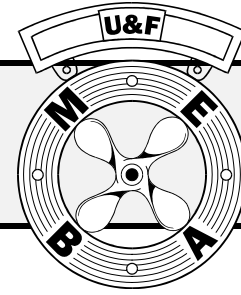


# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



NOVEMBER 2007

The Democratic majorities in Congress under the leadership of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid spent October facing off against the minority Republicans in Congress and President Bush, with President Bush's veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or S-CHIP, generating major headlines.

## **HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS HEARING ON MARINER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE ISSUES**

On Wednesday, October 17th, the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee's Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee conducted a hearing on issues affecting the mariner workforce. The hearing covered topics related to education and training, STCW and other government regulations, and the problems raised by the diminishing number of merchant mariners. The subcommittee heard testimony from a wide array of industry and labor representatives.

M.E.B.A. worked with the rest of maritime labor to develop testimony for the record. Maritime labor had two representatives who spoke at the hearing - SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez for the unlicensed and Mike Rodriguez of the MM&P representing licensed officers. Other witnesses included Maritime Administrator Sean Connaughton and Coast Guard Rear Admiral Joel Whitehead.

M.E.B.A., along with the rest of maritime labor, is increasingly concerned with the criminalization of mariner conduct, increased training burdens placed on mariners, and the difficulties presented by overregulation of the industry. All of these issues were addressed at the hearing, along with labor's concerns regarding the Coast Guard's review of medical policy, and the struggles with the implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program. The testimony from the hearing is available on the Transportation Committee's website at <http://www.house.gov/transportation>.

## **HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE REVIEWS THE SAFE PORT ACT**

On Tuesday, October 30, 2007 the House Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism held a hearing on "The SAFE Port Act: Status of Implementation One Year Later" with witnesses including Maurine Fanguy, Program Director of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program, Transportation Security Administration and Captain Sturm, U.S. Coast Guard. Witnesses from Organized Labor included Lindsay McLaughlin, Legislative Director, International Longshore and Warehouse Union and Mr. Robert F. Blanchet, Teamster Port Representative, International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

McLaughlin said, "We remain adamant that felony convictions for past crimes are not necessarily an indication of a terrorism security risk. We urge TSA to utilize the waiver procedures included in the Act. The Coast Guard must adequately staff independent Administrative Law Judges to hear appeals

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from individuals denied a waiver. And as with the appeals process, workers should be permitted to keep their jobs while they are exhausting the waiver process.”

### **HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE EXAMS TWIC**

On Wednesday, October 31 the full House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing on “Homeland Security Failures: TWIC Examined” with witnesses including Kip Hawley, Administrator, Transportation Security Administration and Admiral Brian Salerno, Director, Inspection and Compliance, U.S. Coast Guard. Witnesses from Organized Labor included Vice President George A. Quick of the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots.

Vice President Quick stressed federal preemption for TWIC, “Specifically, we believe that the federally issued TWIC must take precedence over all other state, local and private identification card requirements for maritime workers. It is, in our opinion, critical that state and local and private entities no longer be able to subject our nation’s U.S. citizen maritime workforce to additional application requirements, background checks and fees or to demand that our nation’s workforce obtain multiple and duplicative maritime port and vessel access control credentials.”