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# AMERICAN MARITIME OFFICER

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## American Labor and Industry Welcome Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel

The United States Senate in December confirmed new Maritime Administrator Stephen Carmel to lead the U.S. Maritime Administration, a promising development for American maritime labor and industry, and for advancing the goals of expanding and strengthening the U.S.-flag fleet.

American Maritime Officers and the U.S. maritime community lauded the nomination of Carmel — a shipping company executive, recent president of U.S. Marine Management and a former U.S. Merchant Marine captain — to lead the agency that serves as the intersection of maritime commerce, national security, maritime transportation policy and the advancement of U.S.-flag shipping.

"The confirmation of Steve Carmel is a clear message: maritime expertise matters," said AMO National President Willie Barrere. "He is the right choice to lead the Maritime Administration, especially in this moment. He brings extensive experience and knowledge as a business leader to the job, and a career



AMO National President Willie Barrere voiced the enthusiasm of maritime labor and industry with the nomination of shipping company executive Stephen Carmel, recent president of U.S. Marine Management, for the post of U.S. Maritime Administrator during the Admiral of the Ocean Sea dinner in October.

MARAD — Page 3

## AMO Onboard as *Everglades Trader* Joins USMMI Fleet



The *Everglades Trader* was reflagged into U.S. registry November 6 by U.S. Marine Management. Built in 2022, the product tanker will replace the *Yosemite Trader* in the USMMI fleet. AMO represents all licensed officers aboard the *Everglades Trader*.



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *Everglades Trader* in November assisting in the reflagging of the ship included Captain James Very, Chief Mate Cullen Bozza, First Assistant Engineer Michael Raymond and Chief Engineer Tom Balzano.

Page 10: BMI Audit to Save Medical Plan Estimated \$510,000 Per Year

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# Our Union's Course of Growth Continues into 2026

**By Willie Barrere  
National President**

2025 was an excellent year for AMO.

We improved in many areas we deem important to our membership. Among them:

- More vessels in new trades
- More jobs
- Higher wages, improved benefits
- More of our contracts with shorter rotations

Improved shipboard communications and connectivity throughout our AMO-contracted fleets.

We have seen an increase in our membership, with many AMO applicants paying off their initiation prior to January 1 and the conclusion of the membership drive. Our recruitment efforts are bringing in more applications every week.

Although we increased dues last year and added a few staff positions at headquarters, the Executive Board chose not to raise dues in 2026. As can be seen on the chart below, our dues amounts are, by far, the lowest amongst the three officer unions. This results in thousands of dollars in savings to our members every year.

We have leased and will furnish an AMO office in Traverse City to better service

our membership residing within a few-hours' drive. It will also serve as a much better base for recruiting (located across the street from the Great Lakes Maritime Academy).

In 2025, we added some unique vessels to our fleet. The Crowley-operated LNG carrier *American Energy* entered service and is the only Jones Act LNG tanker supplying Puerto Rico. Another Crowley-operated vessel, the cable laying barge *Marmac 306*, installed the first three miles of cable in New York Harbor for the wind farm project Empire Wind. The Dominion-owned, Atlas-operated wind turbine installation vessel (WTIV) *Charybdis* began operations in Portsmouth, Virginia.

As 2026 gets underway, we have numerous conversations in progress with companies involving additional vessels. Our focus will be to increase the total amount of U.S.-flagged vessels — and the new Maritime Administrator, Steve Carmel, has this in mind as well. As of this writing, I am waiting on updates on a few of those opportunities, and they will be announced to the membership throughout the year as more information becomes available.

Crowley is building an SOV in

Sturgeon Bay and we expect sea trials and operations to commence in the second and third quarters of this year.

Our relationships with MEBA and SIU continue to be strong as we work together to keep our ships sailing and prepare for fleet expansion. The AMO-MEBA pass-through process has been going well. At the same time, our relationships with the other unions will improve.

AMO has exceptional partnerships with our companies. All entities are looking to expand and we continue to work together for the strength of the U.S. maritime fleet.

2026 also begins with a few changes to our medical benefits, as has been outlined in recent articles online, and print updates are published here.

For the first time, there is an annual cap on out-of-pocket medical expenses for retirees who are not yet enrolled in Medicare. This is very significant for anyone considering retirement before the age of 65. These caps will allow our non-Medicare retirees who so choose to get what is essentially "gap insurance" at a very good rate. Insurance companies love having a fixed price ceiling.

Unfortunately, medical costs have gone up roughly 25 percent over the last

two years. This has put a strain on our Medical Plan, but the union and employer AMO Plans trustees have been working diligently to maintain benefits without interruption.

The five-dollar increase in co-pays for medical office visits will help with this. It's the first co-pay increase in over 20 years.

During ship visits, and in conversations with members, I remind our officers that we do not pay a medical premium.

This is a significant savings for all of us on an annual basis. Many organizations charge a hefty premium to be in a medical plan, ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000 a year. AMO also does not charge a premium for retiree medical, which saves AMO pensioners thousands annually and tens of thousands of dollars over the course of retirement.

In addition to our Medical Plan, the rest of our plans are in excellent shape under the leadership and management of AMO Plans Executive Director Barbara Skrak. Jerry Pannell and his team at the STAR Center — a MARAD Center of Excellence — continue to lead the industry in training. Our TECH and OICEW programs are expanding. If you know someone interested in either opportunity, please recommend them and encourage them to apply.

With nearly 3,500 members, 200 vessels, and work with over 25 shipping companies, AMO is continuing on our course of growth.

We can't do any of this without our membership and the excellent reputation AMO officers have earned over the years. Thank you all for your dedication and professionalism. I, along with the AMO Executive Board and staff, look forward to working with you in the coming year.

We are always looking for images and videos for our social media platforms and publications — visual ways to show off our unique industry and our amazing careers. We continue to develop our footprint on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. We are also looking for excellent photos for next year's calendar. As usual, AMO members and applicants will receive an email later in January with a link to upload photos and videos for posting and publication. Help us share the AMO story.

Thank you all and let's have a safe and prosperous 2026.

## What Does It Cost to Have Representation?

	AMO	MEBA	MM&P
TSP Wages (2025)	\$140,200 (3M/3AE)	\$140,200 (3AE)	\$140,200 (3M)
Total Union Dues	\$1,700*	\$3,969*	\$4,700*
Initiation	\$6,000 After you start working, payable within 36 months	\$4,000 (After you start working, payable within 25 months)	\$4,500 (10% upfront. Balance due within 360 days of covered employment) +\$500 Service Fee
Method	*Total annually No gross working/vacation dues No gross wages	*\$600 Regular Dues (1 <sup>st</sup> quarter due upfront) 6% Gross Vacation Working Dues <small>The information above was taken from the LM-2 Reports filed with the Department of Labor for Fiscal Year 2024. Filed with the DOL by MEBA.</small>	*\$400 Regular Dues 6.5% Gross Vacation Working Dues <small>The information above was taken from the LM-2 Reports filed with the Department of Labor for Fiscal Year 2024. Filed with the DOL by Masters Mates &amp; Pilots.</small>

# AMO Membership Dues Will Not Increase in 2026

As noted in the report of the AMO national secretary-treasurer for the October 2025 union membership meeting, the American Maritime Officers National Executive Board has deter-

mined a membership dues increase is not necessary in 2026.

In accordance with Article V, Section 1(f) of the AMO National Constitution, the National Executive Board shall determine on or before November 1 each year the amount of dues and initiation increase, if any. The board's decision was based upon a review of the union's finances and the recommendation of the AMO national secretary-treasurer.

## MONTHLY AMO MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Regular monthly membership meetings for American Maritime Officers will be held on the first Wednesday of every month except in the months of January, June, July and September, when the membership meeting will be held on the second Wednesday. Meetings will be held at AMO National Headquarters and will begin at 1 p.m. local time. The next meetings are scheduled to take place on the following dates:

**February 4, March 4, April 1**

## FOLLOW AMO ON SOCIAL MEDIA



# New Dome Installed on *SBX-1* After 20 Years of Operation

The following is excerpted from an article written by Molly Burgess and published by Military Sealift Command.

After 20 years, the world's largest known seagoing radar is undergoing maintenance to its most unique and visible component — the golf ball-like dome.

Military Sealift Command's Sea-Based X-band radar (*SBX-1*) is an advanced X-band radar mounted on a mobile, ocean-going semi-submersible platform. According to the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance (MDAA) website, it has the capability to precisely track incoming threat missiles, discriminate flight characteristics of threat missiles and countermeasures, and provide missile tracking data from adversaries to be able to intercept and destroy a threat before it can reach its target.

"This is the first time the dome has been deflated or removed since *SBX-1* has been in operation," said MSC Contracting Officer Representative for *SBX-1* Operations, Maintenance and Security, Billie Wunderle. "But after 20 years, the radome has reached the end of its life cycle, and it is time for it to be removed and replaced."



Those recently onboard the *SBX-1* in Hawaii included (left to right) Chief Engineer Phillip Thompson, MSC Commander Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, *SBX-1* Program Manager Aaron Banta, Command Master Chief Steve Bosco, and MSC Port Engineer Jarrod Deir. American Maritime Officers represents the licensed U.S. Merchant Marine officers aboard the *SBX-1*, which is operated by TOTE Services. (U.S. Navy photos)

*SBX-1* was in port at Ford Island for routine maintenance on the vessel.

According to Wunderle, the timing of the dome replacement during the availability was planned.

"The two events, the vessel maintenance and the dome replacement, are distinctively different events but were purposely planned to be able to conduct both during the same shipyard availability," Wunderle said. "Because this is the first time replacing the dome, the planning and preparation process has been ongoing for five years, with an extensive amount of collaboration to ensure the successful replacement of the dome."

According to a press statement from MDA, *SBX-1* was successfully outfitted with her new radome December 10, 2025, and the "radome replacement project serves as the basis for decades of future Sea Based X-band (SBX) radar support to Homeland Missile Defense."

The dome replacement took about a month to complete, with the entire maintenance availability lasting approximately two and a half months, finishing up in February 2026, said Wunderle.



The Commander of Military Sealift Command, Rear Adm. Benjamin Nicholson, recently visited the Sea Based X-Band Radar (*SBX-1*) in Hawaii. While onboard, he received a demonstration of the dynamic positioning system on the bridge from Third Mate Cara Bebey.



The radome is replaced onboard Military Sealift Command's Sea-Based X-band radar (*SBX-1*) after its original radome reached the end of its life cycle. The replacement was completed December 10, 2025, during a routine shipyard availability at Ford Island.

## MARAD

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as a maritime officer. He knows what it takes to help the U.S. maritime industry grow and succeed."

During a hearing of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in October, Carmel, a nominee at the time, reiterated his support for the Jones Act and other crucial maritime laws and programs essential to sustaining the U.S.-flag fleet.

In his opening statement for the hearing October 22, Carmel, who graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 1979, highlighted his experience and perspective gained from a career in the maritime industry.

"I sailed steadily, earned my Master's license, and commanded ships that traveled to every corner of the world. My time at sea



was marked by more highlights than I could recount here, but perhaps the most meaningful was my service in the Arctic — an experience that sparked a lifelong fascination with that region and inspired much of my later academic work," he said.

"After coming ashore, I held a variety of executive positions with Maersk Line,

Limited — the U.S.-flag subsidiary of one of the world's largest shipping companies — and later became President of U.S. Marine Management, my current position, following our acquisition by Maritime Partners, the leading Jones Act provider of vessel leasing and construction financing," he said.

In his remarks, Carmel emphasized two lessons learned from his vast experience in the maritime industry. "First, maritime strength depends on people — and it must be built long before a crisis occurs. Second, leadership is about execution, accountability, and partnership," he said.

"I have been fortunate to work, both at sea and ashore, alongside some of the finest men and women this country has to offer, and I am proud of all that we accomplished together," he said.

"We are a formidable naval power, but we are not yet a true maritime power. For more than 150 years, we have

searched for a maritime policy that works, even as our industrial capacity has steadily declined — both in our ability to carry our own commerce and to build the ships that do it. We have outsourced those capabilities and, with that, much of our independence," he said.

"A strong maritime sector is not nostalgia — it's strategy. It means resilient supply chains we control; credible logistics for our joint forces; good jobs across our coasts, rivers, and Great Lakes; and the freedom to move what America needs, when and where America needs it — under our own flag," he said.

"We have done hard things before. With this Committee's guidance, and in partnership with labor and industry, we can do them again," Carmel said. "We will not be the generation that stood on the sidelines and passively watched our noble industry die. We will be the generation that rebuilt it — stronger, smarter, faster, and ready."



## Engine TECH Onboard Tanker *SL Hawaii*

*Alumni of Two-Year TECH Program Sail in the AMO Fleet while Apprentices Continue Training at STAR Center, Onboard AMO-Contracted Vessels*

Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *SL Hawaii* in December included First Assistant Engineer Daniel Cummings, Chief Engineer Russell Pilchard, Second A.E. William NS. McGuire and Third A.E. Jacob Boetticher. With them is AMO TECH Program Apprentice Engineer Allison Difilippo. Chief Engineer Pilchard, a graduate of The Engineering Candidate Hawsepice Program, commented Difilippo's stellar performance has continued onboard the ship. AMO represents all licensed officers onboard the *SL Hawaii*, which is operated by Argent Marine.

## AMO Members, Applicants Train at STAR Center



AMO members completing the Tankship Dangerous Liquids (Simulator) Course at STAR Center in October with Instructor Walter Hardman (right) included Steven Benavides, Mark Merenda, Karleen Grenier, Dany Wahba and Artemio Aga Rivera.



AMO members completing the MSC Small Arms (Initial and Sustainment Qualification) Course at STAR Center in October with Instructors Patrick Jones, Steve Sparkman and Michael McKinney included Alan Azcona, William Dorricott, Christopher Huss, Latanya Johnson, John Ludwig, Jeremiah Skiles and Timothy Van Weezel.

## Current Course Schedule Available on the **STAR Center Website**



The current STAR Center course schedule is available on the STAR Center website at the address below. The STAR Center schedule will no longer be printed in the AMO newspaper. The STAR Center course schedule is also sent by email each month to AMO-contracted vessels and to AMO members and applicants at the email address each has on file with the union.

[www.star-center.com/schedule.html](http://www.star-center.com/schedule.html)

## AMO Members and Applicants Can **Register Online** for STAR Center Courses

STAR Center is no longer accepting paper course registration applications by FAX, nor scanned paper applications by email. AMO members and applicants will need to register for courses on the STAR Center website. With a phone, scan the QR code to open a link to the online course registration form, or in the address bar of a Web browser, enter the following URL:

[www.star-center.com/forms/reg.mbr.live.html](http://www.star-center.com/forms/reg.mbr.live.html)



## AMO Members and Applicants Are Asked to Register for Courses As Far in Advance As Possible, and To Submit a Course Application Even if the Preferred Course/Start Date Has a Wait List

AMO members and applicants are asked to submit an application for course registration as far in advance of the course's start date as possible for all courses. Applications received less than 60 days in advance of a course's start date are more difficult to accommodate. AMO members and applicants are also asked to submit an application for their preferred course and start date even if there is a wait list. STAR Center is sometimes able to accommodate those who are on a course wait list.

# AMO Plans Trustees Cap Out-of-Pocket Medical Costs Paid by AMO Retirees and Their Eligible Dependents Who Are Not Yet Enrolled in Medicare Coverage

In a first for the American Maritime Officers Medical Plan, an annual limit or cap will be placed on out-of-pocket costs paid by retired AMO members not yet enrolled in Medicare, as well as their dependents eligible for AMO Medical Plan coverage, effective January 1, 2026.

The union and employer trustees of the AMO Medical Plan have unanimously approved an annual cap on out-of-pocket expenses for pre-Medicare retirees of \$30,000 per individual and \$60,000 total per family. Until now, there has been no limit on annual out-of-pocket medical expenses that could be required by health care providers for pre-Medicare AMO retirees and their families.

By introducing a cap on annual out-of-pocket expenses for retired pre-Medicare AMO members and their eligible dependents, the AMO Medical Plan will offer important financial protection in the event of a catastrophic medical event, helping to reduce the financial burden on retired members and their dependents.

The annual cap may alleviate the potential need for retired AMO members covered by the AMO Medical Plan to obtain a supplemental insurance policy to cover out-of-pocket expenses until they become eligible for Medicare. For retired members who do choose to purchase a supplemental policy prior to Medicare eligibility, the annual cap may ease the process for doing so, since the maximum annual out-of-pocket cost will now be known and limited.

For pre-Medicare retired AMO members and their eligible dependents, the AMO Medical Plan provides coverage on an 80 percent basis, with 20 percent in co-insurance and co-payments (when utilizing an in-network provider or facility). Once retired AMO members and their eligible dependents enroll in Medicare, AMO Medical Plan coverage becomes a Medicare wrap-around benefit, covering the out-of-pocket portion of the approved amount that Medicare does not cover.

To help offset the cost of capping annual out-of-pocket expenses for the coverage of retired pre-Medicare AMO members and their eligible dependents, all applicable co-payment amounts for certain services will be increased by \$5 for all AMO Medical Plan participants, effective January 1, 2026.

The AMO Medical Plan has mailed new insurance cards to plan participants accounting for the \$5 co-payment increase and the out-of-pocket limit for pre-Medicare retired AMO members. Participants were also notified by email of the distribution of the new AMO Medical Plan insurance cards.

**Please Note:** There are no changes to the Blue Cross-Blue Shield or the Smith RX identification numbers on the new AMO Medical Plan insurance cards that have been issued. If you have not

received your new cards in the mail, your existing cards will still contain the correct identification numbers to access your medical and pharmacy benefits.

For active AMO members, active

and qualified AMO applicants, and their eligible dependents, the cap on annual out-of-pocket expenses remains the same – \$3,000 per individual and \$6,000 total per family. For active members and their eligible dependents, the AMO Medical

Plan provides coverage on a 90 percent basis, with 10 percent in co-insurance and co-payments (when utilizing an in-network provider or facility).

No insurance premiums are charged for coverage under the AMO Medical Plan.

## AMO Aboard the *USNS Pathfinder*

Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *USNS Pathfinder* in December, here in Cape Canaveral, Fla., included First Assistant Engineer Jordan Cuddy, Third A.E. Igor Milic, Second A.E. Edwardlee Nelson, Third Mate Scott Anderson, Captain Antoine Picou, RO Ian McDonough, Second Mate Asher Spalding, Chief Engineer Michael Hadley and Chief Mate Edward Templin. The vessel is operated for Military Sealift Command by Ocean Ships.



## AMO Aboard the *USNS John Glenn*



American Maritime Officers members working aboard the *USNS John Glenn* in December, here in Oakland, Calif., included Third Assistant Engineer Brent Morris, Electronics Officer Steve Barnett, Chief Engineer Stravon Jordan, Second A.E. Scott Magin, Captain Rob Sandner and First A.E. Aaron Boulos.

## Chief Engineer Bruce Zarobell Completes Final Tour of Duty Aboard *USNS Able*

Chief Engineer Bruce Zarobell, who joined AMO in 2007, completed his final tour of duty aboard the *USNS Able* in November 2025. Bruce began his sea-going career in the U.S. Navy, continued sailing as an unlicensed engineer, and later joined AMO upon attaining his USCG Third Engineer's license. He has sailed as Chief Engineer aboard *USNS Able*, *Effective* and *Victorious* for 10 years, and within the T-AGOS fleet for over 20 years. He sailed continuously with AMO since joining, almost exclusively aboard USNS vessels. We wish Chief Zarobell a long and healthy retirement!

**Captain Kyle Dupuis**  
*USNS Able*



Members of the *USNS Able*'s Engine Department congratulating Chief Engineer Bruce Zarobell (third from right) on his retirement included (left to right) QMED Boaventura Barros III, QMED Kris Guthrie, Third Assistant Engineer Jonathan Tucker Sr., QMED Alexis Martinez and First A.E. Edwin Jay Alcos.



New Chief Engineer Edwin Jay Alcos relieves retiring Chief Engineer Bruce Zarobell aboard the *USNS Able* in November 2025 while docked in Okinawa, Japan. Chief Alcos began his sailing career as an oiler working for First A.E. Zarobell in the Engine Department.

## AMO Aboard the *Prentiss Brown*



Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the Port City Marine Services tug *Prentiss Brown*, which pushes the barge *St. Marys Challenger*, here in November in Charlevoix, Mich., included Senior Mate Don Welz, Chief Engineer Brian Comstock, Jr., Mate Chris Wagner and Captain Steven Mertz.



## AMO Members Honor World War II U.S. Merchant Marine Veteran During Wreaths Across America Day Ceremony in Texas



On December 13, American Maritime Officers members Captain DeAnna Dennis and Radio Officer Mike Stone volunteered to take part in the Wreaths Across America Day ceremony in Leander, Texas. Wreaths were placed on the graves of members of each branch of service. The AMO members placed a ceremonial wreath on the grave of World War II U.S. Merchant Marine veteran Howard Wolfe. More than 200 people attended the ceremony, which honored fallen heroes laid to rest at Bagdad Cemetery.



# Shipboard Informational Meetings with AMO Members



AMO President Willie Barrere, Vice President for Government Relations Christian Spain and West Coast Representative Alex Butler held informational meetings with American Maritime Officers members working aboard the *Pacific Collector*, *Pacific Tracker* and *S/S Curtiss* on the West Coast in December, among other vessels.

**At left:** AMO members working aboard the *Pacific Tracker* in December, here in Portland, Ore., included Captain Jeff Royer, Second Assistant Engineer Lorenzo Fontana, Third A.E. Trevor Cardin and First A.E. Dave Veldkamp.



AMO members working aboard the *Pacific Collector* in December, here in Portland, Ore., included Second Assistant Engineer Clive Steward, First A.E. Doug Disana, Captain Mylan Jarett, Chief Engineer Frank Bocage and Third A.E. Trenton Silvers. The presentations onboard each vessel included time for questions, answers and direct discussion.



AMO members working aboard the *S/S Curtiss* in December, here in Vancouver, Wash., included Third Mate Ben Rush, Second Assistant Engineer Scott Cokeley, First A.E. Chris Davis, Third A.E. Zachary Ross and Chief Engineer Nathaniel Fountain.



AMO Executive Vice President Danny Robichaux and AMO West Coast Representative Alex Butler visited with the crews of the *Cape Kennedy* and *Cape Knox* to discuss the transition to the newly acquired AMO-crewed MARAD vessels. AMO members working aboard the *Cape Kennedy* and *Cape Knox* (at right), here in New Orleans, La. in December, included (front row) Third Mate Charles Huval, Chief Mate Al Murray, Second Assistant Engineer Tran Luu, Chief Engineer Darin O'Connor, (back row) First Assistant Engineer James Porter, Chief Mate Jeff Baker and Third Assistant Engineer Tim Huval.

## OBITUARIES

**Dennis Zeigler**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on November 12, 2024 at age 66. He is survived by Karla Zeigler.

**Matthew Carter**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on November 13, 2024 at age 98.

**Martin Fleger**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on November 13, 2024 at age 82. He is survived by Linda Fleger.

**James Jeffords Jr.**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on November 17, 2024 at age 93.

**Ronald Parrish**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on November 21, 2024 at age 64.

**Rayme Lacy II**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on November 29, 2024 at age 53. He is survived by Tanya Lacy.

**Herman Vandebek**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on December 6, 2024 at age 92. He is survived by Wilhelmina Vandebek.

**Alexander Banky Jr.**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on December 7, 2024 at age 96.

**James White Jr.**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on December 12, 2024 at age 81. He is survived by Joyce White.

**Louis Luckett**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on December 15, 2024 at age 81. He is survived by Ann Luckett.

**Helwig Van Der Grinten**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on December 16, 2024 at age 84. He is survived by Rosanna Van Der Grinten.

**William Auger**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on December 16, 2024 at age 80.

**Daniel De Merse**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on December 29, 2024 at age 75.

**James Eberly**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on December 29, 2024 at age 84. He is survived by Karen Eberly.

**Paul Martin**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on January 25, 2025 at age 69. He is survived by Mary Martin.

**Raymond Dwyer**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on February 1, 2025 at age 73.

**Erling Naeyaert**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on February 2, 2025 at age 78. He is survived by Nikki Naeyaert.

**Thomas Brege**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on February 4, 2025 at age 75. He is survived by Michelle Brege.

**Gregory Baccari**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on February 21, 2025 at age 67. He is survived by Jennifer Baccari.

**Randolph Brezee**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on February 24, 2025 at age 71. He is survived by Victoria Brezee.

**Chad Morin**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on February 25, 2025 at age 51. He is survived by Tricia Morin.

**Leonard Cifelli**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on February 25, 2025 at age 72.

**Tommie Sanford**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on February 26, 2025 at age 86. He is survived by Margaret Sanford.

**Jerry Swift**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on February 28, 2025 at age 89.

**Thomas Thuemling**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 2, 2025 at age 70.

**Andrew Egressy**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on March 4, 2025 at age 87. He is survived by Diane Egressy.

**John Skeffington**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 10, 2025 at age 73. He is survived by Beverly Skeffington.

**Tomas Malo**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 11, 2025 at age 72.

**Patrick Rogers Jr.**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 11, 2025 at age 75. He is survived by Patricia Rogers.

**Raymond Hill**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on March 12, 2025 at age 69.

**Roy Matteson**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 21, 2025 at age 66.

**Daniel Thurber**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 23, 2025 at age 77.

**Donald Boatright**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 24, 2025 at age 73.

**Peter Thompson**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 26, 2025 at age 77. He is survived by Leimomi Thompson.

**Thomas Sepe**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 27, 2025 at age 95.

**Elden Brege**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on March 29, 2025 at age 83.

**Conrad Washington**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on March 31, 2025 at age 71.

**Norman Young**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 2, 2025 at age 78.

**Ronald Von Drachek**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 3, 2025 at age 82.

He is survived by Judith Von Drachek.

**David Teel**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 8, 2025 at age 70.

**Richard Olson**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on April 11, 2025 at age 73. He is survived by Elena Olson.

**Robert Kowalski**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on April 15, 2025 at age 89. He is survived by Elizabeth Kowalski.

**Richard McPhail**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 17, 2025 at age 61. He is survived by Kimothy Dotson.

**Wayne Nason**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 18, 2025 at age 77.

**John Dunn Jr.**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 21, 2025 at age 77. He is survived by Annette Dunn.

**William Nathan**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 24, 2025 at age 63. He is survived by Sindy Davis Nathan.

**Wallace Ringeisen**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on April 28, 2025 at age 91.

**Howard Venezia**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on April 30, 2025 at age 94. He is survived by Barbara Venezia.

**Kevin Harris**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 5, 2025 at age 68. He is survived by Beth Porter-Harris.

**Stewart Smith**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 5, 2025 at age 79. He is survived by Louella Smith.

**Steve Lasnier**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 9, 2025 at age 43.

**Eugene Langstrand**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 12, 2025 at age 92.

**Michael Labonte**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 21, 2025 at age 60. He is survived by Elizabeth Labonte.

**William Pedersen**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 22, 2025 at age 73. He is survived by Patricia Pedersen.

**James Roman**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on May 26, 2025 at age 78.

**Robert Liimatta**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on May 27, 2025 at age 75. He is survived by Wendy Liimatta.

**Robert Ormond**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on May 28, 2025 at age 77.

**Ian Russell**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on June 5, 2025 at age 46. He is survived by Claire Russell.

**John West**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on June 5, 2025 at age 84. He is survived by Carol West.

**Henry Terry**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on June 5, 2025 at age 70. He is survived by Anne Terry.

**Daniel Drinkwine**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on June 7, 2025 at age 71. He is survived by Thomas Burd.

**William Pierce Sr.**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on June 20, 2025 at age 82.

**David Wichlacz**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on June 22, 2025 at age 75. He is survived by Lynn Wichlacz.

**Leo Paul**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on June 27, 2025 at age 87.

**Matthew Grose**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on June 27, 2025 at age 65. He is survived by Janis Lambert.

**Thomas Latour**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on June 28, 2025 at age 70.

**Carlo Juncal Jr.**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on July 4, 2025 at age 70.

**Thomas Treen**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on July 10, 2025 at age 57.

**Jacobus Maaskant**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on July 13, 2025 at age 81.

**Michael Sutton**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on July 14, 2025 at age 83.

**Glenn Loomis**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on July 18, 2025 at age 74.

**Patrick Cooney**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on July 21, 2025 at age 32.

**James Devno**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on July 21, 2025 at age 75. He is survived by Patricia Devno.

**Anthony Peraro**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on July 27, 2025 at age 69. He is survived by Takako Peraro.

**Lowell Urlaub**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on July 29, 2025 at age 87.

**Matthew Corbett Sr.**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on July 31, 2025 at age 61.

**David Lindmark**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on August 10, 2025 at age 87.

**Mark Santoli**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on August 12, 2025 at age 56.

**William Abernathy**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on August 14, 2025 at age 74. He is survived by Janet Hudson.

**Robert Brooks**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on August 22, 2025 at age 81.

**Gregory Smith**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on August 24, 2025 at age 36.

**Henry Kugler**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on September 4, 2025 at age 91.

**Ronald James**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on September 17, 2025 at age 78.

**Matthew Frankowski**, who sailed inland waters with AMO, died on September 19, 2025 at age 73. He is survived by Kimberley Frankowski.

**Henry Beaucage**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on September 22, 2025 at age 90.

**William McNutt**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on September 29, 2025 at age 77.

**William Mahoney**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 1, 2025 at age 89.

**Garrett Winner**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 1, 2025 at age 74. He is survived by Guillermina Herrera.

**Michael Kindya**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 1, 2025 at age 85. He is survived by Janet Kindya.

**Jonathan Driggers**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 2, 2025 at age 53.

## OBITUARIES

**Ronald Blanchard**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 5, 2025 at age 90.

**Thomas Oliver**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 10, 2025 at age 78.

**Jose Fernandez**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 13, 2025 at age 73.

**Charles Rocks**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 16, 2025 at age 61. He is survived by Raquel Rocks.

**Lee Allen**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on October 18, 2025 at age 69.

**Charles Grall**, who sailed deep sea with AMO, died on October 24, 2025 at age 84. He is survived by Donna Grall.

**Kevin Johnson**, who sailed on the Great Lakes with AMO, died on October 30, 2025 at age 59. He is survived by Teresa Johnson.

### Richard Michael "Richie" LeClaire: 1949-2025

Richard Michael LeClaire, 76, of Ellicott City, Md., passed away on December 19, 2025, surrounded by family.

Richard was born in Cambridge, Mass. and moved with his family at the age of 10 to Hollywood, Fla. He was a merchant mariner and a member of the American Maritime Officers union. He worked as a marine engineer until he retired in 2020. He married Kimberly Pfeifer in 2002 and had two surviving children, Sophie and Luca LeClaire. He was a loving and dedicated husband and father.

Richard and Kimberly met through their common commitment to workers' rights and economic justice. He followed Kimberly to support her in her career. He was so



proud of Sophie and Luca whether in school or on the lacrosse fields. He loved spending time at the beach and fishing with his family and good food with family and friends. Richard was caring and generous, always willing to help. He always lit up every space with his endless amazing stories to share from his colorful life and travels.

He is survived by his wife, Kimberly; daughter, Sophie; son, Luca; and brother, Robert LeClaire.

## U.S. Coast Guard Announces Upcoming Changes for Online Services — Application Submission, Medical Certificate Delivery

The following is excerpted from bulletins released January 7 and December 29 by the U.S. Coast Guard.

**Application Submission portal (launch scheduled for January 26):** Application Submission and Additional Information Portal (ASAP) will provide mariners with a fast, secure, and convenient way to submit applications online. With ASAP, you will be able to:

- Submit an MMC Application
- Submit an MC Application
- Upload additional documents for an existing application

The process will be simple: Complete a short form accessible via the new NMC website, upload your documents, and submit. This will be a one-stop portal to submit your documents directly to the National Maritime Center — no more e-mailing attachments. The transition to the new website was scheduled to begin Friday, January 23, 2026, and some service disruptions were anticipated during the transition.

The Coast Guard posted a tutorial for the use of ASAP, which is available on YouTube ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR1v8IQ\\_I5g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR1v8IQ_I5g)).

**Medical Certificate delivery via e-mail (coming soon):** Instant delivery, anytime access, no delays. The e-mailed Medical Certificate will eliminate mailing delays and the need

to request duplicate certificates. With this improvement, mariners will be able to:

- Receive their medical certificate via e-mail
- Save it directly to a mobile device
- Print it at their convenience

**New website (launch scheduled for January 26):** The new website will focus on the USCG's major products and services: Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs), Medical Certificates (MCs), courses, and examinations. Key features will include:

- Streamlined navigation with a new menu and search functionality
- Access to essential information in one-to-two clicks
- A clear "How to Apply" pathway as the central theme, guiding mariners step-by-step through the application process.

These improvements are designed to simplify the process, reduce waiting times, and give you more control over your documents. For more information, visit the NMC website ([www.dco.uscg.mil/national\\_maritime\\_center](http://www.dco.uscg.mil/national_maritime_center)).

If you have any questions about any of the upcoming changes, contact the NMC Customer Service Center, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. EST, by using the NMC online chat system from the NMC website, by e-mailing [IASKNMC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKNMC@uscg.mil), or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

## USCG: Temporary Reduction of Service at REC New Orleans

Due to staffing shortages at Regional Examination Center (REC) New Orleans, the National Maritime Center (NMC) has implemented the following temporary measures:

• **Mariner Examinations:** REC New Orleans will continue to provide mariner testing via scheduled examination appointments only. Examination appointments are available Monday through Thursday 7:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. CT. Examination appointments are not available on Fridays or federal holidays.

• **Counter Service:** REC New Orleans has temporarily discontinued all counter service including by appointments and is unable to accommodate walk-in visits. Only

applicants with scheduled examination appointments will be permitted to enter the REC at this time.

• **Application Submission:** As of January 5, 2026, REC New Orleans no longer accepts applications in-person. The NMC anticipates transition to an online application submission portal in January. Until the portal is available, mariners should submit merchant mariner credential applications via email and medical certificate applications via email. Only applicants seeking first class pilot routes within the REC New Orleans area of responsibility should mail or e-mail their application to the REC.



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# AMO Medical Plan Audit to Provide Estimated \$510,000 in Annual Savings to Help Fund Benefits of AMO Families Eligible for Coverage

For the first time in the history of the AMO Medical Plan, the trustees of the plan in 2024 approved a best-practice initiative to have an outside firm audit the status and eligibility of all dependents of AMO members being covered with medical benefits under the plan.

In November 2024, AMO Plans notified all participants who would be affected of the dates and requirements for this audit. At that time, 1,836 AMO members had a total of 3,769 dependents participating in the AMO Medical Plan.

AMO Plans hired BMI to conduct the audit for a cost of approximately \$41,000. BMI completed its contracted work on March 10, 2025, reporting that 85% of members had submitted the required documentation and 15% had either not completed it or had not responded at all. The audit at that point had identified 90 ineligible dependents, who were subsequently removed from AMO Medical Plan coverage.

The staff of AMO Plans conducted follow-up research to locate the remaining mem-

bers who had not completed the request for information for the audit or responded at all. By the end of October 2025, 95.6% of members had completed the audit's request for information. An additional 12 ineligible dependents were identified and removed from AMO Medical Plan coverage.

BMI estimates removing the 102 ineligible dependents will save the AMO Medical Plan approximately \$510,000 per year – \$5,000 per ineligible dependent.

At the time this was written, 80 members had still not responded or completed the request for information, and the trustees of the AMO Medical Plan suspended coverage for their dependents until they complete the request for information for the audit.

**Christian Spain**  
**AMO National Vice President, Government Relations**  
**Chairman/Secretary of the AMO Plans Board of Trustees**

## AMO Members, Contracted Companies Recognized for Environmental Excellence

More than 100 vessels operated under contract with American Maritime Officers were among those recognized in 2025 by the Chamber of Shipping of America (CSA) with Certificates of Environmental Achievement for attaining at least two years of environmental excellence in operations, with 29 vessels achieving 10 years or more without an incident.

The awards were presented November 12 in Washington, D.C. at the 22nd annual Environmental Achievement Awards Dinner honoring merchant mariners and maritime industry leaders for being good stewards of the marine environment. CSA awarded Certificates of Environmental Achievement to a total of 57 companies representing 1,377 vessels, both domestic and foreign, which achieved a total of 13,358 years of operation without incident. Of the companies honored, 11 are contracted with AMO.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Marco Sylvester, and CSA's Chairman of the Board of Directors,

Captain Garrett Huffman of Motiva, addressed the attendees and congratulated the award recipients and the industry for their extraordinary performance.

Sean Kline, president and CEO of CSA, noted: "Tonight, we honor the men and women at sea and ashore whose

commitment to safe and environmentally responsible operations sets the standard for our industry. These awards are not just about statistics; they are about a culture of stewardship that runs deep across the U.S. maritime community. Every year, our seafarers and companies

prove that protecting the oceans and powering the global economy go hand-in-hand. Their professionalism, leadership, and dedication strengthen both our industry and our nation, and it is a privilege to recognize their achievements on behalf of the entire maritime community."

AMO-contracted companies operating vessels recognized for environmental excellence included Crescent Towing, Crowley Maritime Corporation, E.N. Bisso & Son, Fairwater Tankers, Keystone Shipping Company (Key Lakes), Liberty Maritime Corporation, Ocean Shipholdings, OSG Ship Management, Pasha Hawaii, TOTE Services and U.S. Marine Management.

CSA represents U.S.-based companies that either own, operate or charter oceangoing tank, container, dry bulk vessels, roll-on/roll-off or special purpose vessels engaged in both the domestic and international trades and companies that maintain a commercial interest in the operation of such oceangoing vessels, including U.S.-flagged and foreign-flagged vessels.

**At left:** AMO members accepting an Environmental Achievement Award on behalf of Fairwater Tanker Management were Paul Johnson, Alex Anderson and Sean Eager.



AMO members accepting Environmental Achievement Awards on behalf of Crowley companies included Nate Beckett and Jon Spiropoulos.

Accepting an Environmental Achievement Award on behalf of Pasha Hawaii was retired AMO member Greg Johnson.



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Secure File Upload:

<https://www.amo-union.org>

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#### STUDENT SERVICES

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(954) 920-3222 Extension 201  
(800) 942-3220 Extension 201  
register@star-center.com  
Course Attendance Confirmation: (800) 942-3220 Extension 200  
24 Hours: (954) 920-3222 Extension 7999

### SERVICES

#### AMO Coast Guard Legal Aid Program

Michael Reny  
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MikeReny@BEX.NET  
FAX: (419) 243-8953

#### MEDICAL CLINIC

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Dania Beach, FL 33004  
(954) 927-5213

## AMO PLANS CONTACT INFORMATION

AMO Plans normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern.

#### Phone: (800) 348-6515

To request a connection with a specific person, dial "0" for the operator.

Medical Customer Service: extension 12

Retirement Services – Pension, 401(k), MPB, and Defined Contribution: extension 14

Vacation: extension 15

E-mail – Medical Plan: amomedical@amoplans.com

E-mail – Vacation Plan: amovacation@amoplans.com

E-mail – 401(k) Plan: amo401k@amoplans.com

E-mail – Retirement Services: amopension@amoplans.com

FAX – Retirement Services: (954) 922-7539

FAX – Medical Plan: (954) 920-9482

FAX – Vacation Plan: (954) 926-7274

# Jones Act Carriers Fuel Oregon During Energy Shortage

It's become a common sight to see fleets of Jones Act tankers coming to deliver life-saving aid after natural disasters hit America's coastal areas.

But those same American-owned, American-built, American-crewed vessels also respond to other distress calls around the nation.

In November, the governor of Oregon declared a state of emergency after the region's main source of energy, the Olympic Pipeline in Washington state, was shut down several times due to leaks in its distribution system. The Olympic Pipeline generates approximately 325,000 barrels of refined fuels per day, which account for about 90 percent of Oregon's gasoline, diesel and jet fuel needs – vital for the cars, trucks and planes in the area.

Although the state had reserves, local government officials were concerned about possible shortages and potential spikes in gasoline costs.

Without delay, Jones Act vessel owners and crews sprang into action, altering delivery routes and bringing much needed fuel products to the Pacific Northwest. The influx of fuel helped avoid disruption for gas stations throughout the state and provided adequate reserves while the pipeline leak was found and repairs made. Several American Maritime Officers-led crews, including the American Petroleum Tankers (APT) vessel *Sunshine State*, made multiple deliveries, proving the versatility and the ability of the Jones Act fleet to adapt to serve the nation's needs.

"Not only is the Jones Act vital to national security, but it is critical because we consistently respond when Americans need it most," said *Sunshine State* Captain



The *Sunshine State*, operated by Intrepid Personnel & Provisioning for American Petroleum Tankers, was one of several Jones Act tankers delivering much needed fuel products to Oregon during a state of emergency in December.



*Sunshine State* officers First Assistant Engineer Bill Sharp and Captain Jonathan Doucot, here attending meetings of the American Maritime Officers National Executive Board in January, were among the AMO members leading the response of the Jones Act tanker fleet to fuel shortages in Oregon late last year as repairs to the Olympic Pipeline were made.

Jonathan Doucot. "Our vessels operate under U.S. regulations, are crewed by U.S. mariners, and are familiar with domestic trade routes, terminals, and regulatory requirements. This allows us to move cargo quickly and safely without delay. Without the Jones Act, the United States would be dependent on foreign vessels and crews to meet the demands of our own domestic commerce."

The Jones Act, the nation's cornerstone cargo cabotage law, mandates that goods shipped between U.S. ports be carried on vessels that are U.S.-flagged, U.S.-built and crewed by U.S. citizens. Because of the vigorous defense of the law over the past century, the nation has a fleet of ships at the ready to respond to any type of emergency.

The *Sunshine State*, which normally delivers fuel along the West Coast, primarily from Cherry Point, Wash. to San Francisco, Calif., joined AMO-crewed APT tankers, such as *American Freedom* and *American Endurance*, Fairwater tankers *Louisiana* and *Ohio*, as well as other non-AMO Jones Act vessels, to provide consistent and reliable fuel deliveries as repairs were made to the vital pipeline.

In September, the Olympic Pipeline had also experienced a brief ten-day outage. During that period, the *Sunshine State* made five trips to Portland, Ore. The pipeline returned to service, but in November it went down again, causing multiple scheduled Jones Act deliveries to Portland.

The state of emergency declaration lasted about three weeks and spanned the busy Thanksgiving holiday, but residents in the region hardly felt the fuel pinch because of the efforts of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

## Maritime Unions Call for U.S.-Flag Shipping Requirement on Venezuelan Oil Imports

Washington, D.C. — America's leading maritime labor unions are calling on the Trump Administration and Congress to require that any crude oil imported from Venezuela be transported exclusively on U.S.-flag vessels crewed by American mariners, arguing such policy is essential to U.S. economic and national security interests.

"A cornerstone of an effective national maritime policy is gaining access to private, commercial cargoes that create steady demand for U.S.-flag vessels, American mariners, and the shipbuilding industrial base," the unions wrote in a letter to senior Administration officials.

The Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA), American Maritime Officers (AMO), the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P), and the Seafarers International Union (SIU), which represent the majority of U.S. merchant mariners sailing in the U.S.-flag fleet, argued that aligning American foreign policy and energy needs with "Ship American" principles would strengthen the U.S. maritime workforce, reduce reli-

ance on foreign-controlled shipping, and counter the growth of opaque "shadow fleet" tanker operations used to move sanctioned oil outside U.S. oversight.

The unions warned that current restrictions on Venezuelan oil have shifted global trade toward foreign-controlled shipping networks, including

opaque "shadow fleet" tankers operating outside U.S. labor and safety standards. As a result, U.S. maritime workers and carriers are excluded from energy cargoes that could otherwise support American shipping capacity and enforcement objectives.

Requiring U.S.-flag transportation

for Venezuelan crude entering the United States, the unions said, would provide reliable commercial cargo for U.S. carriers, enhance sanctions compliance, and reduce reliance on foreign vessels tied to adversarial interests. The policy could also benefit U.S. refiners designed to process heavy crude by increasing supply options and helping stabilize domestic energy markets.

Maritime labor leaders emphasized that American mariners are prepared to support lawful, transparent energy trade that advances U.S. strategic interests.



### AMO Aboard USNS Henson

Members of American Maritime Officers working aboard the *USNS Henson* in November, here in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, included Second Assistant Engineer Nilo Gler, Chief Mate Aric Pullem, Third Mate Daniel Rizzi, First A.E. Nicole Bradley, Captain Alexander Kepchar and Chief Engineer Henry Matuszynski. The vessel is operated for MSC by Ocean Ships.