A Proclamation on National Maritime Day

From sea to shining sea, whether in still or raging waters, America has always been a Nation of maritime travel. Across our 25,000 miles of waterways and over 360 commercial ports, the United States Merchant Marine is integral to our Nation’s prosperity. From helping move goods throughout the supply chain to supporting our troops wherever they are deployed, the Merchant Marine plays a vital role in the economic security and defense of our country. On National Maritime Day and every day, we honor the Merchant Mariners deployed around the world…. Facing a once-in-a-century pandemic, you have adapted. You have kept sailing. You have kept America going.

“It’s my distinct honor to be here as MARAD’s 20th administrator,” said Phil- lips. “I’m thrilled to have this opportunity to serve our nation, and to work with so many regulatory stakeholders, many of whom are here in person today…. To foster, promote and develop the maritime industry to meet our nation’s current and future economic and security needs.”

She continued, “National Maritime Day is our annual opportunity to celebrate and commemorate, to honor our maritime history and to make sure our fellow Americans understand how critical the maritime industry has been—and continues to be—to our nation’s success. Most importantly, today we are thankful for the women and men of the U.S. Merchant Marine, and we celebrate their essential role in safeguarding and strengthening our nation.”

SIU officials and apprentices from the union-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education are on stage. Administrator Ann Phillips, SIU VP George Tricker, SIU Exec. VP Augie Tellez, Deputy Maritime Administrator Lucinda Lesley, SIU Secretary-Treasurer David Heinde, MTI Executive Secretary-Treasurer Daniel Duncan, Apprentices from the SIU-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education are on stage.

Today, our Merchant Marine remains inextricably linked to our national and economic security and competitiveness. Merchant mariners’ legacy of perseverance and dedication is carried on by today’s civilian mariners. As tyranny and violence again cause the tragic loss of innocent lives and senseless destruction in Europe, our merchant mariners have answered the call of duty by crewing vessels of our United States merchant mariners.

We also salute the remarkable efforts of our entire maritime industry throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. They put the well-being of the American people first, risking their lives to ensure that essential cargoes of medical supplies and personal protective equipment were delivered to those in need across our Nation.

As we continue to build a better America, our Merchant Marine plays a pivotal role in securing our coastal and inland waterways so that they are open to trade. No matter the hardship, mariners provide a smooth passage for America’s critical domestic goods and serve as stewards of our Nation’s trading gateways with the rest of the world. My Administration continues its unwavering support of the United States Merchant Marine, as well as the Jones Act, which protects the integrity of our domestic maritime industry and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, and contributes over $150 billion in economic benefits.

We also know that the future success of the vital maritime industry depends on its ability to attract the talent of all Americans and reflect the diversity of the Nation it serves. That is why we are resolved to continue the urgent work of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the ranks of the Merchant Marine and to end sexual assault, sexual harassment, and bullying in the workplace.

Our Nation’s merchant mariners serve with honor and integrity each and every day. Today, we recognize their service and sacrifice and recommit ourselves to fulfilling the promises and uplifting the values that they continue to protect.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved May 20, 1933, has designated May 22 of each year as “National Maritime Day” to commemorate the first transoceanic voyage by a steamship in 1819 by the S.S. Savannah. By this resolution, the Congress has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation calling for its appropriate observance. I also request all ships sailing under the American flag drop ship’s on that day.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim May 22, 2022, as National Maritime Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day and to celebrate the United States Merchant Marine and maritime industry with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-sixth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

From a place to another, the American flag has been carried from one place to another across our Nation.
Union Yes

The recent win by workers who formed a union at an Amazon distribution center in New York is a victory in its own right but it also signals even greater potential for employees across the country. For anyone who missed it, this was not April Fools’ Day joke.

On April 1, more than 2,500 individuals voted to join the Amazon Labor Union. They won the election by more than 500 votes, overcoming a massive anti-union campaign and securing the first such victory in the company’s history. One prominent publication called it “one of the biggest wins for organized labor in a generation.”

Whether an election happens at a large facility like the Amazon warehouse or at comparatively smaller ones like the various Starbucks locations that have recently unionized, it’s always heartening to see workers pulling together and choosing union representation. It also demonstrates that even though our nation’s labor laws remain severely outdated, workers can in fact be free to do so, without employer interference. The PRO Act would give them that chance. Meanwhile, kudos to the grassroots movement in New York that culminated in a spirit-lifting victory for workers.

Register and Vote

While some Seafarers already have voted in this year’s primaries, it’s not too soon for others to double-check their voter registration status ahead of Election Day 2022 (Tuesday, November 8). Make sure you and your eligible family members are registered, and please support pro-maritime, pro-worker candidates.

Without question, there has been an awakening across the U.S. regarding workers’ rights. In part, that’s why the labor movement finds itself at a crossroads with the elections on the horizon.

It’s no secret that union membership across the country has declined over the years, but union households still play a major role in determining outcomes of elections. This depends, though, on everyone from the movement exercising their constitutional right to vote. That the enemies of the working class have attempted so many times to interfere with that right only reveals how terrified they are of a united labor movement making its voice heard.

This encouragement goes beyond presidential and congressional elections. Labor union families must vote the whole ballot from state legislatures to city hall to local school boards. Those who seek to swipe power away from America’s working class operate best when under the cover of darkness, funneling money into races and legislative manipulations that mostly escape the notice of national and international eyes.

That’s why labor cannot leave any political stone unturned. Leadership must do its part to educate members on the issues, but the responsibility rests with each union member to cast her or his ballot strategically. Without concentrated political power at every level of government, the labor movement cannot achieve its goals. And make no mistake, those goals benefit not just America’s working families, but all of America.

AFL-CIO Opposes Open Register

The AFL-CIO Executive Council on March 15 unanimously adopted a statement opposing a proposed open registry in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

SIU President Michael Sacco, the council’s longest-serving member, provided background on the situation to other board members.

In part, the statement reads, “American merchant mariners are the gold standard for the world in terms of safety and training. From iron ore for steel mills along the Great Lakes to food aid to hungry citizens in Africa from materiel for American armed forces stationed around the world to vital household goods at domestic ports, they deliver.

‘For generations, foreign interests and their allies have tried to find ways to circumvent the nation’s labor and tax laws to take good jobs away from hard-working Americans,’ the statement continues. ‘The latest effort, announced last month, calls for the creation of a so-called open registry for the U.S. Virgin Islands. As outlined, this initiative would take cargo from U.S.-flag vessels, crews, and vessels, then place it on vessels that do not use American crews, do not pay American taxes and do not meet American safety and labor standards. This attempt to create a flag of convenience using the U.S. Virgin Islands is wrong and harmful to American workers.’

The statement concludes, ‘The AFL-CIO joins with the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO; the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO; and the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO in calling upon the Biden Administration, the Congress, the Department of Defense and the Maritime Administration to reject any effort that U.S. Virgin Islands-flag vessels be treated as if they are the same as U.S.-flag U.S.-crewed for any purpose or for any program. At the same time, we reiterate our commitment to work with the Biden Administration and the Congress to achieve a more robust, commercially viable U.S.-flag, U.S.-crewed fleet that will continue to protect America’s economic, military and homeland security.

Previously, a joint statement from shipboard maritime unions including the SIU pointed out, ‘The proposed U.S. Virgin Islands flag of convenience open registry will not benefit the United States or America’s maritime industry, any more than any other second or open registry benefits a national flag country. In fact, the establishment and growth of second registries by other industrialized nations has done little more than decimate their national flag fleets to the point that they are no longer able to provide the requisite military security and logistical support to their flag nations. 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-mari time-news/current-news/.

Forms are also available under “SIU Forms” in the ABOUT US section of the website.

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Biden Reaffirms Support for Maritime

President Biden, meeting with the AFL-CIO leadership and principal officers of international unions on April 12 during a gathering at a Sheet Metal Workers facility in Wilmington, Delaware. Attendees included U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pennsylvania); U.S. Reps. Mary Scapagnini (D-Pennsylvania); U.S. Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Pennsylvania); Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf (D); Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney (D); and AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler, who traveled with the vice president.

Harris described Shuler as a friend and “a fighter. She goes to work every day for the working people of our nation, and she is an essential partner to our administration.”

The vice president’s speech was titled, “The Administration’s Historic Commitment to Worker Organizing and Empowerment.” She detailed many of the steps that demonstrate the commitment, including cross-country travel with Walsh for visits to “job sites and training facilities and union halls.”

Admiring mentioning Walsh’s long background in organized labor (including growing up in a union household), Harris said that although their respective histories differ, they have much in common.

“My parents met while they were marching for civil rights,” Harris said. “They taught me that people make a difference and that when we use our collective voice, whether at a protest or a picket line, we can drive great change. And that belief in the power of solidarity has guided me, [Walsh], and all of our lives entire. And it guided yours, as well.”

“President Joe Biden and I are determined to lead the most pro-union administration in America’s history,” she continued. “We know, each and every day in ways both big and small, unions change lives. Unions negotiate better wages and safer working conditions for millions of workers around our country.”

Harris also pointed out, “Even if you are not a member of a union, you (should) thank unions for every benefit that you receive. Thank unions for the five-day workweek, for the weekend, for sick leave. We should all—anyone who works in America—know that you have benefited from the hard work, from the fight of the leaders in this movement. Our labor leaders, our unions train people to take on good jobs.”

However, unions contribute more to society than just a skilled workforce, she said. The labor movement and the good jobs it helps create and maintain “provides community.” It provides home. It provides a place that remembers that nobody should be made to fight alone. It is so fundamental in terms of the approach, which says that we all know we are stronger when we stand together. That is at the heart of the message that Walsh and Shuler behind this podium embodies.”

She continued, “Unions create stronger communities. They bring people together. And they, of course, protect workers from things like harassment and discrimination. They give workers a voice. Put simply, unions move our nation forward. And the American people know it. The American people know that when unions win, workers win, families win, communities win. When unions win, America wins, as evidenced by the fact that, today, unions have their highest approval rating since 1965.”

Despite the favorable views of unions, it often remains an uphill climb to join one. The vice president said that’s because, in part, “powerful forces in our country have been hard at work building barriers to stop workers from organizing. We’ve got to then take it on with a powerful counterforce, which is why our administration is working even harder to tear those barriers down.”

She discussed the White House Workforce Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, which she and Walsh lead. “Last year, our task force proposed nearly 70 actions the executive branch of our government can take to protect and expand the rights of workers to organize and collectively bargain,” Harris stated. “Our President, Joe Biden, accepted every single one.”

Harris explained that the bipartisan infrastructure bill that recently became law “will put thousands of union workers, carpenters, and pipefitters, and plumbers, and, yes, sheet metal workers, to work across the country.”

She concluded, “Every worker deserves a safe and a healthy workplace. Every worker deserves a job with good wages and fair benefits. Every worker in America deserves the choice to join a union. And the President and I will always stand with you to defend these sacred principles. Our administration will do everything in our power to ensure the workers of our nation can succeed and can thrive. Because when workers succeed and thrive, so does our nation.”

World War II U.S. Merchant Mariners Honored With Congressional Gold Medal in D.C.

The SIU on May 18 joined in celebrating long-overdue recognition for U.S. Merchant Mariners of World War II as they received the Congressional Gold Medal in the Capitol Building.

Ten members of the American Merchant Marine Veterans (AMM) participated in the one-hour ceremony, which featured members of congress, the administration, and the military. SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez represented the SIU at the event.

Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Congress. Veterans received the medal on behalf of the approximately 1,500 remaining mariners of World War II.

More than 2,000 SIU members lost their lives in wartime service.

“The bravely demonstrated by the U.S. Merchant Mariners to keep Allied Forces supplied during World War II is second to none,” said U.S. Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper in a statement earlier today.

Also taking part in the presentation were Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, commissioner of the U.S. Military Sealift Command, U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Scott Buschman; and U.S. Maritime Deputy Administrator Lucinda Lesley.

The gold medal will be placed on display in the American Merchant Marine Museum at the Academy in Kings Point, New York. The World War II mariners on hand received duplicates. They included Yoho, William Balabanow, Gerard Driscoll, James T. Lindsey, Charles Million, George Eoffenhauer Sr., Bob Ross, James Sciple, Jack Laub and George Shaw.

For information on ordering a replica of the medal, email Katrina McRae at katrina.mcrae@siuc.edu.
SIU Snapshots from Around the Fleet

SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo and SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth recently met with federal mariners in San Diego. They also helped conduct habitability inspections on two new builds at General Dynamics NASSCO, a union shipyard. The photo immediately below, right was taken at NASSCO; Vincenzo is second from right, while Ruth is at left. The other two individuals are from the U.S. Military Sealift Command. The photo above was taken with CIVMARS aboard the USNS John Lewis.

SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (fifth from right) and SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth (far right) meet with new and veteran CIVMARS in San Diego while the mariners await vessel assignments.

SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth (fourth from right) meets with new members at the West Coast CSU.

SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (fifth from right) and SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth (far right) meet with new and veteran CIVMARS in San Diego while the mariners await vessel assignments.

SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona (right) and SIU Port Agent Chris Westbrook discuss future job opportunities for Seafarers. They’re pictured at the New Orleans hall.

SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo (right) is pictured with U.S. Rep. Marilyn Strickland (D-Washington) at a kickoff event for Washington State’s 10th District.

The CIVMAR-crewed fast combat support ship USNS Supply (left) and SIU-crewed tanker Maersk Peary conduct the first two-station consolidated cargo replenishment at sea (CONSOL). (Photo by navigator, 2nd Mate Daniel Hall, from an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter flown by Lt. Cmdr. Jared Webster)