



THE FEDERAL MARINER

MSC • NOAA • ARMY COE • MARAD

Volume 12 • ISSUE 3
July-September 2021



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION'S GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION

SIU CIVMARS on USNS Patuxent Handle 2 Rescues

Members of the SIU Government Services Division sailing aboard the *USNS Patuxent* helped perform two rescues just nine days apart earlier this summer.

The *Patuxent*, a fleet replenishment oiler, learned of a vessel in distress in the Gulf of Aden on June 7. The runaway-flag commercial vessel *Falcon Line* had experienced engine failure and was taking on water, according to reports from the U.S. Navy.

After proceeding to the rescue scene at maximum speed, the *Patuxent* protected the *Falcon Line*'s crew from heavy winds and high seas while those mariners boarded life rafts. All 15 crew members from the distressed ship were brought aboard the *Patuxent* before their vessel sank. The *Patuxent* provided the rescued mariners with food, water and medical screenings.

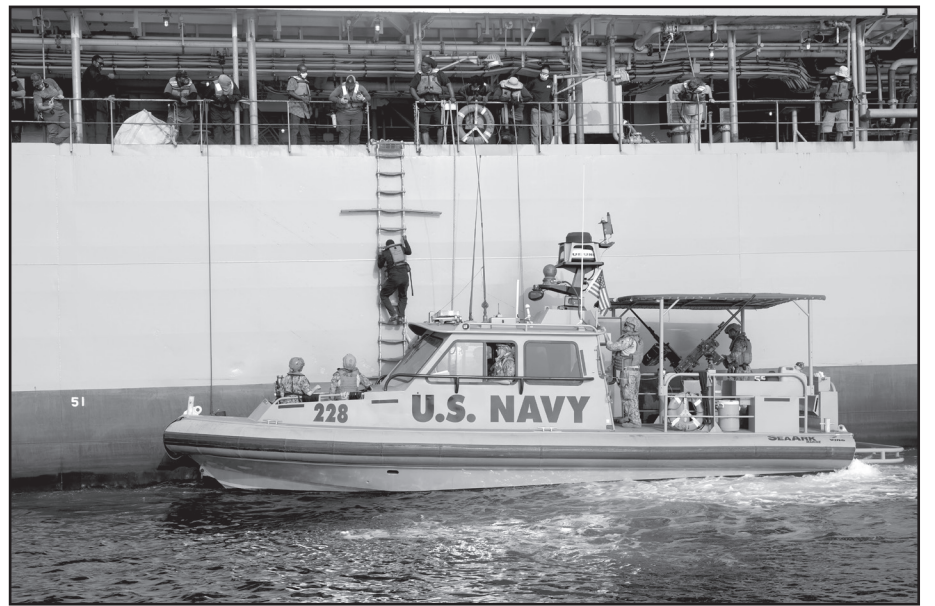
The *Patuxent*, whose crew includes SIU CIVMARS, is part of the U.S. 5th Fleet. According to the Navy, "The U.S. 5th Fleet regularly works with coalition

forces, regional partners and the shipping industry to maintain the regional awareness necessary to facilitate aid like this to mariners in distress."

"As professional mariners, our forces have a duty to help those in need at sea," said Navy Capt. Michael O'Driscoll, commander of Task Force 53. "The Sailors and civilian mariners aboard ships like *Patuxent* have answered this call before, and they will continue to do so whenever possible."

His comment proved prescient. On June 16, the *Patuxent* rendered aid to another vessel that had been drifting for 12 days, also in the Gulf of Aden. The small fishing boat was taking on water; the *Patuxent* rescued the four crew members and gave them food, water and medical treatment.

SIU Vice President Government Services Nicholas Celona stated, "I couldn't be prouder of our members for their efforts in these rescues. Their dedication and professionalism shined through."



One of four individuals rescued from a stranded fishing boat climbs down a ladder from the CIVMAR crewed *USNS Patuxent* to a U.S. Navy patrol boat based at Camp Lemonnier. The mid-June rescue was one of two performed by *Patuxent* crew members that month. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacob Sippel)

Celona Appointed as SIU VP Gov't Services

The union's executive board has announced the appointments of two longtime officials to new positions following the recent retirement of SIU Vice President Government Services Kate Hunt (see story, page 3).

Nicholas Celona succeeds Hunt as vice president, while Amancio Crespo fills Celona's former spot as an assistant vice president.

Both Celona and Crespo are well acquainted with the union. Celona is a 1977 graduate of Paul Hall Center Trainee Class 229. Crespo graduated from the trainee program in 1990. Both sailed for several years before coming ashore to work for the union.

"My goals are to promote, protect and defend the U.S. Merchant Marine and the SIU Government Services Division, which in turn will help ensure our national security," Celona said. "We have to make sure that supplies get through to our troops."

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Celona graduated from Lafayette High School in 1976 and soon thereafter found a home with the SIU. After completing the trainee program, he sailed in the engine depart-

ment until 1982, upgrading several times along the way (most recently to chief electrician). He sailed on vessels operated by Sea-Land, Maritime Overseas, Delta Line, American Hawaii Cruises, Bay Tankers and others.

"The sense of adventure from shipping out was life-changing as a young man," he recalled. "I fell in love with it right away. When I was called ashore to work as an official, I did everything possible to help the membership and our union to grow."

Celona worked as a patrolman in New Orleans from 1983-88 and was involved in multiple inland beefs. He spent 1989 serving as the port agent in Piney Point before what turned out to be a long-term move to the West Coast. Celona was the union's San Francisco port agent from 1990-94; he became an assistant vice president in 1994.

Among other activities, he served as a delegate on the San Francisco-Alameda Labor Council, secretary-treasurer of the local port council, and a governor-appointed member of the board of directors of the Cow Palace (a popular, multi-purpose arena in Daly City, California).

Always politically active, Celona organized the union's annual Thanksgiving gatherings in San Francisco and Oakland, which ran for 29 straight years before temporarily being derailed due to the pandemic. Those feasts evolved into a Who's Who of politics, with regular appearances from Kamala Harris, Nancy Pelosi, John Garamendi, Eric Swalwell, Jackie Spier and many others.

Based on his extensive work with the military, Celona in 2002 was sworn in as an honorary U.S. Marine, a rarity.

He will be based in New Orleans.

Crespo sailed for six years, both in the deck and steward departments, and also worked on a shore gang before serving as a patrolman beginning in 1997. A Brooklyn native (he is good-natured about not having the accent), he became the union's port agent in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in 2005 and has held that post ever since.

Crespo played a major role in helping open the new hiring hall in Puerto Rico in 2018, and he also has stepped up on numerous occasions to spearhead local relief efforts following storms that have battered the is-



SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona (right) is pictured at an industry event in New York in 2019, with his predecessor: the recently retired SIU VP Kate Hunt. Celona began sailing with the union in the mid-1970s.



SIU VP Gov't Services Nicholas Celona (third from right) has met with numerous CIVMARS, including aboard the *USNS Miguel Keith* on the West Coast. Among those also pictured are SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (right) and SIU Gov't Services Rep. Jesse Ruth (second from left).

President's Column

Remembering Rich Trumka

Whether you're reading this column online or in print, you know that the entire labor movement is mourning the unexpected passing of our friend and leader, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.



Michael Sacco

As someone who worked with and knew Rich since the 1970s, I want each of you to know that all of the tributes written and spoken about him are accurate and well-earned. He was one-in-a-million, and I'm blessed to have been not only his colleague, but his friend.

If you met Rich even once, you know that when it came to personal energy, he was an 11 on a scale of 1-to-10. For that reason, I hesitate to describe him as rejuvenated following last year's presidential election, but there's no doubt he had taken his work and his leadership to another level. He was exceptionally fired up about the very real opportunities we have before us for labor-law reform and for growing our movement.

There's a decent chance you saw him on television in recent months, promoting workers' rights and trade unionism. Be 100 percent certain that those appearances were exclusively about the work at hand, rather than having anything to do with personal publicity. Rich was all about workers and their families.

In practical terms, you cannot say that someone is one-in-a-million and then expect our movement to not miss a beat. That's just not realistic. Throughout the AFL-CIO – from headquarters to the affiliate unions like the SIU, to the state labor federations and central labor councils to individual locals – we all have to step up to help fill that void. It's a tall order.

Nevertheless, I am completely confident in new AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who, like Rich, came up through the ranks and earned everything she got. Liz is the one who reminded us that we're allowed and expected to mourn, but we're not permitted to slack off. As she said, Rich wouldn't allow it.

Please take the time to read our coverage of Rich, and also know that he absolutely had a special affection for the SIU. Whenever we asked for help or invited him anywhere, he made it happen. I've got a framed photo of him in my office with a bunch of our officials playfully grabbing him during the 1999 AFL-CIO convention. Rich signed it, "8 Seafarers against 1 Mine Worker. Seems about right!"

Even when he was kidding, his fighting spirit came through. And those odds wouldn't have been fair, anyway – to us. Rich could overcome any challenge.

Rest in peace, my dear friend. You are missed.

Protect Yourself and Your Shipmates

A younger family member tells me that when you buy a computer, it's already outdated by the time you take it home and pull it out of the box.

These days, writing about COVID-19 vaccines has a similar feel, as developments are happening quickly throughout the country in early August. New variants are taking a toll, there are lots of questions about schools reopening for in-person classes, and – in my opinion – some legislators are using the topic of vaccinations for their own potential political gains.

Nevertheless, all signs point to vaccinations becoming a requirement for employment in many if not most occupations. It's hard to picture that trend reversing.

I can't bang this drum often enough: Vaccines are the best way to protect yourselves, your families and your shipmates. If you're still hesitant, get the facts from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and I think you'll change your mind.

Be safe, brothers and sisters.

SIU Directory

Michael Sacco, President

Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President

David Heindel, Secretary-Treasurer

George Tricker, Vice President Contracts

Nicholas Celona,

Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo,

Asst. Vice President Government Services



The official party pose for a photograph at the commissioning ceremony in San Diego for the *USNS John Lewis* on July 17. (U.S. Navy Photo)

Newest Replenishment Oiler Christened

The newest ship to enter the Military Sealift Command (MSC) fleet was christened at General Dynamics NASSCO – a union shipyard – on July 17.

The fleet replenishment oiler *USNS John Lewis*, which will carry CIVMARS from the SIU Government Services Division as part of its crew, was celebrated in a ceremony attended by family of the ship's namesake, the late U.S. Rep. John Lewis. The event marked the first anniversary of Lewis' death from pancreatic cancer.

The christening also saw a bipartisan congressional delegation made up of 30 members including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California), Rep. Maxine Waters (D-California), Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-New York), Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas), Rep. Jackie Speier (D-California), and Rep. Nikema Williams (D-Georgia), Lewis' successor.

Other dignitaries included former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus; Vice Adm. Ross Myers, commander, Fleet Cyber Command and commander, Tenth Fleet; Vice Adm. Roy Kitchener, commander, Naval Surface Forces; MSC commanding officer Adm. Michael Wettlaufer; and actress and social activist Alfre Woodard Spencer, the ship's sponsor.

Lewis served 17 terms as a congressman and was known as the dean of the Georgia congressional delegation. A civil rights activist, he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his long service in government by then-President Barack Obama in 2011.

"How perfect the motto of this ship: unbreakable perseverance," said Pelosi in her keynote address. "Everyone who sees this ship will be reminded of John's perseverance.... God truly blessed America with the dedication and leadership of John Lewis."

The 746-foot *Lewis* is the first of the new John Lewis-class previously known as the TAO(X). This class of oilers has the ability to carry 162,000 barrels of diesel ship fuel, aviation fuel and dry-stores cargo. The upgraded oiler is built with double hulls to protect against oil spills and strengthened cargo and ballast tanks, and will be equipped with basic

self-defense capabilities. The Lewis-class of oilers will replace the current Kaiser class fleet replenishment oilers as they age out of the MSC fleet.

"As the global maritime environment is increasingly crowded and contested, the *John Lewis* will continue to support our national security strategy in building partnerships with our friends and allies, and enable Naval forces to rapidly respond to crises, deter adversaries, and maintain forward presence to protect the homeland," said Wettlaufer. "*USNS John Lewis*, with current and future ships that make up our combat logistics force, are absolutely fundamental to that mission as they provide fuel, parts, provisions, and mail for Naval forces around the globe."

Six more Lewis-class oilers are on order for the Navy. In July 2016, US Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus that he would name them after prominent civil rights activists and leaders.



Ship's sponsor Alfre Woodard Spencer christens the *USNS John Lewis* in San Diego. (U.S. Navy Photo)

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. The union's website – www.seafarers.org – includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

<https://www.seafarers.org/news/labor-maritime-news/civmar-news/>

Forms are also available under "SIU Forms" in the ABOUT tab.

Contact Information

Vice President Government Services

Nicholas Celona:

Phone: (201) 434-6000

Email: ncelona@seafarers.org

Asst. Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo:

Phone: (253) 272-7774

Email: jvincenzo@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Sam Spain:

Phone: (757) 622-1892

Email: sspain@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Jesse Ruth:

Phone: (619) 581-6008

Email: jruth@seafarers.org

Groundbreaking SIU VP Hunt Retires, Caps Dedicated Career

The maritime industry proved a natural fit for Kathleen “Kate” Hunt, but that doesn’t mean her career was easy.

She played pioneering roles along the way, including service as the first female patrolman for the National Maritime Union (NMU) and the first female member of the SIU executive board. She weathered a rocky stretch (not of her doing) at the NMU and later handled major responsibilities for two SIU-affiliated unions.

Hunt happily declared herself “finished with engines, my friend” when describing her decision to retire as vice president of the SIU Government Services Division, effective Aug. 1. She had been a vice president since 2018.

“I’ve worked since I was 14 years old,” Hunt said. “I’ve never not worked. But initially, I will be sitting on a beach in Rhode Island, just looking out on the horizon. After that, I’m looking forward to a lot of family time. We’ve got lots of toddlers and babies in my family; I’d like to help my nieces and nephews, and just hang out with them. I’d also like to travel a little when the time is right.”

Hunt comes from a maritime family (her father was an NMU port agent, and many other relatives sailed), so it wasn’t shocking that she landed a job with a steamship authority in the 1970s. But her next move – sailing in the deck department of ferries in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, beginning in 1976 – was very uncommon for women in that era.

She came ashore as a patrolman four years later and continued serving as an NMU official until that union merged into the SIU in 2001, at which time she wasn’t sure about her future.

“God bless (SIU President) Mike Sacco. He let me keep working,” Hunt recalled. “He just wants people that like to work and do their jobs, so I did.”

After the merger, Hunt was assigned as a representative for the SIU’s Government Services Division, working with the SIU crews aboard Military Sealift



In this file photo from 2019, Hunt (center) stands with SIU Government Services Division members aboard the *Joshua Humphreys* in Norfolk, Virginia.

Command vessels, NOAA research vessels and other government-owned ships. She’d done similar work for the NMU.

Hunt also worked as a representative of the Seafarers Entertainment and Allied Trades Union (SEATU), serving members employed in the Northeast while being based at the SIU’s New York-area office.

In August 2016, Hunt was appointed by the SIU’s Executive Board to serve as the national director of the United Industrial Workers (UIW). In this capacity, Hunt oversaw dozens of UIW shops in the continental United States and Alaska and in the United States Virgin Islands. She held that post until her appointment (and subsequent reelection in 2020) as a vice president.

“Kate is one of the hardest-working officials we’ve ever had,” said SIU President Michael Sacco. “She’s been a tremendous asset to the members, and she did a great job representing them aboard the ships.”

“Kate is a complete professional,” said SIU Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel. “Whatever task she took on was handled thoroughly and with the membership’s interest in mind. She fought with vigor and usually came out with a win. Fitting into a male-dominated industry never distracted her. If anything, it played to her advantage. I would like to wish her a well-earned retirement and best wishes in her next phase of life. I’m betting she will be following Bruce Springsteen around the country while he’s on tour.”

Nicholas Celona, Hunt’s successor as vice president, said, “It’s an honor and a privilege to have known Kate and to have been a colleague. I hope she enjoys her next chapter of life, with fair winds and following seas.”

SIU Assistant Vice President Government Services Division Joe Vincenzo stated, “Well done and a well-deserved retirement, Kate. It was a pleasure and privilege working with you over the years on UIW and Government Services contracts, issues and membership services. Enjoy that margarita on the beach!”

Capt. Andrew M. Lindsey, vessel master aboard the *USNS Comfort*, included this succinct message when forwarding Hunt’s farewell email to the crew: “We are losing our Tiger Mother.”

Capt. Keith A. Walzak of the *USNS Grumman* described Hunt as “always on our side and at our call.”

In a written communication to Hunt, Chief Steward **Valerie McCaskill** said, “I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for being such an inspiration to the industry and myself. In the short time I was able to spend with you at the NOAA union contract negotiations, I learned so much from you. But the thing that truly captivated me was how you walked in the room with such authority, humility, and grace that commanded presidential respect and admiration from all. I was blown away. I had never seen that before and yet I loved every minute. From that day forward you have changed my perspective on how to represent women in the industry. Own who you are, command respect with humility, and never settle for their best offer but demand they give you what you deserve! Thank you for being such a phenomenally fierce powerhouse!”

Looking ahead, Hunt said she has “full faith and confidence that Nick and the team that’s already in place will be member-service oriented and do great things.”

She cited the successful resolution of the “gangways up” beef as one of her biggest accomplishments



Hunt addresses Seafarers at the July membership meeting in Piney Point, Maryland.

(it involved prolonged restriction to ship during the pandemic), and also commended the work of former SIU Assistant Vice President Government Services Chet Wheeler and counsel Deborah Kleinberg (both are retired) for helping improve shipboard habitability standards.

“I think we led the way on that front,” Hunt said. “We were and still are the lead on making sure that the standards aboard the ships are fair and equitable and decent, and that’s also true of the hotels (where CIVMARS stay). You can’t negotiate wages in the federal sector, so it’s working conditions that we always focused on.”

She added that while there are some differences in the federal maritime sector as compared to the private sector, “Seamen are seamen. And it always makes me happy when I go aboard a ship and you see someone you helped. I’d see guys years later who had redeemed themselves and had a decent career. I was always really proud we helped guys hold onto their jobs and maintain their careers.”

Asked what advice she’d give to people entering the industry, Hunt provided a twofold answer. First, she said, “Join the union!” Second, “Just do your job.”

Hunt said she will miss her colleagues, including fellow officials, members, and personnel from the government and the military.

“I really have been very blessed,” she said. “All I ever wanted to do was be a good shipmate, and I think I’ve been that. I’m really at peace with my decision to retire. My only regret is that it’s been a year since I’ve been on a ship.”

Union Secures Habitability Settlement

The SIU in early August secured monetary compensation for eligible CIVMARS from the *USS Mount Whitney* (vessel pictured at right, in Italy). The union had filed a grievance concerning habitability issues beginning in summer 2020. At that time, the ship had gone into a yard for repairs and regular maintenance, and the crew was berthed in a floating hotel constructed on a barge called the Vivaldi. The bottom line for CIVMARS: The union got a settlement of \$20 per day for the period of July 20, 2020 to August 31, 2020 for each of the unlicensed bargaining unit members currently employed with MSC and who served aboard and were lodged aboard the Vivaldi during that period. (U.S. Navy photo)



SIU Mourns Loss of Richard Trumka

AFL-CIO President Had ‘Soft Spot for Seafarers’

Somehow, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka managed to be simultaneously larger-than-life and eminently approachable.

Likely due to the former quality, the initial reaction among SIU officials and staff to unofficial news of Trumka’s death on Aug. 5 primarily consisted of disbelief. Trumka’s high-energy personality and regular appearances on television (promoting workers’ rights) as recently as that same week seemingly precluded his departure, and there had been no hints of health problems.

Unfortunately, confirmation soon followed: Trumka, 72, succumbed to a heart attack while on a camping trip with family.

Outpourings of sympathy began the same day, including comments from President Biden, Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-New York), and fellow labor leaders from throughout the movement.

SIU President Michael Sacco enjoyed a genuine friendship with Trumka.

“Rich and I worked together for decades, going back to the 1970s, when we were involved in labor disputes in Missouri, Kentucky and Illinois,” Sacco stated. “Throughout his entire career, no one worked harder for America’s working families.

“Rich was fearless and down-to-earth, and even though he had plenty of formal education, at his core he remained a working-class union guy and a family man,” Sacco continued. “He never forgot his roots with the Mine Workers. Those of you who were lucky enough to hear Rich give a speech in person know that he commanded a room like few others. His passion and intelligence and foresight always came through loud and clear.”

He concluded, “The labor movement that Rich led and loved will move forward with heavy hearts – but we will move forward.... That’s how we honor his legacy.”

SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez said, “If you ever heard Rich address a crowd, you immediately knew what this man was about. His passion, fervor and compassion for the working men and women of this country was the hallmark of his being. Little doubt was left as he bared his soul in the struggle for equality both economically and socially. He was truly an American hero. He had a soft spot for the Seafarers going back to his Mine Worker days in the 70s, and many of us got to know him personally. The world has a lost a good man, but there is no doubt at all that his legacy will be carried on by millions.”

SIU Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel stated, “With heavy hearts, we learned of the passing of Brother Trumka. Rich was a true leader and inspiration to many. Our heart goes out to Rich’s family as well as the 12 million brothers and sisters in his extended family of the Federation. He will be missed.”

President Biden described Trumka as “a dear friend, a great American, and a good man. I will miss him as will the countless workers whose lives he made better, and the labor movement he led with daring vision. As I told his family after we heard the news, Jill and I send our love –today and always.”

On the Senate floor the morning of Aug. 5, Schumer said, “The working people of America have lost a fierce warrior, at a time when we needed him most. Just yesterday, Rich was lending his support to the striking miners in Alabama. Following in his father’s footsteps,



SIU President Michael Sacco (left) and AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka are pictured at the federation’s 2017 convention in St. Louis.

he worked in the mines. He went to Penn State, earned his law degree – but he didn’t practice, didn’t go to some fancy place, he went right to work for the United Mine Workers, which he led for so many years.

“He had in his veins, in every atom of his body, the heart, the thoughts, the needs of the working people of America,” Schumer continued. “He was them. Rich Trumka was the working people of America. He never had any airs, he never put it on, and he cared about his fellow workers so. He was a great leader, and he knew that the labor movement and working people had to expand and be diverse. One of his passions as a leader was immigration reform, which I talked to him about repeatedly, because they were working people, too. No matter where they came from, or what they look like.... We have just lost a giant, and we need him so. We will remember him forever, and his memory will, I know, importune all of us to do even more for the working people of America who Rich Trumka so dearly and deeply loved.”

Trumka served as president of the federation since 2009. In 1982, at age 33, he ran on a reform ticket and was elected the youngest president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

There, he led one of the most successful strikes in recent American history against the Pittston Coal Company, which tried to avoid paying into an industry-wide health and pension fund.

Trumka was elected AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer in 1995, and held that post until 2009, when he was elected president.

His commitment to improving life for working people began early. He grew up in the small coal-mining

town of Nemacolin, Pennsylvania. Nearly all the men in his family, including his father and grandfather, were coal miners. Trumka followed them into the mines, working there as he attended Penn State and Villanova University Law School.

Acting AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said, “Rich was a legend, from his early days as president of the United Mine Workers of America to his unparalleled leadership as the voice of America’s labor movement. Rich loved workers. And he knew there was nothing more powerful than workers standing together for a better life.

“If you ever watched Rich at a rally or on a picket line, his face would light up with excitement and hope,” she continued. “He never forgot who he was working for. He never forgot who he was fighting for. America’s working people were his guiding light for more than 50 years.... We are not done yet. Rich would never allow it. Now more than ever, we must come together, as one federation, to carry out the mission Rich devoted his life to.”

UMWA President Cecil Roberts said Trumka “was more than the leader of the American labor movement, he was an unequalled voice for the workers around the world.... Richard and I were partners in leadership at the UMWA for many years, but we were more than that. He was my brother, he was my friend, he was my confidant.”

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten stated, “Rich Trumka was our brother in the truest sense of the word. His sudden passing is a tremendous loss for the entire labor movement, and for working families across the country.”

Meeting With MSC

SIU officials meet with Military Sealift Command executives and staff in Norfolk, Virginia. Among those pictured are SIU VP Nick Celona (second from right), SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (third from left), and SIU Representative Sam Spain (far right). Celona also recently has met with several SIU Government Services Division crews on vessels in Virginia and California. Visit the SIU Facebook page for photos from those meetings (www.facebook.com/SeafarersInternational/).

