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With SIU Officials in Attendance, Sobeck Takes Helm at MSC

SIU officials were among the hundreds of attendees at the U.S. Military Sealift Command's (MSC) most recent change-of-command ceremony, which took place Sept. 8 in Norfolk, Virginia, aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower*.

Representing the union were Vice President Government Services Division Nicholas Celona, Assistant Vice President Joe Vincenzo, and Representative Sam Spain.

Rear Adm. Philip E. Sobeck is the agency's new commanding officer; he succeeded Rear Adm. Michael Wettlaufer, who'd been at the helm since June 2019 (mere months before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic).

The head of the U.S. Transportation Command (US-TRANSCOM), Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost, served as presiding officer for the change of command ceremony, while the commanding officer of the U.S. Fleet Forces Command, Adm. Daryl Caudle, oversaw Wettlaufer's retirement ceremony.

"What I learned to appreciate from the start is that MSC is an entire Navy within a Navy," said Wettlaufer. "Operating a globally deployed fleet leveraging integration across the services and Navy fleets with our commercial shipping and repair industry plus labor partners, MSC generates combat power – that is 145 government and commercially-owned and operated ships today. With only two percent of the budget and at two percent of the people when compared to the Navy, this lean team also mans, trains, equips, deploys, sustains and operates nearly 20% of the Navy's 290 battle Force ships while providing global logistics support to the other 80%. Importantly, we continue to build new ships to join our stable."

He added, "I am proud to have been part of this dedicated group that is relentlessly focused on our mission: providing agile logistics, strategic sealift, as well as specialized missions anywhere in the world, for the joint warfighter 24/7, 365 days a year."

Sobeck takes command after serving as director of Strategic Plans, Policy, and Logistics at USTRANSCOM, headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, where he oversaw the revision of the command strategy. His previous flag assignments also include director, 21st Century Sailor Office; commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 3/Command Task Force (CTF) 36; and commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific/CTF 73.

"Because adversaries continue to challenge our peace, and the peace of our children, with the threat of armed conflict, we must continue to evolve to meet the demands of contested logistics and provide senior national leaders decision advantage," Van Ovost said. "That's power. That's projection. That's advantage. And I trust that Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck will accelerate this evolution."



Pictured from left are SIU Representative Sam Spain, USTRANSCOM Commanding Officer Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost, Alan Frosch (spouse of Gen. Van Ovost), SIU VP Nicholas Celona and SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo.

"I am extremely humbled and honored to be the 29th commander of Military Sealift Command," said Sobeck. "After having served in the U.S. Transportation 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."

MSC is self-described as "the leading maritime logistics provider for the Department of Defense supporting Navy fleet commanders and USTRANSCOM operating more than 130 vessels worldwide and managing a \$4.8 billion annual budget with a workforce of 5,000 civil service and contract mariners, supported by 1,300 shore staff and 1,200 active duty and reserve military personnel."

Van Ovost added, "To the men and women of Military Sealift Command, you clearly demonstrate the Navy's core values of honor, courage, and commitment. I am proud to serve with you. You are critical in the mission to protect the security of the American people. [And] you are vital in the expansion of economic prosperity and opportunity. TRANSCOM, the joint force, and our nation thanks you for your service and sacrifice."



SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona (right) greets the new commanding officer of MSC, Rear Adm. Philip Sobeck.

U.S. Treasury Report: Unions Benefit America's Workers, Economy

The U.S. Treasury Department in late August released its most comprehensive ever look at the role that labor unions play in the American economy with a new report by the Department's Office of Economic Policy. The report represents one of the more than 70 actions implemented by the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, chaired by Vice President Harris.

The report finds 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, unions contribute to a more robust and resilient economy.

In a news release announcing the report, the Department said, "President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Yellen and the Administration have consistently championed the rights of workers and the role of strong labor unions in contributing to a thriving middle-class and economy – including through good-paying jobs, safe working conditions, and equitable treatment for workers."

The report's key findings include:

- Middle-class workers reap substantial benefits from unionization. Unions raise the wages of their members by 10 to 15 percent (compared to unrepresented workers). 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 increased 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

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President's Column

On the Right Course

Both within the SIU and in the larger U.S. maritime industry, we naturally spend most of our time focused on current and future tasks and challenges. At the same time, it's important to step back every now and then and acknowledge the good work we're doing and the very real progress we've made.

For examples, look no further than recent issues of both the *Federal Mariner* and the *Seafarers LOG*. We've reported on new, American-made tonnage in different sectors of the industry. This includes a deep-sea containership (sailing in the Jones Act trade), a passenger ferry, and the lead in a new class of multi-purpose training vessels, along with multiple vessels that signify ongoing job security for members of the SIU Government Services Division. Collectively, those vessels also reinforce the excellent capabilities of our brothers and sisters in domestic shipbuilding.



David Heindel

I also salute the good-hearted volunteerism of our SIU brothers and sisters in the Pacific Northwest, who once again stepped up for the annual "Paint Tacoma" project (check out our coverage on the SIU website). While their efforts aren't new, they also aren't taken for granted. And those labors of love speak volumes about the rank-and-file membership. Our members may sometimes have tough exteriors, but they are generous, community-minded people who are happy to help others.

Speaking of assisting others – and switching subjects back to our everyday work – the SIU recently signed on in support of new legislation aimed at ensuring that U.S.-grown commodities remain the cornerstone of international food aid. The American Farmers Feed the World Act of 2023 offers numerous potential benefits, not the least of which is that it would boost the amount of cargo available to American-flag vessels (and their U.S. citizen crews).

The bill has bipartisan support. Upon its introduction, one of our industry's most steadfast supporters, U.S. Rep. John Garamendi (D-California), said in part: "American agriculture feeds the world, and United States-flag vessels are ready to deliver critical food aid to those countries most in need. Congress always intended for these foreign relief programs to be a triple bottom line: A win for America's farmers in years when they grow more than they can sell. A win for our nation's shipbuilding and maritime industries, guaranteeing cargo during peacetime so we have the U.S.-flag vessels needed during wartime. And a win for projecting the generous spirit of Americans to help those starving around the world. Our bipartisan bill restores this careful balance to ensure that taxpayer dollars for foreign relief are spent on American-grown foods transported on U.S.-flag vessels, not foreign alternatives."

This is one more example of why the SIU remains politically active. Seafarers know that our industry is heavily regulated, especially at the federal level. Our advocacy is vital to maintaining laws and programs like the Jones Act, the Maritime Security Program and cargo preference. Our political efforts also help lead to gains such as the new Tanker Security Program and the Cable Security Fleet.

Put another way: We're politically active because SIU jobs depend on it. And our advocacy for U.S. crews, American-flag ships and domestic shipbuilding is buoyed by the consistently outstanding work of Seafarers. People know that we are proud to serve as part of America's fourth arm of defense, and we're always committed to delivering the goods. This was quite evident during the pandemic, when our members and many other mariners stayed on the job while others worked from home. Any concerns about the supply chain did not apply to American-flag ships and American mariners.

We do indeed have a lot of work ahead of us, but I'm optimistic about our course.

SIU Directory

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Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President

Tom Orzechowski, Secretary-Treasurer

George Tricker, Vice President Contracts

Nicholas Celona,

Vice President Government Services

Joe Vincenzo,

Asst. Vice President Government Services

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MSC's USNS Navajo Christened

New jobs are on the way for members of the SIU Government Services Division following the Aug. 26 christening of the *USNS Navajo* in Houma, Louisiana.

The vessel is the first in a class of 10 – five of which, including the *Navajo*, are being constructed at Bollinger Shipyards, while the other five are slated to be built at Austal USA in Mobile, Alabama. The vessels are classified as towing, salvage and rescue ships – abbreviated as T-ATS – and are planned as replacements for the U.S. Military Sealift Command's (MSC) Powhatan-class and Safeguard-class ocean tugs.

Bollinger also will build the *USNS Cherokee Nation*, *USNS Saginaw Ojibwe Anishinabek*, *USNS Lenni Lenape*, and *USNS Muscogee Creek Nation*. Projected delivery dates are one per upcoming fiscal year.

Austal has started construction on the *USNS Billy Frank Jr.* and *USNS Solomon Atkinson*, and is under contract for the detail design and construction of three more ships whose respective names haven't been announced. Projected delivery dates range from early 2025 to 2026.

During the August ceremony, the Honorable Arlando Teller, assistant secretary for tribal affairs, U.S. Department of Transportation, served as the keynote speaker and joined ship sponsor Jocelyn Billy as she broke a ceremonial bottle of sparkling wine across the bow of the *USNS Navajo*. (Billy is a member of

the Navajo Nation, Miss Navajo Nation 2006, and is a strong advocate for Navajo Nation veterans.)

The new Navajo class of U.S. Navy towing, salvage and rescue ships is named in recognition of the tribe and the Diné people, and their many contributions to the U.S. military and the country's defense. While many Americans are familiar with the famed Navajo Code Talkers, the Diné people have answered our nation's call and served our armed forces with honor and valor in nearly every major conflict since the birth of our nation, the Navy pointed out in a news release about the christening.

"This ceremony signifies more than the unveiling of a new class of towing, salvage and rescue vessels. It is an homage to the Navajo people's rich military legacy," said Justin Ahasteen, executive director of the Navajo Nation's Washington office. "Navajo warriors throughout history have tirelessly shielded our nation. From the legendary Navajo Code Talkers of World War II to the brave Navajo men and women serving today, our nation embodies the spirit of warrior protectors and defenders."

"The T-ATS 6 combines two classes of ships for your nation and your Navy," said MSC Deputy Commander Rear Adm. Jeffrey Spivey. "It combines those into one class that is more capable than any ship we have out there in this salvage class."

Ships in the new class will be 263 feet long and have 59-foot beams, with a sailing speed slightly greater than 15 knots.

Report: Unions Help America's Economy

Continued from page 1

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. Modern unions have broad representation across race and gender. In 2021, Black men had a particularly high union representation rate at 13 percent, as compared to the population average of 10 percent. The diverse demographics of modern union membership mean that the benefits of any policy that strengthens today's unions would be felt across the population.

- Finally, in addition to supporting the middle class, 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.

The Biden-Harris Administration recognizes the benefits of unions to the middle class and the broader economy and continues to take steps to strengthen their role.

Promisingly, there have been recent signs of a reinvigorated labor movement, as union election petitions in 2022 bounced back from the pandemic to their highest level since 2015, and public opinion of labor unions is at its highest level in over 50 years. Actions taken and planned by the Biden-Harris Administration to advance this progress include:

- Prioritizing the passage of the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act and the Public Sector Freedom to Negotiate Act.

- Appointing a General Counsel and Board Members to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) committed to protecting the right of workers to organize in the workplace.

- Increasing the funding of the NLRB to enable them to expand enforcement activities.

- Creating the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment, which, under the leadership of Vice President Harris, works with agencies on ways to use their existing statutory authority to support worker organizing and bargaining.

- Signing Executive Order 14063, which requires the use of project labor agreements on federal construction projects of \$35 million or more.

- Signing Executive Order 14003 to promote the rights of federal employees to collectively bargain.

- Launching the Good Jobs Initiative to ensure the provision of critical information to workers, employers, and government—including about the union advantage—as they work to improve job quality and create access to good jobs free from discrimination and harassment for all working people.

- Promoting "know your rights" initiatives to provide workers with better information about their organizing and bargaining rights.

- Announcing a new rule to raise wage standards of construction workers by updating prevailing wage regulations issued under the Davis-Bacon and Related Acts, which require payment of locally prevailing wages and fringe benefits to more than one million construction workers.

- Requiring employers to pay prevailing wages and abide by apprenticeship requirements to claim the full value of many clean energy tax incentives in the Inflation Reduction Act, as part of the Treasury Department's implementation of the law.

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.

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Heindel Elected to AFL-CIO Executive Council

Federation Honors SIU President Emeritus Sacco

Seafarers International Union President David Heindel is the newest member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Heindel was seated at the beginning of the organization's summer meeting July 18-19 at AFL-CIO headquarters in Washington, D.C. He is one of 55 affiliate presidents and other officers that collectively serve as the governing body for the federation of labor unions. The SIU is an affiliate of the AFL-CIO.

In thanking the council for its unanimous vote, Heindel declared, "Anything the Seafarers can do domestically and internationally for each of the affiliates, we are here to help."

Prior to Heindel's election, AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Fred Redmond read a statement thanking retired SIU President Michael Sacco for his tenure on the council (the full text appears below).

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler noted Sacco was the longest-serving member of the Executive Council when he retired. (He was elected in 1991.) She said she and Redmond were honored to have Sacco run their election to lead the AFL-CIO at last year's convention in Philadelphia.

The statement reads:

On the Retirement of Michael Sacco

The AFL-CIO Executive Council celebrates the service of our brother and friend, Michael Sacco, the longest-serving president in the history of the Seafarers International Union (SIU).

During his more than three decades as international president and six decades of membership with SIU, Sacco proved to be a staunch champion for generations of merchant mariners and America's working families.

A native of Brooklyn, Sacco served in the U.S. Air Force before joining the Seafarers in 1958 and then working aboard U.S.-flag merchant vessels. In 1960, he came ashore to serve the SIU in a succession of union posts, including those of patrolman, port agent and headquarters representative. He served as vice president of the Seafarers Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship from 1968 to 1979, and helped prepare the next generation of merchant mariners.

From 1980 to 1988, Sacco directed the SIU's Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters division as vice president, and in June 1988, the Seafarers International Union of North America Executive Board appointed him president, a post he would hold for nearly 35 years.



SIU President David Heindel (center) is congratulated by AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler (right) and AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Fred Redmond.

In November 1991, Sacco was elected to the AFL-CIO Executive Council, beginning his tenure as its longest-serving member.

During his service as SIU president and president of the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO, his leadership brought security and stability to the Sea-

farers, a successful merger with the National Maritime Union, and solidarity with the numerous maritime unions.

Mike Sacco dedicated his life to the SIU and to furthering the values of trade unionism. He is an inspiration to us all and we wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement.

School, Union Host MSC Officials



The SIU and its affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education in late July hosted a quarterly labor-management meeting at the school that also included personnel from the U.S. Military Sealift Command (MSC), the MM&P and the MEBA. Attendees covered a wide range of topics pertaining to federal-sector mariners. Following the meeting, they toured the campus in Piney Point, Maryland. Among those pictured in the posed photo (right to left, starting at far right) are SIU Representative Sam Spain, SIU Counsel Jon Madden, SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona and (far left) SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo.



Biden Gives Shout-Out to SIU, Reiterates Maritime Support

With SIU President David Heindel seated near the podium, President Biden on July 20 offered supportive remarks about both the union and America's freight cabotage law during a speech at Philly Shipyard (which employs union workers).

Biden was there to help celebrate the ceremonial start of construction of the first offshore wind vessel of its kind (a scour ship, the *Acadia*) to be Made in America and Jones Act-compliant. The vessel, which will place rocks on the seabed to secure the base for offshore wind turbines, is being constructed for Seafarers-contracted Great Lakes Dredge and Dock.

With hundreds of unionized workers in attendance, Biden noted that the SIU will provide shipboard manpower when the vessel is completed. He mentioned that several other unions will be involved in the ship's construction.

He also stated, "Some folks may not know, there was a law in 1920 called the Jones Act that was passed. It says ships travelling between U.S. ports have to be American-built, American-owned and have American crews. There are some who are content to rely on ships built overseas, without American crews to operate them. Again, not on my watch. We're strengthening American shipbuilding, supporting good union jobs, and bringing offshore-wind supply chains back home."

Heindel met with Biden before the ceremony.

"I thanked the president for his support of the Jones Act and the U.S. Merchant Marine. I also thanked him



Pictured at the shipyard are (from left) SIU Philadelphia Port Agent Joe Baselice, U.S. Rep. Mary Scanlon (D-Pennsylvania) and SIU President David Heindel.

for bringing good union jobs for the wind industry," Heindel stated.

During the ceremony, Biden talked about "the progress we've made building an economy from the middle out and the bottom up."

He said unions "built the middle class, and it changed the economic direction of this country."

Turning his attention to recent job growth, Biden cited "over 13 million new jobs built across the country and nearly half a million of them here in Pennsylvania just

in the last two-and-a-half years. Eight hundred-thousand manufacturing jobs (created in the U.S.), 28,000 here in Pennsylvania alone in the last two-and-a-half years. That's more jobs in two years than any president has created in a four-year term. Unemployment is below 4 percent – the longest stretch of unemployment below 4 percent in the last 50 years. We're beginning to come back, folks. We can because we're giving workers a chance."

The president also said that his "Investing in America agenda is bringing our clean energy supply chains home. Since I took office, we've seen more than \$16 billion in new offshore wind investments, including 18 offshore wind vessels, 12 manufacturing facilities, and 13 ports. Today, we announced the first-ever offshore wind sale in the Gulf of Mexico. We're going to the Gulf.... Across the Delaware River in Paulsboro, New Jersey, workers are welding the steel foundation for another large-scale wind project. That's going to create more than 3,000 good-paying jobs. A project off the coast of New York will use a vessel built in the shipyards of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida and rely on an electrical substation engineered in Kansas and made in Texas."

He added, "All this investment means good-paying jobs here at home. We're making sure these new jobs come free and fair and (with) the ability to join a union if you're not already in one. I made a commitment that I'd be the most pro-union president in American history – and I'm keeping that promise."

Seafarer Snapshots from the Fleet



Directly above and at immediate right, SIU Asst. VP Joe Vincenzo and SIU Representative Sam Spain meet with CIVMARS aboard the *USNS Kanawha*. Vessel is pictured directly below.



Above, CIVMARS gather for a meeting aboard the *USNS Supply*. Vessel is pictured directly below.



In photo directly above and the one immediately below, SIU Government Services Division Representative Jesse Ruth meets with CIVMARS on the West Coast.



SIU Representative Sam Spain (left) meets with crew members aboard the NOAA ship *Pisces*.

SIU VP Government Services Nicholas Celona (right in photo at immediate right) recently attended a change-of-command ceremony on the West Coast. He's pictured with with Brigadier General Douglas K. Clark, Commanding General, 4th Marine Division.

