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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **ILA Rank-And-File Members Say Yes to Six Year Contract**

**NEW YORK** — Rank-and-file members of the International Longshoremen's Association, AFL-CIO at ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts approved a six-year Master Contract on Tuesday, June 9, 2004.

The Master Contract covers some 15,000 waterfront workers at ports on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. The new contract goes into effect this October 1, 2004 and continues through September 30, 2010. The ILA completed negotiations on this six year master contract with United States Maritime Alliance, Inc., (USMX) in late March, following 18 months of bargaining between the union and the management group representing ILA employers.

According to ILA President John Bowers, the union's chief negotiator, returns on Tuesday evening from ILA locals in the Maine to Texas region indicated a majority of members favoring ratification of the Master Contract, though the ratification vote was close.

"This ratification vote is a tribute to the rank-and-file membership of the ILA, as well as those who negotiated it during difficult and long contract wage scale meetings," said ILA President John Bowers. "I know that many members were concerned about the two-tiered wage system and possibly voted against the contract because of that. We tried our best to bridge the gap in pay and we believe this contract takes us on the road to doing that."

## **ILA Master Contract Approved/Page 2**

In the weeks since the tentative agreement was reached on the Master Contract, ILA port areas concluded local negotiations. Today, ILA members voted today from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m. on both the Master Contract and their respective local agreements.

The Master Contract was ratified by a majority of all voters in the Maine to Texas region. Local agreements, which are subject to ratification by ILA members in each of their respective port areas, were still being tabulated this evening. When the new Master Contract agreement takes effect on October 1<sup>st</sup>, newer ILA members whose base pay this year was at \$21 an hour or less will see their salaries increase by \$7 throughout the life of the contract. Higher waged ILA workers will enjoy four pay hikes totaling \$4 as well.

Another important issue addressed in this new contract was providing adequate and affordable health care coverage. Rising medical and prescription drug cost are taxing most health care plans and the industry's MILA plan was no exception. ILA and USMX negotiators were faced with the challenge of confronting mounting deficits in the MILA program while trying to maintain adequate health care coverage for ILA workers. Both labor and management officials believe this new six-year contract includes the necessary provisions to tackle higher costs while providing benefits to the widest possible number of ILA members and their families.

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