

# AOS-USA President Report

## AOS-USA Annual Meeting

April 30, 2009

Since our 2008 Annual Meeting at MITAGS, I have:

1. Participated in the annual meeting of the Council of American Master Mariners in Reno, Nevada, and Galveston, Texas.
2. Given the invocation at the *Ship Safety Award Luncheon* sponsored by the Chamber of Shipping of America, in Houston,
3. Participated in the National Maritime Security Advisory Committee work group focusing on shore leave,
4. Participated in the Fall 2008 Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee meeting, where I raised the issue of R-1 visa holders being denied TWICS,
5. Presented a paper on how quality of life issues impacts recruitment of future mariners at the Company of Master Mariners of Canada in St. Johns, Newfoundland,
6. Authored an article appearing shortly in the US Coast Guard's magazine, *Proceedings of the Marine Safety & Security Council* focused on training opportunities for young men and women as maritime ratings.
7. Participated in the World Maritime Day Activities (September 28, 2008) with NAMMA leaders, and be a member of a panel discussion on seafarer welfare issues in New York.
8. Lead the invocation at the United Seamen's Service Annual Admiral of the Ocean Seas Dinner in New York.
9. Attended 2009 Workboat Show in New Orleans, and raised up the issue of R-1 Visa Exclusion at Maritime Security Workshop.
10. Attended Gulf Coast Small Vessel Security Summit in Houston (January 2009)
11. Gave presentation during the 2009 Houston Maritime Ministry School (February 2009)
12. Participated in the Cruise Ship Priest Meeting at the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples in Rome (February, 2009)
13. Participated in the 31<sup>st</sup> Session of the USCG Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee

When Congress adjourned in December, the 2007 Coast Guard Authorization died. I am assured that section 306, which mandated that all facility security plans have a means for seafarers to pass through the facility for shore leave will, will be resubmitted in the new Congress.

During the Administrative Board meeting, the decision was made to take on the promotion of the **Guidelines For the Fair Treatment of Seafarers**. Fr. Bob Sipe and Fr. Henry Hernando volunteered to lead the project. They will be talking about the program during the Annual

Meeting.

In a nutshell, AOS-USA will try to promote and educate its members, and through them, visiting seafarers on the *IMO Fair Treatment of Seafarers Guidelines*. These guidelines need to be disseminated to our maritime ministers, seafarer centers, and most especially, the visiting mariners.

**New Business:**

**Foreign Correspondent:**

I have asked Michelle Homden of Great Britain to act as our foreign correspondent. Often important Maritime events occur in the London area. Michelle will be asked to attend some of these meetings, represent AOS-USA, and then prepare a report on the activities.

**Update on 501(c)(3):**

Ms. Margo Charles of MChar Services is assisting us in filing our 501(c)(3) application with the Internal Revenue Service. All necessary documentation has been submitted to her, and the paper work should be in the hands of the IRS. We are waiting for the final determination, which should be coming shortly.

**US Maritime Administration/Transportation Security Administration & AOS-USA:**

Anne Dougherty of the Maritime Administration was tasked by past Maritime Administrator, Sean Connaughton, to try come find a solution to the exclusion by TSA of certain visa categories from obtaining a TWIC.

Those port ministers, who are in the United States on R-1 visas, have had difficulties in getting TWIC's. TSA made a determination that R-1 visa holders had no need for regular unescorted access to MTSA-regulated facilities, and that when R-1 Visa holders needed to do religious services for mariners, he or she could be escorted by a TWIC escort.

This TSA rule making was inconsistent with the reality of maritime ministry, and was going to make a number of maritime ministers no longer be able to carry out their ministries.

Because TSA also denied foreign students with F-1 visas the ability to receive TWIC's, the US Maritime Administration was placed in a very difficult situation. For decades, foreign students have been invited to attend the US Merchant Marine Academy at Kingspoint. Now that April 15 has passed, these students who may have held a merchant marine document will no longer be able to sail on US vessels without a TWIC. The TSA's determination would have made it impossible for foreign students to ever get the sea time necessary for the license they were studying for.

MARAD has taken the lead, and has established a relationship with the Transportation Security

Administration. MARAD will be the sponsoring agency to TSA for those F-1 and R-1 visa holders who need TWIC's.

Once a person's name has been submitted to MARAD, MARAD will forward that name to TSA. TSA has agreed to dispense the applicant from the visa regulations, and proceed with the issuing of the TWIC.

AOS and NAMMA will solicit from the maritime ministry community those persons who hold R-1 visas, and will need TWIC's. Once the R-1 visa holder submits the information that MARAD and TSA will need to process the request, the information will be passed through AOS/NAMMA to MARAD.

MARAD is restricted in the number of information sources they can draw from. This is a federal regulation that is part of the Paper Reduction Act. AOS had originally approached MARAD about this issue back in May of 2008, and because of this relationship, they have asked us to be the point of information.

However, AOS's position is that this is a cooperative effort between itself and NAMMA. AOS would solicit from Catholic port ministers and pastoral assistants who may need MARAD's endorsement. NAMMA would reach out to the Protestant maritime ministers. The information would then be forwarded to MARAD.

**Thanks:**

As I conclude this report, I would like to thank our Secretary General, Miss Doreen Badeaux for all her hard work and dedication. I also want to thank the Administrative Board for their support and help. I am very excited about the progress that has been made in developing our organization. However, just as we find in our seafarer centers, the mission is so much larger. To meet this larger mission, AOS-USA may need to consider special projects, develop grant proposals, and hire additional staff. This is truly an exciting and a challenging time for our organization.