

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
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## **M.E.B.A. ELECTION: MEMBERS MUST BE CURRENT BY TOMORROW (FRIDAY) OR THEIR BALLOT WILL NOT COUNT**

Members who are not in good standing by Friday, November 15, 2024, with dues paid in accordance with the M.E.B.A. By-Laws (through the end of the Fourth Quarter, as applicable) are not eligible to vote in the ongoing M.E.B.A. election. Members need to ensure that their dues status is secured through the end of the year to guarantee their participation in this year's officers' election.

## **ILA TALKS GET A LITTLE ROCKY**

Negotiations between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) have reportedly stalled over disagreements on port automation, raising the prospect of potential strikes at East and Gulf Coast ports in January.

At the heart of the standoff is USMX's push to implement semi-automated equipment, which the ILA contends endangers job security. "The ILA is committed to protecting all union jobs," an ILA spokesperson stated. In response, USMX argues that technological updates are crucial for improving safety, efficiency, and supply chain strength — without cutting jobs.

M.E.B.A. stands in solidarity with ILA in their fight for a fair contract. In a letter sent to the ILA this summer, M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac noted, "Port automation poses an existential threat that seeks to slash labor costs under the guise of corporate greed. As brothers and sisters in the maritime industry, we must collectively reject these harmful proposals that would eliminate good paying union jobs at the expense of profiteering."

This impasse follows a recent settlement that halted a three-day strike, securing a 62% wage increase and extending the Master Contract until January 15, 2025. However, unresolved automation issues could unravel this progress. With the January deadline approaching and a surge in imports expected, the risk of a strike grows. The current administration made it clear it wouldn't invoke the Taft-Hartley Act, but the incoming administration isn't expected to continue that policy.

## **NLRB BANS CAPTIVE-AUDIANCE MEETINGS**

In a major ruling to protect union rights, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has prohibited employers from requiring workers to attend anti-union meetings, a move aimed at

shielding union activities ahead of the next administration. The Board is said to be advancing several pro-union cases, including protections for gig workers and employees at companies like Amazon, Starbucks, and Apple. Last week, the NLRB overturned a longstanding rule, barring employers from telling employees that unionizing could harm their relationship with management. However, many labor experts expect that the incoming Trump administration will undo many of the Board's union-supportive rulings. Before the change of administration occurs, the White House is pushing to secure NLRB Chair Lauren McFerran's reappointment, hoping to maintain the Board's Democratic majority.

The latest decision impacts so-called "captive audience" meetings, where companies, including Amazon and Starbucks, discourage workers from unionizing. Amazon alone spent over \$17 million on anti-union consultants from 2022 to 2023. While many labor advocates are celebrating the new ban, some employers argue it violates their free speech, with Amazon stating it intends to appeal the decision. Now, companies can still hold such meetings if they make attendance voluntary and don't track attendance.

The AFL-CIO noted that captive audience meetings are "a coercive tool bosses regularly use to gain an unfair advantage before union elections. As part of well-funded and aggressive anti-union campaigns—regularly involving threats of discipline, site closure, wage and job cuts, and threatening immigrant workers with deportation—employers force employees to listen to anti-union speeches, often multiple times, preventing employees from asking questions or even politely leaving the meeting. These coercive meetings are well-known union-busting tools, and the practice has no place in America's workplaces or in our democracy."

### **AMHS MAKING UPGRADES AS FLEET REPLACEMENT SOUGHT**

The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) is aiming for long-term fleet replacement, hoping for up to \$2 billion over 20 years, while also making short-term improvements like adding Wi-Fi, possibly expanding bar services, and potentially introducing gift shops on board.

Federal funds will cover Wi-Fi installation, which is expected to launch on the ferry COLUMBIA in mid-December via Starlink's satellite service, already in use for crew and operations. A \$5 million federal grant will fund Wi-Fi across the AMHS fleet. During the trial period on the COLUMBIA, Wi-Fi will be free, but it will likely become a paid service.

AMHS is exploring additional revenue from expanded bar options and merchandise sales. In the past, bars and gift shops ran at a loss, but AMHS hopes new strategies could turn a profit without significantly raising labor costs.

### **U.S. CONTINUES TO CHIP AWAY AT HOUSHI ASSETS**

The Pentagon reported that U.S. warships USS STOCKDALE and USS SPRUANCE successfully defended against a coordinated missile strike by Yemen's Houthi forces. On Monday, the Houthis launched a complex assault involving eight drones, five anti-ship ballistic missiles, and three anti-ship cruise missiles. The U.S. vessels intercepted and neutralized the threats without incurring any damage or personnel injuries. The incident followed a recent U.S. Central Command operation targeting Houthi weapon storage facilities in Yemen. The attack occurred as U.S. forces were navigating the Bab el-Mandeb strait, which links the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.

Last weekend, CENTCOM forces executed a series of precise airstrikes on multiple Houthi weapons storage facilities situated within Houthi-controlled territories in Yemen. These facilities housed a variety of advanced conventional weapons used by the Iran-backed Houthis to target U.S. and international military and civilian vessels.

These targeted operations were conducted in response to the Houthi's repeated and unlawful attacks on international commercial shipping, as well as U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the Red Sea, Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and the Gulf of Aden.

Houthi-controlled Al-Masirah TV broadcasting misinformation in Yemen and the Middle East fancifully reported that U.S. vessels in the Arabian Sea (STOCKDALE, SPRUANCE and the aircraft carrier USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN) were hit by airstrikes. A Houthi spokesperson claimed the faction "successfully achieved its objectives." That came as news for the crews of the three vessels which were all unscathed.

### **AMC'S GAITHER HONORED AS ONE OF "TOP WOMEN IN MARITIME"**

Rilla Gaither, Senior Advisor for the American Maritime Congress, received special recognition this week when *Marine Log* magazine tapped her as one of 20 "Top Women in Maritime." The AMC is a maritime research and educational organization, made up of M.E.B.A. and M.E.B.A.-contracted companies.

Rilla has been a solid maritime industry force for over 40 years, solidifying her reputation as a knowledgeable and efficient problem-solver at the Maritime Administration as a GS-15 Contracting Officer where she oversaw hundreds of millions in funding for MarAd's fleet of operational and reserve vessels. She also served as a liaison for MarAd in support of human relations initiatives at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. Her service at the AMC followed where she leveraged her wide-ranging and intimate knowledge cultivated over decades of federal service into showcasing the critical nature of the U.S. maritime industry to Capitol Hill and the Administration. She spearheaded efforts to increase U.S.-flag vessel food-aid carriage, heightened awareness of the importance of Export-Import Bank cargoes for our industry and contributed to the development of the Tanker Security Program. She has provided critical support for USA Maritime and the D.C. Propeller Club for years as well as several other organizations dedicated to the advancement of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Rilla was in attendance earlier this week to accept her award at the Top Women in Maritime celebration that took place at the WWII Museum in New Orleans, LA. AMC President Fair Kim as well as AMC Government Affairs Manager Caitlyn Tierney and M.E.B.A.'s New Orleans Representative Denis Alegría were pleased to support Rilla at the event. Congratulations!

### **APPLICANTS SEEKING MEMBERSHIP MUST FORWARD DOCS WITHIN TWO WEEKS**

Qualified applicants trying to make membership in December must make sure they provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The DIC meets twice a year to review applicants for membership and will issue a report in late November to be voted upon by members during the regular December membership meetings (December 2-6).

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. Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements should forward their information to Headquarters.

Applicants have been mailed letters from HQ referencing the missing requirements needed for that applicant to make membership. Referenced documents must be submitted to HQ before the DIC finalizes their report at the end of November if the applicant wishes to be considered for membership during this review period. If you have questions about your status, you can contact the Membership Department at [membership@mebaunion.org](mailto:membership@mebaunion.org) All questions about service charge payments should be directed to the M.E.B.A. Accounting Department at [accounting@mebaunion.org](mailto:accounting@mebaunion.org). Qualified applicants who fail to make the deadline will have to wait another six months – until the June 2025 report – to make membership.

### **M.E.B.A. ELECTION: HOW TO OBTAIN A DUPLICATE BALLOT**

If you are an M.E.B.A. member and did not receive a ballot – or yours has been lost or destroyed – you can request a duplicate ballot in writing. There’s not much time. Act quickly. Our By-Laws state that duplicate ballots “shall be counted unless the original and duplicate ballot mailed to a member are both cast, in which event neither ballot shall be counted.”

Any written requests for duplicate ballots made to the M.E.B.A. will be referred to the Impartial Administrator: The quickest way to request a duplicate is by emailing TrueBallot at [0212401@trueballot.com](mailto:0212401@trueballot.com) *Please make sure you include your address to send the duplicate ballot. A reply email is not generated when the request is made. Duplicate ballots are typically delivered by mail within a week of request (dependent on the Post Office.* You can contact Marco C. at M.E.B.A. Headquarters - [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) - for any follow-up questions.

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

Monday, December 2 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, December 3 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, December 4 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, December 5 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300** (Tampa meeting to be held at Coppertail Brewing Company - 2601 E 2nd Ave, Tampa, FL)

Friday, December 6 – **Honolulu@1100**

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

