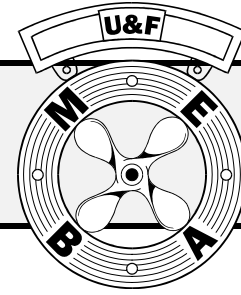


LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



FEBRUARY 2008

The House and Senate returned to Washington, DC on January 15th and January 22nd respectively. The House and President Bush set to work on an economic stimulus package to address America's economic woes. The Senate is now modifying that package before a vote before February 15. President Bush outlined a modest legislative agenda for his final year in office during his State of the Union Address on January 28th.

House Subcommittee holds hearing on TWIC

The House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing on implementation of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential. TWIC cards are required for all Coast Guard-credentialed workers by September 25, 2008. Enrollment began three months ago and the hearing this month was scheduled a progress report.

Subcommittee Chairman Elijah Cummings has been vigilant in his oversight of the new TWIC regime staging multiple hearings on the subject. He let it be known that the TWIC program has been a long time coming and that numerous delays have hampered the process since it was passed into law in 2002.

"However," he said, "while we have waited several years for the roll-out of TWIC, it appears that this time was used constructively to put in place the processes that are enabling the relatively smooth roll-out that is now underway, and I commend the parties involved, including TSA and its contractor, Lockheed Martin, for their efforts."

Coast Guard Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship Rear Admiral Brian Salerno told the Subcommittee that for the most part the TWIC roll-out is proceeding smoothly though the complexities of such an encompassing new system bars a completely trouble-free process.

TSA's TWIC Program Director Maurine Fanguy told the Subcommittee that the initial roll-out has been a success with the agencies involved making steady progress. As of January 15, 2008, nearly 109,000 people had pre-enrolled for the program, 48,783 enrollments had been completed, 25,366 cards had been printed, and 11,795 cards had been picked up and activated.

Lockheed Martin Transportation & Security Solutions President Judith Marks told the Subcommittee that since the process began, they discovered that they underestimated the amount of workers requiring TWIC credentials in the Gulf Coast. As a result, wait times in areas such as Baton Rouge and Lake Charles were much longer than average.

John Porcari, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation brought a port perspective to the Subcommittee. He said the Port of Baltimore has been taking a range of measures to ease the process for enrollees who, at times, have faced various delays in the process. He noted that there have been a few cases of TWIC applicants forced to make multiple visits to the port because of TSA

computer outages, lost information on TSA servers or other issues that slow the process down. Such delays, he mentioned, involve such issues as "cost of the card; payment arrangements by public and private institutions; and reluctance of individuals because of concerns about disqualifying background criteria."

President Bush Signs Defense Bill

Despite controversy over President Bush's pocket veto of the fiscal year 2008 defense bill, Congress leaders did not attempt a veto override when Congress reconvened this month. A slightly altered Defense authorization bill ([HR 4986](#)) passed the House on Jan. 18, 2008, and the Senate on Jan. 22, 2008. President Bush signed the bill into law on Jan. 28, 2008.

MEBA HQ Welcomes Senator Jim Webb (D-VA)

M.E.B.A. hosted a fundraiser for first-term Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) at Headquarters attended by a cross section of maritime labor and industry representatives. A Naval Academy graduate, Sen. Webb is a decorated Vietnam veteran who served in the Marines and is a former Secretary of Navy. He voiced his support for the Jones Act and Maritime Security Program.