

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



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In this issue//White House "Buy American" Order Tightens Up Jones Act Enforcement//DOT, DOL Nominations//PRIDE OF AMERICA Set to Resume Sailing in May//Unions Protected Workers from Job Loss during Pandemic//New MarAd Deputy will Helm Agency for Now//Take a Survey on Mariner Mental Health Needs//Plethora of Signatories for Crew Change Crisis Pledge//MSC Salvage Ship to Honor Muscogee Creek Nation//Registration for February Membership Meetings Begins on Monday; System Simplified//

WHITE HOUSE "BUY AMERICAN" INITIATIVE BODES WELL FOR U.S.-FLAG SHIPPING

As part of an Executive Order issued this week to fortify Federal "Buy American" provisions, the White House is directing federal agencies to closely adhere to domestic preference rules including compliance of the Jones Act as they sharpen up accountability and close loopholes. The Order was crafted to more effectively support U.S. manufacturers, businesses, and workers by better ensuring that federal government dollars are spent on American-made goods by American workers with American-made component parts. The Order specifically affirms the Administration's support of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (Jones Act) as part of that equation and directs agencies to abide by a strict interpretation of domestic preference laws for maritime transport, something that has not been as effectual in practice in past years. USA Maritime, a coalition of maritime unions, associations and shipping companies - including the M.E.B.A. and AMC - noted that cargo preference laws "are frequently waived, misinterpreted and outright ignored by agencies within the government for a variety of reasons - just like other Buy America preferences." They hailed the Executive Order saying it acknowledges "the importance of the maritime industry," highlights this new Administration's support for the Jones Act, and directs "greater adherence to America's domestic Made-in-America, Buy American and domestic preference laws for maritime transport."

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac applauded the Administration's recognition of the Jones Act as "the cornerstone of our American maritime policy" and said that the industry is looking forward to working with the President to create "future opportunities to support and grow the domestic maritime industry that generates numerous middle class, union jobs for the U.S. Merchant Marine."

Specifically, among other things, the EO creates a senior level office within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to oversee the implementation of the Order and work with stakeholders to ensure it is adhered to stringently. It beefs up oversight to crack down on unnecessary waivers to domestic preference laws and directs a cross-agency review of all domestic preferences.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said, "We know that when America's workers are given a level playing field, we can compete with anyone. This order is a good first step."

DOT, DOL NOMINATIONS

South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg is expected to win confirmation as the next Transportation Secretary once the full Senate schedules a vote, which may happen as early as Friday. On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Committee voted 21-3 to advance his nomination to the Floor. Last week, Buttigieg navigated a 2 ½ hour Senate Commerce confirmation hearing that was largely cordial. During the hearing Buttigieg was afforded an opportunity to address the Jones Act after Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) expressed her support and asked the nominee for his opinion. Buttigieg noted, "Yes, I share your support for the Jones Act - it is so important to a maritime industry that creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, as well as the shipbuilding industry here in the U.S."

A confirmation hearing for Labor Secretary Nominee Marty Walsh appears that it won't happen until early February. The AFL-CIO pointed out that if he is confirmed, he will be the first union member (LIUNA) to serve as labor secretary in more than 40 years.

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka noted, "As a longtime union member, Walsh knows that collective bargaining is essential to building back better by combating inequality, beating COVID-19, and expanding opportunities for immigrants, women and people of color. He will have the ear of the White House, the Cabinet and Congress as we work to increase union density and create a stronger, fairer America. Marty Walsh has always been a fighter who understands the power of working people standing together for a better life."

PRIDE OF AMERICA SET TO RESUME SAILINGS IN MAY

The U.S.-flag Norwegian Cruise Line-America passenger vessel PRIDE OF AMERICA is ready to get back in action on May 1st when it is scheduled to resume cruise operations with new COVID protocols in place.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) previously cleared the way for the resumption of cruise sailings making U.S. port stops, but many companies, including NCL's parent company, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd., continued a voluntary suspension of cruising to allow additional time to implement extensive COVID-19 safety measures. The M.E.B.A.-crewed PRIDE OF AMERICA is the lone large U.S.-flag passenger vessel and also the only cruise ship operating exclusively between the Hawaiian Islands.

UNIONS PROTECTED WORKERS FROM JOB LOSS DURING PANDEMIC

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that in 2020, unionization levels dropped from a year earlier, but unionization rates rose – largely because fewer union workers lost their jobs compared to non-union workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Where workers have been able to act collectively and bargain through their union, they have been able to secure enhanced safety measures, additional premium pay, and paid sick time, during the pandemic,” said Economic Policy Institute’s Heidi Shierholz. “Due to this, unionized workers have had a voice in how their employers have navigated the pandemic, including negotiating for terms of furloughs or work-share arrangements to save jobs. This likely played a role in limiting overall job loss among unionized workers.”

In what was termed a “pandemic composition effect,” industries with lower unionization rates, like leisure and hospitality, have tended to experience the most job loss during the pandemic, while sectors with higher unionization rates, like the public sector, have tended to see less job loss. It was noted that

that 46.5% of the overall 2020 unionization rate increase was the result of a pandemic composition effect, while 53.5% was due to union workers seeing less job loss than non-union workers in the same industry.

12.3% of men and 11.8% of women were represented by a union in 2020. While women experienced more job loss than men over the last year, the number of women in unions declined less (a decline in unionization of 31,000 among women and 413,000 among men). Of all major racial and ethnic groups, black workers have the highest unionization rates, at 13.9%. This compares to 12.0% for white workers, 11.0% for Hispanic workers, and 10.0% for Asian workers. In 2020, black workers experienced the largest rate of decline in employment but the largest increase in the rate of unionization. This was likely due to in large part to composition effects—for example, women and black workers are disproportionately concentrated in leisure and hospitality, which has seen large job loss but has low unionization rates, and in the public sector, which has seen less job loss and has higher unionization rates.

“The Biden administration and Congress must institute policies that promote union representation and collective bargaining as we rebuild our post-pandemic economy and workforce,” said Celine McNicholas, EPI Director of Government Affairs. “Unions played an invaluable role in fighting for health and safety measures during the pandemic, and but they have been under attack by corporate interests for decades.”

NEWLY APPOINTED DEPUTY WILL HELM MARAD IN ACTING CAPACITY

Lucinda Lessley, newly appointed as Deputy Maritime Administrator, will serve in the top spot at MarAd in an Acting capacity until a new Administrator is confirmed. MarAd Chief Counsel Douglas Burnett had temporarily taken the reins at the agency after Rear Admiral Mark Buzby resigned the position earlier than expected.

The USA Maritime coalition called Lessley “a champion of the U.S.-flag industry” and believes her experience and acumen make her a good choice to lead the agency in the short-term and prove an asset to MarAd and the U.S. maritime industry over the long-haul. Lessley has worked to promote U.S.-flag shipping during her long career that includes service in the House Transportation & Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Coast Guard & Maritime Transportation.

USA Maritime said, “We are confident Ms. Lessley’s leadership will help ensure our nation has the U.S.-flag vessels and American mariners needed to provide the commercial sealift readiness capability relied upon by the Department of Defense and to enhance the military, economic and homeland security of the United States.”

TAKE THIS (ANONYMOUS) SURVEY ON MARINER MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

The COVID-19 Working Group of the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS), a Federal interagency, is asking mariners to complete an anonymous survey concerning mariner mental health needs during the pandemic. The CMTS helps assess the adequacy of the marine transportation system and makes Federal policy recommendations.

They encourage mariners from all segments of the U.S. maritime industry to take ten minutes to anonymously complete the “Mariner Mental Health Needs during COVID-19” online survey accessed at <https://redcap.link/mariners>

The confidential survey asks mariners a variety of questions about COVID-19, mental health, and their experiences and feelings when aboard a vessel during the challenges of this worldwide pandemic. No mariner identification data will be collected. Survey participation from a significant portion of the mariners in each industry segment is critical to understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their mental health. The survey began on January 22 and runs through May 31, 2021.

Results from the survey will be shared with federal agencies, vessel owners/operators, mariner unions, maritime training institutions, seafarer welfare organizations and MTS stakeholders to facilitate development of effective solutions that benefit our mariners' mental well-being.

NEPTUNE DECLARATION: MASSIVE GLOBAL EFFORT TO RESOLVE CREW CHANGE CRISIS

A new global pledge signed by more than 300 maritime industry and human rights leaders aims to resolve the still deepening crew change crisis that has essentially held hundreds of thousands of mariners hostage at sea. 327 companies and organizations signed the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change, including the International Transport Workers' Federation (M.E.B.A. is an affiliate), and major multinationals such as BP, Cargill, Rio Tinto and Shell. The Declaration puts accountability on the industry to use their leverage to end the crisis.

Among other things, signatories committed to call on industry peers and governments to recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to COVID-19 vaccines, implement gold standard health protocols and increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes.

ITF's Stephen Cotton said, "Companies must now be held to account. This means no more charter parties with 'no crew change' clauses: charterers must work with shipowners to facilitate crew changes. This means investors asking the companies they own and deal with what the companies are doing to address the crisis. And this means asking why any company in the industry didn't sign this declaration," said Cotton.

FUTURE MSC SALVAGE SHIP TO HONOR MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION

The Navy continues to honor Native Americans with each new Military Sealift Command newbuild towing/salvage vessel being constructed to replace its aging fleet.

The Navy recently announced that a future Navajo-class towing, salvage, and rescue ship will be named USNS MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION to honor the self-governed Native American tribe located in Okmulgee, Oklahoma. The Muscogee people are descendants of not just one tribe, but a union of several. Muscogee Creek Nation is the largest of the federally recognized Muscogee tribes, which is the fourth largest tribe in the U.S. with more than 86,000 citizens - some of which have or continue to serve across the U.S. Armed Forces.

The new class of vessels will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current Powhatan-class ocean tugs and Safeguard-class rescue and salvage ships which were constructed in the early 1980s. Each ship in the class is being named in honor of prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

The future USNS MUSCOGEE CREEK NATION will join USNS NAVAJO, USNS CHEROKEE, and USNS SAGINAW OJIBWE ANISHINABEK providing a wide range of missions including open ocean towing, oil spill response, humanitarian assistance and wide area search and surveillance.

REGISTRATION FOR MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS STARTS MONDAY; SYSTEM SIMPLIFIED

M.E.B.A. Members, Applicants and Retirees can now register up until 24 hours before the start of an online M.E.B.A. monthly membership meeting, a new change to help simplify the process and encourage attendance. Instead of the regular Thursday-to-Thursday registration process the week before the meetings, attendees will begin to register this Monday (2/1) and can sign up until the day before the meeting starts.

An additional notice about meeting registration will be sent to members, applicants and retirees with email addresses on file with M.E.B.A. Headquarters. If we do not have your personal email address on file at HQ and you would like to be on the list, please let us know at membership@mebaunion.org

12 of the 13 meetings will be held online. The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School will host its meeting in-person (on Tuesday, February 9) in the Newberry Auditorium. The registration contact persons for all the meetings will be listed in the notice that is emailing on Monday. That notice will also be available on the website on Monday in the “Documents & Member Notices” Section.

ONLINE FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (All times are local)

[Registration Begins on Monday and ends 24 hrs. before each meeting]

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

Tuesday, February 9 – CMES@1430 (**CMES Meeting will be conducted in-person**);
Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

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

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

Friday, February 12 – **Lincoln’s Birthday** - (*All Halls Closed*)

Monday, February 15 – **Presidents Day** - (*All Halls Closed*)

Tuesday, February 16 – 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. 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.