cyclones.

STATUS OF MARITIME SUPPLY CHAIN FOCUS OF FRIDAY HOUSE HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

U.S.-flag shipping including maritime labor will be represented by witnesses scheduled to testify at a Friday House subcommittee hearing being held by videoconference. The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, led by Chairman Rep. Sean Maloney (D-NY), will host a hearing on the status of the Maritime Supply Chain during COVID-19. American Roll-on Roll-off Carrier President and CEO Eric Ebeling will testify on behalf of USA Maritime. USA Maritime is a coalition of maritime unions, associations and shipping companies – including the M.E.B.A. and AMC – fighting for the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Other witnesses include representatives for the American Association of Port Authorities, American Maritime Partnership, the National Association of Waterfront Employers and the American Waterways Operators.

The hearing, that takes place at 1 pm (ET) tomorrow (Friday, May 29), will be streamed through the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee's YouTube page. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChc8bTPtZgTZDDLJ6UWJgxA/>

JUNE ONLINE MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

(Registration period is May 28-June 4 only – contact respective meeting Chair)

Monday, June 8 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, June 9 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, June 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

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

Monday, June 12 – Honolulu@1100.

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