



# Meeting the Challenge in 2004

**M**EBA is meeting the challenge on a number of fronts. Union members and officials working together are making lasting contributions to national security, the legislative arena of maritime issues, and importantly in strengthening contracts and developing new job opportunities.

**Answering our Nation's Call:** The MEBA is rising to the challenge yet again, a year after Operation Iraqi Freedom. MEBA members are part of an armada that is shipping 24 million square feet of cargo to and from the Middle East in "OIF 2." This enormous coordinated effort commenced at the beginning of this year and is expected to run through early summer. To give some perspective to this massive operation, during the first OIF, about 21 million square feet of cargo were delivered to U.S. forces overseas. Military planners say that the transport of roughly 240,000 military personnel, along with each division's necessary equipment, will be the largest troop rotation since World War II. MEBA members on MSC vessels - including the LMSRs, MarAd Ready

Reserve Force fleet vessels, MSC Auxiliary ships and many others are all contributing to ensure that our military is kept supplied with everything they need. Again, the success of crewing such an immense operation speaks volumes of the coordination between our union dispatch halls and the ready-to-serve attitude and ability of our members.

The MEBA is also meeting the challenge on the legislative front: Forty-eight hours before a key Senate vote, I met with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) in her office regarding our relationship with the Washington State Ferry system and an amendment by Senator Murray to triple the federal funding for ferries. I pledged to put MEBA in motion to gather bipartisan support for increasing ferry funding needed to pass the amendment. We succeeded. Senator Murray's ferry provision is just a first step in a long legislative process, but it is progress that is likely to have a real impact in future years.

MEBA negotiators are meeting the challenge by preparing for a series of negotia-

tions this year. Importantly the Maersk/ USSM and Horizon Lines contracts expire in a few months. Our negotiators are gearing up for the talks and are committed to representing the membership's best interests. After all, the Best deserves the Best.

In addition, we are also working aggressively with our companies in seeking new contracts from employers such as the federal government. Already some of our companies, who traditionally have shied away from government work, have with our help submitted bids - which is exciting. While there is no guarantee that our companies will win contracts this first time around, one can only win by being "in the game."

The POID/APL office worker collective bargaining agreement is also up for negotiation. We anticipate fluid negotiations with APL, with a major focus on job security provisions that will guard against any potential outsourcing issues. The POID members are ready to bargain and along with our rank and file negotiating team and Union negotiators, we look forward to a successful outcome.

Renewing contracts and promoting job growth with new work are the focus of negotiators. It is the income and the outcome that drive our officials and rank and file to be smart and tough negotiators at the bargaining table. 2004 and 2005 will be busy times as we put our contracts in order. I urge members who have suggestions and concerns to contact their local Union officials.

In Unity and Friendship,

*Ron Davis*  
Ron Davis



Members of several maritime unions gathering at MEBA's San Francisco Union hall stand by the message that a strengthened political arm of a union helps fortify the issues that we care about.