Representatives from the Seafarers International Union, AGLIW (SIU), the Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (MEBA), and the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (IOMMP) met with NOAA representatives during August 2016 to negotiate on behalf of NOAA wage mariners about their shore leave entitlement. Shore leave is leave which is accrued by most federal mariners working for federal government agencies. Shore leave is a categorization of what is accrued in addition to other types of leave to which federal mariners are entitled (such as sick leave and annual leave).

Prior to these negotiations, NOAAilienced and unlicensed wage mariners had questions and concerns about the accrual and the consistent application of shore leave to wage mariners sailing in the NOAA fleet. Over the last several years, the SIU, MEBA, and MMP unions and NOAA representatives have been working to try to reach a resolution about grievances and differences in the interpretation of the statutory regulations which cover shore leave. Using an interest-bargaining (IBB) process, the parties were able to reach a tentative agreement over the course of several meetings held at NOAA’s headquarters located in Silver Spring, Maryland. IBB negotiations are the preferred method of negotiation for the Seafarers’ Maritime Unions, NOAA Negotiate on Shore Leave Entitlements

Negotiating on behalf of the unlicensed wage mariners represented by the SIU were Kate Hunt and Sam Spann, Government Services Representatives; and Deborah Kleinberg, Counsel. Representing MEBA were Tracey Burke, Government Services Representative; Mark Gallagher, Contracts Representative; and Nils Dijiberg, MEBA Counsel. Representing IOMMP was Randi Czuzwski, Government Services Representative.

Negotiating on behalf of NOAA were Troy Frost, Deputy Director of Marine Operations, Laura Young, Administrative Officer; and members of the NOAA Workforce Management Office and the Department of Commerce Office of the General Counsel.

RADM David Score, Director of Marine and Aviation Operations and the NOAA Corp as well as RADM Anita Lopez, Deputy Director Office of Marine and Aviation Operations and the NOAA Corp, were also involved in the negotiations to share their thoughts and goals as well as to support the IBB negotiation process used by the parties.

After negotiations, Hunt summed up the outcome of the meetings: “We believe these meetings were extremely productive. The tentative agreement reached will provide NOAA wage mariners to accrue shore leave in a fair and consistent manner. Once the agreement is signed it must go to the Department of Commerce for agency head review. There are a number of steps which still need to be completed, but if all goes well, we hope the agreement will be in place by January 2017.”

The SIU will keep NOAA crews updated as new information becomes available.


Federal mariners should note that the dates are set for this year’s annual open season for selecting health, dental and vision insurance for you and your family. Open season begins Nov. 14 and ends Dec. 12, 2016.

New premiums were scheduled to be announced on September 28, 2016. Overall, employees paid an average of 7.4% increase in their premium costs in 2016. The Federal Employee Health Benefits Insurance (FEBH) is a group of various insurances available to federal mariners and their families. Health insurance is vitally important to you and your family, especially if you are injured overseas. It is very helpful to have a health insurance plan that will cover medical expenses abroad if you are a federal mariner sailing on vessels which travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS).

One of the most important benefits for federal mariners is overall, comprehensive health insurance coverage for you and your family. A good place to start learning about your health care choices is to review the dates which have more than the health care plans to choose from is the Office of Personnel Management website (opm.gov). This is a free website which will have 2017 materials available soon. Health plans that you are interested in learning about also have their own webpages.

Another excellent resource can be purchased from the Washington Consumer Checkbook Organization. This year the non-profit will be publishing the 38th edition of its Guide to Health Plans for Federal Employees, touted as the most comprehensive resource available for researching FEHB plans. It is available in print and online. The ratings include plans operating nationwide and regionally throughout the United States.

According to the Washington Consumer Checkbook’s website, the ratings consider many factors too numerous to mention here in their entirety, but here are just a few:

- Plan premiums, catastrophic limits and estimates of out of pocket costs for medical expenses, a comparison of out of pocket costs on the actual coverage allowed by the plan, and each plan’s coverage of low, average and high medical expenses. Ratings also cover plan quality and your satisfaction with the plan's services. The group also rates dental and vision services. The guide will provide detailed consumer advice on which plan options may work best in different situations, providing information consumers may not have considered.

To learn more about this guide and how you can purchase a copy, visit www.checkbook.org

If you have a federal mariner sailing on vessels which travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS), please note the following:

Financial Considerations

If you are a federal mariner sailing on vessels which travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS), please note the following:

- There may be some tax advantages to put some savings in SAFEDS. The money contributed to your SAFEDS account is not subject to federal, state, or other health insurance coverage. SAFEDS also offers an account for families with young children or elder care expenses – the Dependents Care FSA. This account allows you to set aside money to pay for your daily care expenses.

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Federal Mariner

July - September 2016

navy christens cívmar-crewed
usns yuma at austal usa in mobile

New jobs for members of the SIU Government Services Division are on the horizon following the Aug. 24 christening of the USNS Yuma in Mobile, Alabama. The Yuma is the eighth of 10 expeditionary fast transport vessels (EPF), formerly identified by the Navy as joint high-speed vessels or JHSVs. The ceremoy took place at the Austal USA shipyard, where the entire fleet has been built.

The ship’s sponsor, former Secretary of Homeland Security and Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, named the ship before formally christening it with a bottle of champagne. Rear Admiral Dee Mewbourne, commanding officer of the U.S. Navy’s Military Sealift Command. I’m looking forward to working with Admiral Mewbourne to promote the interests of MSC CIVMARs and working in partnership with the agency as we work in the years to come to make MSC CIVMARs’ lives easier and safer. I’m optimistic that Rear Admiral Mewbourne will work hard to get to know MSC CIVMARs and to learn about the wide range of important issues which impact the CIVMARs day in and day out as they ensure that MSC remains capable of fulfilling its mission across the world.

Since its inception, SIU has worked to ensure safe working conditions for federal mariners and commercial-sector seafarers alike. To bring a sharper focus on shipboard safety, MSC and the SIU are standing up a joint labor management safety committee (see the CIVMAR Note on page one). There is nothing more important than keeping CIVMARs safe. We encourage every CIVMAR to keep the SIU aware of your shipboard conditions, especially if you are concerned about an unsafe situation or practice.

Get Out the Vote

While I hope that most SIU Government Services Division mariners read the Seafarers LOG in addition to the Federal Mariner, I understand that not everyone manages to see every issue. So for anyone who missed this sentiment earlier in the year, let me repeat that I respect everyone’s right to their own opinions and their own political views. I also understand that politics brings out emotions, and that reasonable people can disagree on the worth of a particular candidate.

Federal mariners have an in-depth understanding of how different presidential administrations may impact government agencies budgets and policies. Policy decisions made by the president and the people the president appoints to run agencies throughout federal government will have an impact on you, your family, your wages and working conditions as civil service employees.

With that in mind I urge every federal mariner to know the facts about the current presidential candidates. Don’t get distracted by the hype and hyperbole that surrounds every presidential race. For many reasons, for federal employees this issue, the SIU endorsed Hillary Clinton at the beginning of the year. I still firmly believe she is the right choice for America’s working families. We’ve been working with the Clinton campaign to help them understand the needs and concerns of federal mariners and their families.

The job security of many federal mariners depends on maintaining pro-maritime and pro-worker laws and programs. Our SIU Government Services Division members definitely understand that we work in a heavily regulated industry. Federal agencies which operate vessels are often subject to even greater regulation than private sector vessels. Each agency has the ability to add its own instructions and Guidelines and add additional requirements to monitor and guide federal mariners’ work aboard these vessels.

Evaluating the legislation and other elected representatives who oversee those regulations is a never-ending job for all of us. That’s why your union carries this important message to virtually every level of government, from the White House to the state legislatures to the local town halls. That’s why we’re so heavily involved in politics, working with both major parties, and it’s why I’ve spent a lot of time this year encouraging members to get out the vote in November.

Educate yourself on your senate and congressional representatives. If you’re unsure about the legislative votes of your current members of Congress which impact working men and women, you can learn more about their voting record by visiting: www.afccio.org/Legislation-and-Politics/Legislative-Voting-Records or just search for “all ciao voting records.”

It’s critical that we help get out the vote on behalf of other pro-worker candidates in the House and Senate, as well as at the state and local levels. Our livelihoods depend on who ends up shaping and developing the laws by which we all must live.

Elections for the SIU Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters are taking place later this year. In any case of members eligible to vote who believe they will be at sea during the Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, 2016 voting period or who otherwise think they will need absentee ballots, absentee ballots will be available.

The SIU constitution ensures that members who are eligible to vote and who find themselves in this situation may vote. Procedures are established in the SIU constitution to safeguard the secret ballot election, including the absentee ballot process. Here is the procedure to follow when requesting an absentee ballot:

1. Make the request in writing to the SIU office of the secretary-treasurer, 5201 Ault Way, Camp Springs, MD 20746.

2. Include in the request the correct address where the absentee ballot should be mailed.

3. Send the request for an absentee ballot by registered or certified mail.

4. The registered or certified mail envelope must be postmarked no later than midnight, Nov. 15, 2016 and must be received at 5201 Ault Way, Camp Springs, MD 20746 no later than Nov. 25, 2016.

5. The secretary-treasurer, after confirming eligibility, will send by registered mail, return receipt requested, to the address designated in the request, a ballot, together with an envelope marked “Ballot” and a mailing envelope no later than Nov. 30, 2016.

6. Upon receiving the ballot and envelope, vote by marking the ballot. After voting the ballot, place the ballot in the envelope marked “Ballot.” Do not write on the “Ballot” envelope.

7. Place the envelope marked “Ballot” in the mailing envelope which is imprinted with the mailing address of the bank depository where all ballots are sent.

8. Sign the mailing envelope on the first line of the upper left-hand corner. Print name and book number on the second line. The mailing envelope is self-addressed and stamped.


SIU Directory
Michael Sacco, President
Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President
David Heindel, Secretary-Treasurer
George Tricker, Vice President Contracts
Chester Wheeler, Asst. Vice President Government Services

former DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano christens the USNS Yuma. (Photo courtesy Austal USA)

Get Out the Vote

Disagree on the worth of a particular candidate. But I also understand that politics brings out emotions, and that reasonable people can disagree on the worth of a particular candidate.

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Rear Adm. Mewbourne is New MSC Commander

The USNS Lewis B. Puller, crewed by members of the SIU Government Services Division, hosted the change-of-command ceremony for the U.S. Military Sealift Command (MSC) on Aug. 25 in Norfolk, Virginia. SIU President Michael Sacco, Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel, Vice President Government Services Kermit Mangram and Government Services Representative Sam Spain were in attendance.

The ceremony marked Rear Admiral Dee L. Mewbourne’s first day as the new commander of the MSC, as Rear Admiral T.K. Shannon officially retired after a long career capped by four years at the agency’s helm. Gen. Darren W. McDowell, commander, U.S. Transportation Command, and Adm. Philip S. Davidson, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, were the guest speakers.

According to the Navy, “During Shannon’s term as MSC commander, he expanded the expeditious fast transport (T-EPF) class to seven ships, with four of them forward deployed. Under his leadership, the vessels’ mission expanded from fast-transport cargo to a larger, multi-mission theatre security cooperation and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platform. Additionally, he oversaw the expansion of the Navy’s first expeditious sea base (T-ESB) and expeditious transfer dock (T-ESD) platforms into the maritime seabasing concept.

“Serving as the commander of MSC and working with our team of mariners, Sailors and shore-based civil servants has truly been an honor,” said Shannon. “I look forward to seeing our talented team of professionals continue to do our nation’s important work providing sealift and maritime transportation.”

Mewbourne grew up in Ormond Beach, Florida, and graduated in 1982 from the United States Naval Academy. He was designated a naval flight officer in December 1983 and later earned a master’s degree in business administration from Colorado State University.

“Building on the legacy of Admiral Shannon, Military Sealift Command will ensure the Navy is ready to fight and win anywhere in the maritime domain, making America safer for our families today and for future generations,” said Mewbourne.

He is an honor graduate of the United States Naval Test Pilot School and completed the Navy’s Nuclear Power Program, Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Joint Forces Staff College and numerous executive educational courses.


He has accumulated over 3,600 total flight hours in over 50 various aircraft and over 1,000 arrested landings on 14 carrier decks.
CIVMAR-Crewed Frank Cable Wins Navy Safety Award

The CIVMAR-Crewed Frank Cable recently earned a prestigious honor. (Photo courtesy U.S. Navy)

Editor’s note: The Seafarers International Union has always worked with both major political parties and continues to do so with the candidates running for public office in 2016. We believe that voting is important and that our candidates have a responsibility to work for workers. This edition of CIVMAR-Crewed Frank Cable has been edited and adhered to all safety requirements, while completing the mission. During that period, the Frank Cable earned a significant reduction in safety discrepancies, including a major reduction for the period that the ship was in the crew safe. I could not be prouder of all they accomplished.

During the previous year, the Frank Cable had no on-duty class A or class B mishaps and no lost-man-hour or limited-duty days resulting from on-duty mishaps while completing the mission. During that period, the Frank Cable earned a significant reduction in safety discrepancies, including a major reduction for the period that the ship was in the crew safe. I could not be prouder of all they accomplished.

Why it’s Important

Federal employees have more at stake in general elections. Not only will the next president and his or her administration impact you and your families in a personal way, but as a crucial part of our country’s civil service, the next president will directly impact your workplace and your work environment.

A candidate’s policies on wages, size of government, fair treatment of workers, and his or her philosophy about the importance of union representation of government workers are all critically important factors for you. This is true whether you work at NOAA, ACEC, SUBJIN Bay or MSC.

It’s up to every person to educate himself or herself carefully about the candidates, learn the facts. As author and civil rights activist Maya Angelou said: “When someone shows you who they are, believe them.”

Know Some History

Here are just a few of examples of how a presidential administration can impact federal employees. In 1993, President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12933, which stated: “Federal employees who had been working with the previous administration will have the opportunity to keep their jobs rather than hiring all new employees.”

On February 17, 2001 within a month of taking office, the Republican administration following President Clinton revoked Executive Order 12875 and all the protections it offered to federal employees.

In 1994, President Clinton signed into law Executive Order 12933. This Executive Order was implemented to protect workers who provided services in federal buildings were not given the same protections as those who took over contracts from other companies to offer employees who had to come to the notice of the president or the opportunity to keep their jobs rather than hiring all new employees.

On the same day he revoked the Executive Order providing partnership throughout the federal government (February 17, 2001), the same Republican president revoked this order and the protections it offered to employees.

More than 20 unions representing federal employees, including the SIU, formed the United Defense Workers Co-alition to stop the discriminatory and anti-worker NSPS program. It took years of legal and legislative fights to undo the damage. In 2009, President Obama had the NSPS program overturned in court and restored DOD employees impacted by this law to their previous status.

President Obama changed the bleak landscape for federal workers. In 2009, he implemented Executive Order 13522, which stated: Federal employees and their union representatives are essential front-line sources of information about the realities of delivering government services to the American people. -Management should discuss workplace challenges and problems with labor and employees to develop solutions jointly, rather than advise union representatives of predesigned solutions to problems and then engage in bargaining over the impact and implementation of the predesigned solutions.

This purpose of this order is to establish a cooperative and productive form of labor-management relations throughout the executive branch.

Know the Facts

Federal mariners work tirelessly for our country. Some are required to sail into potentially dangerous places and spend long periods away from their families and friends at a great sacrifice.

All people should be treated with dignity and respect. All workers should be valued. Our next president should understand these concepts and support employees who make the great civil service that helps ensure our country will continue to prosper.

Donald Trump does not share the values of working families. According to the AFL-CIO, Trump is one of the most anti-worker presidential candidates in American history. In fact, Trump:

- Has not provided any position on protecting the merchant marine, and has on occasion insulted federal employees;

- Has not produced any communications about policies critical to the maritime industry;

- Thinks wages are too high. He does not support a raise to the minimum wage;

- Says he will bring jobs back to the United States, however, Trump-brand products such as ties, shirts, bulbous pens, and body soap are manufactured in overseas places such as Bangladesh, China, Japan and Mexico;

- Says it’s acceptable for corporations to threaten to move production away from the U.S. to force down the wages of working people;

- Supports so-called right-to-work (for less) laws which take away power from working people and their unions;

- Says he is pro-worker but refuses to recognize a union election at his hotel;

- Says he will put his friends, who also hold anti-worker and anti-union beliefs, in charge of trade and other parts of his administration;

- Supports efforts to end the “right to work” laws which are worse than no laws at all;

- Has overheard his businesses and thought they fail as a result of crushing debt;

- Uses the Trump charitable foundation to pay lawsuit costs and personal items for his own pleasure;

- Has selected a Vice Presidential candidate, Mike Pence, who did everything possible to work against the state civil servants in Indiana. He made sure that Indiana would remain a so-called right-to-work state. Pence opposes raising the minimum wage to liveable levels. He opposed a bill that would have raised Indiana’s minimum wage from $7.25 to $8.25 an hour. Pence signed into law a bill which strips local government from raising minimum wages unless mandated by the state or federal government. He also signed into a law a bill which repealed Indiana’s common construction wage. This hurt Indiana’s state employees as it left wages on publicly funded construction projects vulnerable to free-market pay scales rather than in the hands of local boards composed of taxpayers or contractors.

In comparison, Hillary Clinton has devoted her life’s work to improving the lives of working men and women and protecting children. Clinton has:

- Spelled out in great detail how she will support the Maritime Security Program, the Jones Act, and cargo preference laws – all of which are vitally important to seafarers and federal mariners;

- Demonstrated the necessary intellect and emotional capacity to govern during difficult times. Clinton is not afraid to stand up for workers and their families when it matter most;

- Supported the Equal Pay Act while Senator of New York;

- Fought and will continue to fight to raise the minimum wage and strengthen overtime rules;

- Signed 20 other Senate’s, a letter to the previous administration calling on the president to reject export service contracts and introduce a resolution calling on the Senate to oppose efforts to outsour;

- Supported the Employee Free Choice Act and the Employer Right to Choose Act, legislation critically important to employees and their union representatives;

- Voted against the first free trade agreement and will not support the TPP agreement as it is currently proposed;

- While serving in the Senate, Clinton assisted working people and their unions in negotiating new contracts including the IBWE as it negotiated with the National Grid, IWDSU/UNITE HERE as it negotiated with the Duane Read Drug Store and the BUE-CWA as it negotiated with Caldwell Manufacturing.

- Established and secured significant funding for New York and the workers impacted by the 9/11 terrorist attack. She fought for five years of millions of dollars in medical monitoring funds to help workers at Ground Zero and for assistance to affected families and laid off workers.

- Will encourage companies to invest in workers. Clinton will invest in high-quality training, apprenticeships and skills building for workers.

Which Candidate Will Protect Your Interests?

In the United States we sometimes take our ability to vote for granted. We forget that in other parts of the world people sacrifice their lives so we can have that freedom because the election is pre-determined. For our courageous federal workforce, this election could not be more important. Exercise your right to vote, and remember: When someone shows you who they are, believe them. 