

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 37 – September 14, 2023



In this issue//Seagoing Unions Call for Withdrawal of CBP Rule that Could Cost American Jobs//RADM Sobeck Takes Over at MSC//Treasury Dept. Details Benefit of Unions//New SUNY Training Ship will be There Monday//UAW May Begin Targeted Strikes//Help Stop Ørsted Union Busting//

SEAGOING UNIONS CALL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF CBP RULING THAT COULD ALLOW JONES ACT EXPLOITATION

Maritime labor unions including the M.E.B.A. are calling on U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to withdraw and reconsider a vague July CBP "letter ruling" that could be used by foreign-flag interests to circumvent the applicability of the Jones Act in federal waters on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The CBP ruling says that, in certain cases, a foreign vessel can onload monopile foundations (used for offshore wind turbines) from a U.S. port and deliver them to various OCS points "in the vicinity" without violating the Jones Act.

A joint letter sent by the M.E.B.A., AMO, MM&P, SIU, MTD and TTD says the vagueness of the ruling will allow foreign-vessels to sidestep the Jones Act thus plucking away jobs for American workers in the up-and-coming U.S. offshore wind industry.

The unions say the lack of clarity in the CBP decision will lead to multiple interpretations. "For example," they say, "it is not clear if the ruling even applies to the jack up vessel, which is only mentioned incidentally in one sentence. Also, this ruling does not even address CBP's longstanding position that a coastwise point exists when it is in the vicinity and directly related to an existing coastwise point...The worst thing CBP can do is issue a ruling that is unclear."

The letter notes that CBP is allowed 60 days to withdraw a decision, and this ruling should absolutely be pulled and reconsidered. They note, "Fundamentally, OCSLA extends American law and jurisdiction to the Outer Continental Shelf. The Jones Act is part of American law. Thus, it should apply here. The Constitution and laws of the United States apply throughout our jurisdiction, regardless of whether there's something constructed on the cargo delivery site. CBP has the opportunity here to correct a long-standing misinterpretation of the law – one that has caused confusion in the past and has led to on-going litigation in federal court."

The letter has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website available at www.mebaunion.org

RADM. SOBECK TAKES REINS AT MSC FOLLOWING CHANGE-OF-COMMAND

Rear Adm. Philip E. Sobeck is the new Commander of the Military Sealift Command following a ceremony last week aboard the aircraft carrier **USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER** in Norfolk,

VA. M.E.B.A. was represented by our Government Fleet Representative Jack Menendez at the event.

At the Change-of-Command and retirement ceremony, Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer handed over the reins to RADM Sobeck following three years busy years as Commander that included the tumultuous COVID-19 years.

Sobeck takes command after serving as director of Strategic Plans, Policy, and Logistics at U.S. Transportation Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, where he oversaw the revision of the command strategy. “I am extremely humbled and honored to be the 29th Commander of Military Sealift Command,” said RADM Sobeck. “After having served in the U.S. TRANSCOM headquarters, I’ve developed an understanding and an appreciation of the importance of this command. More importantly, I developed a respect and admiration for the people who make this complex maritime enterprise work.”

Over the next decade, 12 new classes of ships will come online and MSC will see up to 20 new ships delivered to its fleet in the next five years, all with modernized systems. In addition, MSC is focused on delivering emerging capabilities such as new connectors, unmanned aerial resupply and expeditionary munitions reload to better support distribution of maritime logistics.

TREASURY DEPT. DETAILS BENEFITS OF UNIONS

The Treasury Department’s Office of Economic Policy recently released a comprehensive report finding that unions play an important role in addressing longstanding challenges faced by the middle class – including stagnant wages, high housing costs, and reduced intergenerational mobility. In doing so, they report that unions contribute to a more robust and resilient economy. Specifically, it finds that:

- Middle-class workers reap substantial benefits from unionization. Unions raise the wages of their members by 10 to 15 percent. Unions also improve fringe benefits and workplace procedures such as retirement plans, workplace grievance policies, and predictable scheduling. These workplace improvements contribute substantially to middle-class financial stability and worker well-being. For example, one study has estimated that the average worker values their ability to avoid short-notice schedule changes at up to 20 percent of their wages.
- Unionization also has spillover effects that extend well beyond union workers. Competition means workers at nonunionized firms see increased wages too. Heightened workplace safety norms can pull up whole industries. Union members improve their communities through heightened civic engagement; they are more likely to vote, donate to charity, and participate in a neighborhood project. And, the higher pay and job security of both union and nonunion middle-class workers can further spill over to their families and communities through more stable housing, more investment in education, and other channels.
- Unions help create a fairer economy by benefiting all demographic groups. By encouraging egalitarian wage practices, unions serve to reduce race and gender wage gaps. And modern unions have broad representation across race and gender.

- Unions contribute to economic growth and resilience. They do so in part simply by reducing overall inequality. Income inequality often feeds back into inequality of opportunity, which impedes growth if disadvantaged people cannot access the resources necessary to acquire job skills or start businesses. And unions can boost businesses' productivity by improving working environments and by giving experienced workers more of an input into decisions that design better and more cost-effective workplace procedures.

SUNY FINALLY HAS A NEW TRAINING SHIP

The first newbuild Academy training ship in the National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NSMV) program is enroute to Throggs Neck, NY to replace the Academy's 62-year-old vessel. Philly Shipyard, Inc. delivered the beautiful new EMPIRE STATE VII to replace SUNY Maritime's ancient EMPIRE STATE VI.

It is the first of five new purpose-built, modern training vessels for the state maritime academies. The NSMVs are designed to provide world-class training for America's future mariners and to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions in times of need. The vessel got underway from Philly Shipyard on Wednesday and is expected to arrive at SUNY at noon on Monday.

Four other NSMVs are in various stages of construction at the yard and will replace aging training vessels at four other maritime academies. The PATRIOT STATE II will replace Massachusetts Maritime's 54+-year old TS KENNEDY next year. Maine Maritime's NSMV will be ready for action in late 2024. The fourth newbuild is slotted for Texas A&M Maritime Academy and should be completed in 2025. The fifth will go to the California State University Maritime Academy (CMA) and delivery is set to take place in 2026.

UAW PROMISES TARGETED STRIKES AGAINST BIG THREE AUTOMAKERS

The United Auto Workers (UAW) could launch a series of targeted strikes against the Big Three Detroit automakers as soon as Friday morning after the contract expires at midnight tonight. UAW President Shawn Fain outlined plans for work actions at specific General Motors, Ford Motor, and Stellantis (the parent company of Chrysler) plants if agreements are not reached.

He met with UAW members on Facebook Live last week and laid out member demands in Big Three bargaining. He said that UAW members are thinking big and the Big Three can afford it. Ford, General Motors and Stellantis made a combined \$21 billion in profits in just the first six months of this year. That's on top of the quarter-trillion dollars in North American profits that the Big Three made over the last decade. "Record profits mean record contracts," Fain said.

A central point of contention in the negotiations is wage increases. The UAW is steadfastly pursuing double-digit wage hikes. Other key demands from the UAW include 40% hourly pay increases, a reduction in the workweek to 32 hours, a return to traditional pensions, the elimination of compensation tiers, and the restoration of cost-of-living adjustments, among various other items on the negotiation table.

HELP STOP ØRSTED UNION BUSTING

Danish renewables company Ørsted has failed to respect union workers in the United States and maritime unions are calling for a September day of action against the company demanding that the

company live up to their promises. The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) have been frozen out of their traditional jurisdiction of loading and unloading cargo and Ørsted US has disrespected maritime workers by negotiating in bad faith. Ørsted has repeatedly broken promises made to the ILA, including retraining the workforce in New London, Connecticut, who were out of work for three years as the port was redeveloped into an offshore terminal. In July 2023, Ørsted US disclosed it signed twenty-year contracts with historically anti-union shipping companies – a direct violation of their own Code of Conduct – breaking promises made to US seafarer unions.

You can sign an open letter to Ørsted Group President and CEO, Mads Nipper: itfglobal.org/orstedopenletter and share it to social media channels. Let's show Ørsted the global union movement won't stand for their union-busting tactics!

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

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

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

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

Thursday, October 5 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, October 6 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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



***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. 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.