



BLET Auxiliary News

Working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families.

Volume 6, Number 3

Autumn 2015

Sereena Hogan, President • Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President • Lawana Poss, Secretary • Terri Fleming, Treasurer
Kathleen Bisbikis, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative • www.bletauxiliary.net

Welcome to Our New Auxiliaries!

Mile High Auxiliary No. 5280 Denver, Colorado Chartered June 9, 2015

Front Row: President Steffiney Quick, Treasurer Karyn Beisner, Secretary Jenni Gosset, National President Sereena Hogan, National 1st Vice President Susie Burrola; **Back Row:** Michael Bevirt, Paul Pearson, Dave Gossett, Kitty Rabb McClure, Kitty's son Austin. **Charter Members not in photo:** Jim Wilmesher, Kay Wilmesher, Michael Quick, Denise Shine, Shanna Bevirt, Lisa Martin, and Amy Hall.



Flat Rock Auxiliary No. 8 North Platte, Nebraska Chartered June 10, 2015

Seated: National 1st VP Susie Burrola, Nebraska State Legislative Board Chairman Pat Pfeiffer, National Pres. Sereena Hogan. **Second Row:** Christy Cauffman, Jamie Eichner, Meagan Schroeder, Cassie Mannon, Kendra Lampe, President Gina Kuening, Legislative Rep. Carol Bodeen, Vice President Jen Otzel, Randy Cauffman; **Back Row:** Scott Dulin, Mike Thomalla, Secretary Adrienne Thomalla, Todd Mannon, Andrew Lampe, Travis Kuenning, Greg Otzel. **Charter Members not in photo:** Shae Caldwell, Treasurer Molly Morales, Hector Morales, and Sarah Roberts.



Southern Comfort Auxiliary No. 30 Atlanta, Georgia Chartered June 18, 2015

Front Row: Secretary-Treasurer Susan Holloway, President Therese Frederick, Vice President Donna Milford, National Secretary Lawana Poss, **Back Row:** Megan Bates, Michael Holloway, Scott Frederick, Teresa Bryant, Michael Poss, and Kelly Frank. **Charter Members not in photo:** Wanda Hawkins, Michael "Mad Dog" Frank, James and Jennifer Conner, Debbie Massengale, and Danielle McLaughlin.





From the President - BY SEREENA HOGAN

Greetings members and friends! I am happy to report that our surge in membership continues and we are moving full steam ahead! As you can see from our cover story, in the few months since our last newsletter was published, we have organized five new auxiliaries, for a total of eight since the first of the year, and we have added over 100 new members since

the new term started last October. Welcome to all our new members, and thank you for joining the Auxiliary family!

Attending the regional conventions this summer was a bittersweet experience for us, as each one was the last-ever of its kind. Each of them was well attended and the organizers did an outstanding job of making these grand finale conventions a memorable experience for all in attendance. Our next issue will feature stories and photos from each convention. Beginning next year, there will be two annual regional meetings sponsored by the BLET National Division: the Eastern Regional Meeting, July 11-14, 2016, at the Hilton Drake Hotel in Chicago, Illinois; and the Western Regional Meeting, August 22-25, 2016, at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, California.

Congratulations to BLET California State Legislative Board Chairmen Tim Smith and Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Brian Kelley for their victories with the passage of new legislation that is in our best interest. For more details, please read the Legislative Update by National 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis, pp. 6-8.

I had the honor and pleasure of attending the Quadrennial Meeting of the Minnesota State Legislative Board in Bloomington, Minnesota, August 31-September 1. Congratulations to Brother Dave Brown, who was reelected by acclamation to his third term as Minnesota State Legislative Board Chairman. While in Minnesota, Brother Brown's wife Cheri, who is an Auxiliary member-at-large and the Auxiliary State Legislative Rep for Minnesota, and I traveled to the northern tip of the state where we organized Twin Ports Auxiliary No. 6388 in Proctor, Minnesota, at a dinner meeting sponsored by Clyde Larson, Director of Field Operations for the Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas law firm. Our 1st Vice President Susie Burrola and I had been working with Roseanna Surchik to get an auxiliary going in that area since the time I first met her at the IWC in Minneapolis last year.

In early June, Susie and I made a whirlwind organizing trip to Colorado and Nebraska. Our first stop was Denver, where we organized Mile High Auxiliary No. 5280. Colorado State Legislative Board Chairman Jim Wilmesher and I had been working together for the last few years to get an auxiliary started in his area and he was ecstatic that it came together in time for the new auxiliary members to help with the IWC held in Denver August 17-20. Thank you to FELA Attorney Lloyd Rabb for sponsoring the organizing meeting luncheon on June 9.

Our next stop was North Platte, Nebraska, to meet with Travis and Gina Kuenning, with whom Susie had been working for several months to get an auxiliary started in that locale. Nebraska State Legislative Board Chairman Pat Pfeiffer was very thrilled to have more auxiliary members in Nebraska to help with legislative issues in his state. Many thanks to Scott Dulin, Investigator for the Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas law firm, for sponsoring the dinner meeting in North Platte on June 10.

Next day, we traveled south to meet with members and spouses of Division 623. Susie had contacted Local Chairman Todd Felber about getting an auxiliary started in McCook, Nebraska, and worked with him to set up a dinner meeting sponsored by John Hiatt, of the Bremseth Law Firm. Although some unexpected glitches on the rails that day prevented Todd and some others from attending the meeting, those who were able to make it to the dinner did show interest and, thanks to Susie's persistence in following up, we hope to get an auxiliary started in McCook in the near future.

In late July, Susie traveled to Fort Madison, Iowa, accompanied by our 3rd Vice President/Asst. National Legislative Representative Rachael Grimes, to attend a two-day picnic sponsored by Tom Gaither and Art Rapp, Field Reps for the Kujawski & Marcus law firm. Susie had been working with Staci Harl, spouse of Division 391 Legislative Representative Kade Harl, to get an auxiliary going in that area. Thank you Rachael for your willingness to accompany Susie on this trip! And thank you also Tom and Art for all your help!

At this year's Southeastern Convention, thanks to the efforts of Therese Frederick and our 2nd Vice President Kathleen Bisbikis, Southern Comfort Auxiliary No. 30 was organized right there at the Lake Lanier Islands Resort near Atlanta, Georgia. When I arrived at the resort, convention chair Teresa Bryant introduced me to her co-chair Scott Frederick, BLET Division 30, who immediately told me that his wife Therese wanted to form an auxiliary in the Atlanta area. Therese and Kathleen signed up enough members during the week and we held an organizing meeting and ceremony for the new auxiliary right before the closing banquet!

So, between the regional meetings and our organizing trips, we have had a busy summer of travel!

I am very proud of our Auxiliary 39 sisters who have been helping in so many ways to lend aid to the firefighters, residents, and animals affected by the fires in Northern California that have destroyed 1600 homes and taken up to six lives, as well as the lives of many domestic and farm animals. Look for a more detailed story in our next issue. In the meantime, enjoy the fall weather and have a Happy Thanksgiving everyone!

Sereena Hogan, National President
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Tucson, Arizona 85704
520-297-0944, vp3sereena@aol.com

Ft. Madison Auxiliary No. 391
Ft. Madison, Iowa
Chartered July 21, 2015

Left to right: Legislative Representative Bobbie Jo Zemlicka, Kade Harl, Legislative Rep, Jeff Kurtz, National 1st VP Susie Burrola, Alicia Titus, Vice President Carla McEntee, Matt Eimer, Rachel Grimes, President Stacie Harl, Secretary-Treasurer Amy Gruntmeir and Brian Gruntmeir.



Twin Ports Auxiliary No. 6388
Proctor, MN & Superior, WI
Chartered August 30, 2015

Front Row: National President Sereena Hogan, Lisa Kuhl, Auxiliary 6388 President Roseanna Surchik, Catherine Dorin, and member-at-large and Auxiliary Minnesota State Legislative Rep Cheri Brown. **Back Row:** Dennis Kuhl, Ben Nygaard, Ashley Jensen, Nicole Nygaard, Steve Surchik, Thomas Dorin, and Felicia Swenson. **Charter Member not in photo:** Hollie Fons.

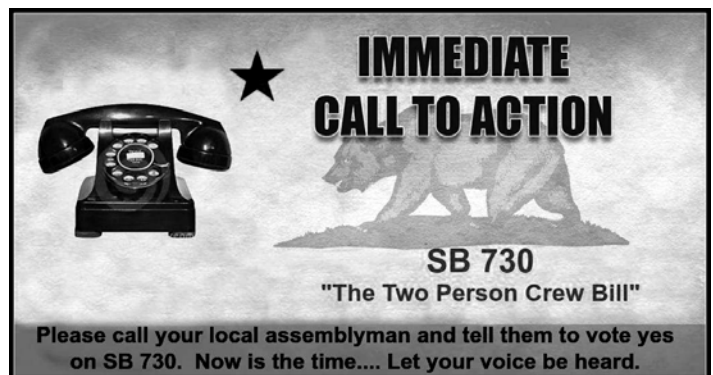


Auxiliary Joins Forces with BLET to Advance Rail Safety Bill in California

By Kathleen Bisbikis, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Rep

As an auxiliary, one of the most important things we can do is to provide support to our BLET Legislative Department when the opportunity arises. And that is just what we did in August of this year when our California State Legislative Board was working to get SB 730, the "two-person crew bill" passed in California. The bill passed the State Assembly on August 21 with a vote margin of 51-28 and was signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown on September 8, 2015, but it is not without the behind-the-scenes work of many people, including the California Nor-Cal Auxiliary members and BLET members across the state, as well as many other rail families and friends who stepped up and let their voices be heard.

Tim Smith, State Legislative Board Chairman sent out an e-mail on August 17 asking everyone to call the assembly member in their area and ask them to vote yes on SB 730. He asked that we call our friends, families, and neighbors to encourage them to do the same. What Brother Smith did that day was send out a "call to action." The members of Nor-Cal 39



Call to action graphic created and posted on Facebook by National Auxiliary 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Rep Kathleen Bisbikis during the August 2015 campaign to promote two-person crew bill SB 730 in California.

Auxiliary immediately stepped up to the challenge. We posted information on Facebook, sent out e-mails to all our members, both auxiliary and union, sent text messages, and picked up our phones and called everyone we could think of. We implemented our mobilization program by initiating a modern-day "phone tree." There was no form of communication that we did not use to reach our members, friends, and family. You do not have to be a union member, or a railroad family member, to call your local assemblyperson.

— continued on Page 8

Getting Real About the Mission and Purpose of the BLET Auxiliary

By Susie Burrola, National 1st Vice President

The first BLET Convention I attended, I had no idea what to expect. Being a railroad spouse (sometimes referred to as a “single” mom) with four children who were active in every sport of the season, I honestly just needed a get-away with my husband Oscar. Little did I know that Oscar was actually “setting me up.” He had mentioned the Auxiliary to me in the past, but I had so much on my plate as it was. I was working, volunteering at my children’s school, helping out at our church, taking care of the house, and running the kids around to their various sports practices, games, etc. I asked myself, “What else could I possibly add to my plate?”

Apparently Oscar knew my calling better than I did. My passion for volunteer work and giving back is in my DNA. Oscar worked hard at the railroad and at his union job as Local Chairman of Division 839 so that I could do the things that I was passionate about. As a union officer, he understood the importance of the Auxiliary and he knew that once I met the auxiliary officers at the regional convention and found out what they did, I would be hooked!

Well, needless to say, I joined as a member-at-large at the International Western Convention in San Luis Obispo, California, in 2008. A couple of years later, I was able to recruit a group of spouses of Division 839 members and the Nor Cal 39 Auxiliary was chartered on February 13, 2010, in Stockton, California. With the support of our local BLET Division 839, California State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Smith, and FELA Attorney Ed Pfister, we were up and running.

My experience serving as Vice President of our Sports Booster Club had taught me how to run an organization, but I really didn’t know what the Auxiliary had in store for me. During our first few years, our fledgling auxiliary had some “hiccups” and “bumps in the road,” but we worked through those and formed a strong bond with one another. We understood that the Auxiliary was not simply a social group or club, or a group of women who got together to chat... we were family!

Over the years, our division and auxiliary members have experienced deaths, cancer, children’s health issues, and serious accidents. We really needed each other during these difficult times and we came to understand the importance of camaraderie and mutual support. We have realized that our beliefs, political views, ages, and different upbringing does not matter; what does matter is that our spouses are out there working hard day and night and we have come together to support them, their families, and the entire BLET. Solidaritythat’s what matters to us!

As my children reached the age where they could drive themselves places and became more independent, I became even more involved in the Auxiliary and realized it was time for me to take the next step. I knew my calling was to step out of my comfort zone and get involved at the national level. My experiences of meeting new people at the regional conventions over the years who were not aware of what the Auxiliary is really about helped me to realize that I could make a difference.

Once I became a national officer, I saw and understood the obstacles and hard work my sisters before me had to deal with. Like any organization, we have avid supporters as well as people “on the fence,” and many people

who just don’t understand the importance of the Auxiliary. Over the last few decades, Auxiliary membership has declined and the organization has taken a financial hit with the stock market crisis. With the many seeds that were planted by the sisters who served before us, we have been growing and evolving and spreading the message of our purpose and mission.

The auxiliary has a lot to offer. We support one of the greatest organizations in this country; we are the spouses of BLET members... those who move freight and people across the nation. Without the railroads, this country would come to a screeching halt in so many ways. Most of us are still part of a generation that understands the importance of unions and solidarity. We must pass that along to our children and to those younger members of the union and the Auxiliary.

We are educating our members about the health and safety issues that our railroaders face and the legislative issues they need to support. We teach them that our voices can make a difference. We are teaching the younger generations to be grateful for what their union forefathers have provided for them and that they need to support the union that they belong to and stand proud as union members and families. We are now seeing many of the younger members becoming more active at local union meetings because their spouses are involved in the Auxiliary and we have become an extension of their nuclear families.

I have personally watched my own children and the children of other auxiliary members show their pride to be a part of the BLET Union. It was very visible through Tyler and Mason, the young children of Jenni and Dave Gossett, who are both members of the newly formed Mile High Auxiliary 5280. These boys were excited to meet other union families and to help and participate at the IWC this August in Denver. It’s a memory that will be with them forever.

The Auxiliary is helping to pass on the importance of unionism to our future generations. We are the strongest asset that our spouses have. Railroad engineers and trainmen spend more than half their lives on duty or at their away-from-home terminals. What better way do we have to share and support each other than being a part of the Auxiliary?



Future union leaders Tyler and Mason Gossett at the 2015 IWC in Denver, Colorado. Notice their nametag lanyards . . . and they are proudly wearing their BLET and Auxiliary lapel pins. The sticker on Tyler’s pocket reads “Keep Calm and Stay Union Strong.”

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

It has been a very busy summer and I hope that you were able to attend one of the regional meetings this year. It was wonderful to be able to attend the final SMA in Georgia at Lanier Islands near Atlanta. It was a wonderful location for families and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. It was somewhat bittersweet to have the honor of participating in the last ever flag ceremony at the opening ceremonies, an auxiliary tradition that dates back many years. The flags of all the states that were a part of the Southeastern Meeting Association were offered at auction at the banquet and have gone to their new homes to be cherished by the members who bid on them. I was also able to attend the final EUMA in Boston. It was great to be in a city with such a rich history and so many attractions nearby. The convention was well attended and I had the opportunity to meet many brothers and sisters from the northeastern states.

Thank you to everyone at all of this year's conventions who supported the Auxiliary by purchasing raffle tickets and making donations that go to our Scholarship Fund. A scholarship can change the life of a young person and your support means the world to us.

T –SHIRTS!

We have black v-neck "BLET Chick" t-shirts for sale! (See page 9 or "The National BLET Auxiliary" Facebook page for more info.) The shirts are \$30 for all sizes from XS - 3XL; however we are out of sizes Large and 2XL. Please contact National 2nd Vice President Kathleen Bisbikis at 209-786-7367 or Biz4413@gmail.com if you would like to purchase a shirt.

CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program (CAP) is our organization's way of saying thank you to long-time members. These members are usually elderly and their incomes are such that they sometimes need a little boost to meet their monthly obligations and ensure that they can get the things they need. The CAP provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. Our CAP recipients are grateful for what we do.

Please check to see if someone in your auxiliary may be eligible for this program and encourage them to apply. I would be happy to provide the necessary application form. Members-at-large are eligible also.

Please call or e-mail me, or any national officer, when there is a death of a member or one of their family members. We want to be able to send our condolences to the family. We would like to also share in the joy!! Please let me know of any exciting happenings!

WELCOME TO THE NEW AUXILIARIES!

North Platte, Nebraska – Flatrock Auxiliary No. 8
Atlanta, Georgia – Southern Comfort Auxiliary 30
Denver, Colorado – Mile High Auxiliary 5280
Ft Madison, Iowa – Auxiliary 391
Proctor, Minnesota – Twin Ports, Auxiliary 6388

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS-AT-LARGE!

Thomas Gaither, Woodlawn, Illinois ; Suzanne Carhart, Minoa, New York ; Mary Donch, New Rochelle, New York ; Arthur Rapp, St. Joseph, Illinois ; Doug and Tracy Pope, St Peters, Missouri, Kate Giblin, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, Erik Stroik, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Attention Local Auxiliary Secretaries: When new members join your local auxiliary, please send me a copy of their application so that I may add them to our database. We can then make sure that they begin to receive the newsletter and any legislative alerts that are sent out by our National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Congratulations to the recipients of our scholarship awards for the 2015/2016 Academic School Year. (See article on Page 9.)

IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Betty Clary passed away on Wednesday, November 12, 2014. Sister Betty was a past International Secretary for the Grand International Auxiliary (now known as the BLET Auxiliary).

Vivian Leopard, member of Auxiliary 37, passed away on June 4, 2015.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the friends and family of Betty and Vivian.

Condolences to Auxiliary 12 member Connie Tippery, whose mother, Rose Divin, passed away on July 12, 2015.



Lawana Poss can be reached at 770-497-8898, by e-mail at Lewp2007@bellsouth.net, or by mail at 1394 Bywood Court, Suwanee, Georgia 30024.

If I can answer any questions for you, give me a call or send me an e-mail and I will get back to you as soon as I can!!

— Lawana

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE



"Life's most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?"

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Two Person Crew Bill Signed Into Law in California

California scored a big win for safety when two-person crew bill SB 730, authored by Senator Lois Wolk (D-Davis), passed the State Assembly on August 21 with a vote margin of 51-28. The bill was signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown on September 8, 2015.

The bill prohibits the movement of freight or light rail trains from being operated without a minimum of at least two crew members. This bill not only safeguards our operating employees, but also the public, as well as our environment. It does not add one job, but maintains the current checks and balances we have in the rail industry today with two federally certified and qualified operating personnel (Engineer and Conductor) in the cab of all freight trains and light engines involved in the movement of freight. It also gives authority to the California Public Utilities Commission to assess penalties against anyone who knowingly violates this prohibition.

"Today's freight trains carry extremely dangerous materials, including Bakken crude oil, ethanol, anhydrous ammonia, liquefied petroleum gas, and acids that may pose significant health and safety risks to communities and our environment in the case of an accident," Wolk said.

"With more than 5,000 miles of railroad track that crisscrosses the state through wilderness and urban areas, the potential for derailment or other accidents containing these materials is an ever present danger."

Hopefully this legislation will serve as a model for other states. At least 14 states have introduced minimum crew size legislation this year, including Washington, Nebraska, Minnesota, Wyoming, Iowa, Utah, and North Dakota.

Congratulations and many, many thanks to California State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Smith, Vice Chairman Ryan Snow, all of the California State Legislative Board members, and the BLET Auxiliary members in California, who all worked tirelessly to get this bill passed.

Victory in Missouri!

In May of this year, the Missouri State General Assembly (MOGA) passed House Bill 116, which would make Missouri a so-called Right-To-Work state. Fortunately, Democrat Missouri Governor Jay Nixon vetoed the bill, thus preventing it from becoming law. On September 16, the MOGA reconvened for their annual Veto Session. This is the time when the state senators and state representatives attempt to override any veto by the governor if they believe they have enough votes to do so. This requires a two-thirds super majority in both chambers, which the Republican Party currently holds.

BLET Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Brian Kelley sent out a "call to action" asking every BLET and Auxiliary member who lives in Missouri, and their family members, to immediately contact their state representative and state senator during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, to ask them to oppose any attempt to override the governor's veto of HB 116.

During the September 16 veto session, the Republican-led House

voted 96 to 63 for the right-to-work bill. The vote fell short of the two-thirds majority needed to overcome the veto. Governor Nixon praised the vote as a "victory for workers, families, and businesses," calling the bill "divisive" and "anti-worker." He went on to say: "I thank the members of the General Assembly — both Democrats and Republicans — who sent a clear message to the nation that Missouri will stand by its workers and oppose attempts by outside special interests to cut wages and weaken the middle-class."

Many thanks to Brian Kelley and all of our members and their family members who worked hard to convince their representatives and senators to oppose the override.

Positive Train Control (PTC)

Senate votes to delay PTC deadline: The U.S. Senate voted in late July to extend the time allowed for railroads to install positive train control (PTC) by another three years. The PTC system, had it been operational, could have averted the deadly Amtrak crash that took place earlier this year in Philadelphia. A Senate Commerce Committee memo said the deadline was "not feasible for the vast majority of freight and commuter railroads."

"This is a transportation bill that ignores the transportation crisis in this country," said U.S. Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ). "It disregards what we learned after the horrible train crash in Philadelphia by delaying implementation of positive train control, which we know would have prevented the tragedy and saved lives."

Positive train control was on the list of the National Transportation Safety Board's most wanted safety improvements for 2015.

GOP bill an attempt to undermine rail safety: Senator John Thune, R-SD, the Chairman of the Commerce, Science and Transportation

Committee, introduced a bill in August that included provisions to further delay the deadline by which freight and commuter railroads must install positive train control.

The bill introduced would require railroads to have the equipment in place for PTC by December 31, 2018, but would have no set time-frame for the railroads to have the technology actively in use.

"It's an attempt to fool the American people so that government officials and railroad officials can say something is being done when the reality is it isn't," former NTSB Chairman Jim Hall said.

FRA Report on PTC: On August 7, the FRA sent its mandated Status of Positive Train Control report to Congress. The agency has determined that even after seven years, and help from the FRA, most railroads will not have their PTC systems implemented by December 2015.

"Positive Train Control is the most significant advancement in rail safety technology in more than a century. Simply put, it prevents accidents and saves lives, which is exactly what we seek to do at the Department of Transportation every single day. We will continue to do everything in our power to help railroads install this technology," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx.

The report states that, over the last 46 years, there have been approximately 145 freight, commuter, and transit accidents that could have been avoided if there had been a system in place like that of PTC. Those accidents came with a price tag of 300 lives lost and 6700 injuries that could have been preventable.

"The Federal Railroad Administration will continue to use its resources and expertise to help railroads achieve the critical goal to have Positive Train Control imple-

mented," FRA Acting Administrator Sarah Feinberg said.

PEB 248 Issues Recommendations in NJT Dispute

In July, 100% of New Jersey Transit (NJT) members voted to strike if the unions and railroad failed to come to an agreement to settle their ongoing contract dispute under the process set forth in the Railway Labor Act. The BLET had been bargaining with the NJT for a new contract for engineers since April 2011 and the dispute had been in National Mediation Board-sponsored mediation since June 2014.

On July 15, 2015, President Obama signed an executive order creating a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) to investigate and help resolve the ongoing dispute, and the emergency order went into effect on July 16, 2015. It should be noted that this is the first time in the 78-year history of the Presidential Emergency Board that it has ever been made up of all women. President Obama appointed Elizabeth C. Wesman to serve as the chairperson, along with Barbara Deinhardt and Ann Kenis. All three women had previous PEB experience.

On August 20, Presidential Emergency Board 248 issued its recommendations. The recommendations on the major issues of wages and health insurance contributions fall much closer to the terms proposed by the Union Coalition than those proposed by New Jersey Transit, although the Board did backload its wage recommendations to accommodate the railroad's budgetary concerns.

The PEB found that the Coalition proposals were appropriately based on settlements in the commuter industry, while the company's unprecedented reliance on a state worker concessionary contract was not persuasive.

Coalition spokespersons said, "The Presidential Emergency Board, composed of three veteran, distinguished neutrals, has proposed terms that represent a reasonable compromise approach to settlement. We sincerely hope that New

Jersey Transit will now take this opportunity to bring this protracted dispute to an end."

ECP Braking Systems

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has released information this month on a train braking simulation study, prompted by the amount of recent derailments of trains carrying flammable crude and ethanol.

The study compares the differences in safety of electronically controlled pneumatic brake systems (ECP) and that of distributed power braking systems, as well as conventional braking systems. The study showed that the ECP braking system outperformed both distributed and conventional braking systems.

"Over the last decade, the NTSB has investigated a number of catastrophic flammable liquid unit train derailments. Our recommendations have called for improved technologies that can reduce or minimize the risk of derailments," said NTSB Chairman Christopher Hart. "Improved braking capabilities are but one part of the equation in making rail transportation safer."

The U.S. Department of Transportation ruled in May 2015 that all tank cars carrying flammable materials will need to be updated with ECP braking systems by January 2021.

FRA Reminds Railroads to Report Crude Oil Transport

On July 22, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) sent a reminder to all railroads transporting Bakken crude oil that, in accordance with the Emergency Order issued May 7, 2014, they must make State Emergency Response Commissions and Tribal Emergency Response Commissions aware of the expected movement in affected states and tribal areas.

The emergency order superficially states that trains carrying 1,000,000 gallons (approximately 35 cars) of Bakken crude oil in a single train through a state must notify the appropriate state or tribal commission. The FRA has stated, "it will continue with random spot checks and regular

compliance audits to ensure that states, local communities, and first responders have the information necessary to respond to a possible accident. FRA will take enforcement actions as necessary to ensure compliance."

Oregon, Washington & Pennsylvania Adopt New Safety Rules

At times, one simply has to take things into one's own hands, and that is what several states are doing to protect their citizens from the potential disaster that can be caused by an oil train moving through the state.

Washington has implemented a four-cent-per-barrel tax on oil moved by train through their state to cover the cost of cleanup of any potential spills. Also, freight train companies are required to notify emergency personnel whenever oil trains pass through their communities.

In Pennsylvania, Governor Tom Wolf asked expert Allen Zarembski for recommendations on how to improve safety measures in his state. Pennsylvania typically handles 60-70 oil trains a week. Professor Zarembski suggests that railroads focus on faulty track and equipment. He reported that, "most major derailments in recent years were caused by faulty track or broken equipment, not human error."

The Oregon Transportation Commission has also updated its state's rules for the transportation of hazardous materials. Oregon will be adding an additional four new rail inspectors, bringing its total to 11. Emergency responders will get immediate notification about the type, quantity, and placement of hazardous materials on the train. In addition, the Oregon Department of Transportation can now fine railroads up to \$1000 per day if they are not in compliance with these new rules. Oregon chose to add more rail inspectors because, like Pennsylvania, they believe that track-related defects are the most common cause of derailments.

US-Mexico Rail Bridge

The West Rail Project in Cameron County, Texas, includes the first in-

ternational bridge connecting the U.S. and Mexico in over 100 years. To help promote border security, x-ray scanning machines will scan rail cars for drugs and other contraband items. The project will improve the legal trade between the U.S. and Mexico as well as improving travel times.

"This is a project that will leave a lasting effect on our community for many years to come," said Cameron County Judge Pete Sepulveda, Jr. "Providing this new link to move goods and services more efficiently is going to bring enormous advantages and opportunities to the consumer, the supplier, and to markets throughout North America and the world."

Texas High-Speed Rail

It looks like California may not be the only state with high speed rail as a means of travel. Texas Central Partners, a private Texas-based company, has raised \$75 million towards the \$12 billion they project will be needed to construct and operate a high-speed passenger rail system between Dallas and Houston, Texas. Once operating, the Texas bullet train will be estimated to travel at approximately 205 mph and will make travel between Dallas and Houston just a 90-minute trip.

NTSB Asks Amtrak to Record Crewmember Actions

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), in a letter to Amtrak, has said that Amtrak should install crash- and fire-resistant inward- and outward-facing audio and image producing cameras in the cabs of all of its trains and review those films to make sure their crews are following protocol. In addition, the NTSB asked that Amtrak report twice a year on its progress of the installation of the cameras.

NTSB Chairman Christopher A. Hart stated, "The information that recorders can provide to ensure that crews are consistently operating trains safely is just too valuable to ignore and recordings can provide critical information in understanding crew actions prior to accidents, which can help prevent tragedies like the recent derailment in Philadelphia."

Whistleblower Awarded \$1.25 Million

Michael Elliott, former Chairman of the BLET's Washington State Legislative Board, was awarded \$1.25 million after a six-day trial in Tacoma Washington. Elliott's lawyer was able to prove to the eight-person jury that Elliott was targeted and terminated in 2011 after reporting numerous safety violations, first to the BNSF Railroad, and eventually to federal authorities. Elliott reported several complaints about overgrown vegetation blocking the signal system along BNSF-owned tracks between Tacoma and Vancouver, Washington, along with several potentially catastrophic signal malfunctions. The signal system is designed to keep trains from colliding on tracks that are owned by BNSF and shared by passenger and cargo trains. The BNSF was slow to respond to the complaints so Elliott reported the issues to the Federal Railroad Administration who found 375 violations.

Many of the violations were in territory overseen by a BNSF supervisor, Dennis Kautzmann, whom Elliott accused in his lawsuit of plotting a confrontation in the parking lot in which Kautzmann jumped on the hood of Elliott's vehicle as he tried to leave. A scuffle ensued, and Elliott punched Kautzmann, according to court documents. That March 2011 incident was used as grounds to terminate Elliott and have him charged with criminal

assault, according to court documents. Elliott's attorney said there was evidence that Elliott was set up by Kautzmann, whose story was rejected by a criminal court jury but used by BNSF to fire him.

While that incident was under internal review, BNSF officials claimed they discovered Elliott's alleged failure to report an earlier felony conviction, and he was fired in April 2011. In September 2011, after its review of the incident with Kautzmann, the company called him in and fired him a second time, according to court documents.

The federal jury awarded him \$1 million in compensatory damages, including loss of future pay, and imposed \$250,000 in punitive damages against the railroad.

Google and the FRA Team Up for Safety

A partnership between Google the technology company and the Federal Railroad Administration was announced on June 29. Google will be the first company to begin incorporating railroad crossing information into GPS applications. GPS coordinates for approximately 250,000 rail crossings across the U.S. will be added as both visual and audio alerts to mobile navigation systems in an effort to help reduce the number of grade crossing accidents and fatalities, which has grown over the last several years.

FRA Acting Administrator Sarah Feinberg released the following written

statement: "Adding railroad crossing data to smartphone mapping applications just makes sense—it means supplying drivers and passengers with additional cues that they are approaching a crossing. For drivers and passengers who are driving an unfamiliar route, traveling at night, or who lose situational awareness at any given moment, receiving an additional alert about an upcoming crossing could save lives. We know that more and more drivers today use map applications on smartphones to guide them to their destinations. While mobile device maps and applications are trusted sources for directions and guidance, many of them do not notify drivers when they are approaching a rail crossing, or do not identify the rail crossing at all. When drivers are alerted or reminded that there is a rail crossing ahead, they may be more likely to remain alert, use greater caution, and obey the signal crossings.

"From the very beginning of his tenure, Secretary Foxx has pushed all of us to do more to integrate technology to raise the bar on safety across all modes of transportation. This partnership, which will allow us to do just that, is an important development. Secretary Foxx and I are incredibly grateful that Google has quickly agreed to work with us, and we are hopeful that other tech companies that develop map applications will join us too. Last year, approximately 270 people died in highway-rail collisions that were largely preventable. This is the first time this decade in which that

number has actually increased from the previous year. We can—and should—do everything possible to end vehicular-train incidents at rail crossings. With Google and other tech companies' help, I'm confident that we can achieve this goal even faster."

BLET Director of Political & Legislative Affairs Appointed

Effective July 13, Brother Robert F. (Bob) Hagan of BLET Division 757 is the new Director of Political and Legislative Affairs for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He will be headquartered at the BLET's National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. Brother Hagan, a CSX Engineer with over 40 years' railroad experience, has been a BLET member since 1997. In 1986, he was elected to a seat in the Ohio House of Representatives, representing the 53rd Ohio House district, centered in Youngstown, Ohio. Over the next 28 years, he served in both the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio State Senate.

Brother Hagan will lobby for legislative issues and handle political education under the direction of BLET National President Pierce and Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman.

Kathleen Bisbikis can be reached by phone at 209-786-7367; by mail at 7367 Stabulis Rd., Valley Springs, California, 95252; or by e-mail at biz4413@gmail.com.

Auxiliary Joins Forces with BLET. . .

Continued from Page 3

In this case, you only had to be a California resident. We challenged all of our members to post or message us to let us know when they had made the call, and even provided phone numbers for the assembly members in the different areas. The good news is, they made the calls and, if there was no answer, they left voice mail messages or called back the next day. They stood up and let the California government know that they did not want any freight or light rail train in California to be operated with less than two people in the cab... and it worked!

If you get the opportunity in your state to help, please remember this... YOUR VOICE MATTERS! The phone call to your state assembly member literally takes less than 60 seconds out of your day and, when numerous

calls start pouring in on the same issue, they take notice! All calls that come in are logged; don't think your one call doesn't make a difference. If the issue is important to your way of life, to your state, to your union, don't make an excuse—make the 60-second call and let your voice be heard! Find out who your BLET state legislative board chairman is, as well as the legislative representative for your BLET local division, and let them know that you are there to help them with these important issues. If you need help finding out who these officers are in your area and how to get in touch with them, please give me a call at 209-786-7367 or e-mail me at bletauxiliarylr@gmail.com and I will help you get connected.

The effectiveness of an organization depends on its ability to speak with one voice for a common cause. Our legislative Department depends on all of us to be an effective voice in Washington, D.C., and in each state. We can do it!

Congratulations to our 2015-2016 BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Recipients



The Auxiliary is pleased to award these \$1000 scholarships to the following students for the 2015/2016 academic school year. We wish each of you a great school year and continued success at achieving your goals in life!

Leona A. Louis Memorial Scholarship awarded to: Allyson K. Roof (née Booth), daughter of James and Anne Booth. James is a retired member of BLET Division 28, and Anne is a member of Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28, in Tucson, Arizona. Allyson is attending the University of Colorado Denver- Anschutz Medical Campus.

John O. and Brenda Casteel Scholarship awarded to: Jacob Wright, son of Jason and Heidi Wright. Jason is Director of Education and Training- National Division and a member of Division 502, and Heidi is a member of Auxiliary No. 422 in Olathe, Kansas. Jacob is attending Kansas State University.

\$1000 Scholarships awarded to the following:

Rachel McWilliams, daughter of Rob and Kathy McWilliams. Rob is a member of Division 126, and Kathy is a member-at-large. Rachel is attending California State University - Fresno.

Karma Jade Underwood, daughter of Jim and Lori Underwood. Jim is a member of Division 228, and Lori is a member-at-large in Pocatello, Idaho. Karma is attending Boise State University.

Ariel Johnson, daughter of Owen and Beate Johnson. Owen is a member of Division 212 and Beate is a member-at-large in Spring, Texas. Ariel is attending the University of Houston College of Optometry.

Dillon Taylor, son of Clay and Becky Taylor. Clay is a member of Division 28 and Becky is a member of Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28 in Tucson, Arizona. Dillon is attending the University of Richmond School of Law in Virginia.

Jennifer Anderson, daughter of Mark and Nancy Anderson. Mark is a member of Division 333 and Nancy is a member-at-large in St. Paul, Minnesota. Jennifer is attending Brigham Young University.

Jordan Sawyer, daughter of Richard and Lynn Sawyer. Richard is a member of Division 134, and Lynne is a member of Auxiliary No. 134, in Winslow, Arizona. Jordan is attending Eastern Arizona College.

Thank you, Sister Helen Brand!



Photo courtesy of John Bentley, Director of Publications, BLET National

At the Southwestern Convention (SWCM) banquet in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on September 14, Alternate National Treasurer Helen Brand was honored for her eight years' service to the BLET Auxiliary as National Treasurer (2006 - 2014) and for organizing our golf tournament fundraisers at the SWCM for nine years as of this year. National President Sereena Hogan presented Helen with a mantle clock featuring the Auxiliary logo on the clock face. Thank you Helen for your continued service to the BLET Auxiliary... we love you, sister!

T-Shirts for Sale!



American made/union made black v-neck t-shirts, with "BLET Chick" logo in bright blue and white on back and all-white BLET logo on front, bottom left side. Made of very soft 100% cotton; \$30 for all sizes - we have sizes XS, SM, M, XL, and 3XL. Shrinkage is very minimal if washed in cold water. Please go to "The BLET National Auxiliary" Facebook page to see a full color graphic of the logo... this black and white photo just doesn't do it justice! To order, contact Kathleen Bisbikis at 209-786-7367 or biz4413@gmail.com.

FOUR GOOD REASONS NOT TO SHOOT PHOTOGRAPHS ON RAILROAD TRACKS



Graphic from: <http://9buz.com/media/stay-off-tracks-only-trains-2013-09-18>.

Photo shoots on or near railroad tracks have become very popular in recent years. Train tracks are fun to photograph. With leading lines and cool textures, many photographers flock to the railroads for senior photos, family portraits, and even artsy images. There are many dangers to photographing on or near rail lines and, in many cases, it's against the law.

With an increase in pedestrian rail trespass casualties in the United States, railroad companies like Union Pacific and organizations like Operation Lifesaver, have been urging photographers to stay off the tracks.

The Federal Railroad Administration reports 430 deaths per year via trespassing on railways and just about as many injuries. According to Joyce Rose, President and CEO of Operation Lifesaver, a person or vehicle is hit by a train every three hours in the United States. The following are a few good reasons not to shoot photographs on railroad tracks:

1. It is dangerous

The only safe place to cross is at a designated public crossing with either a crossbuck, flashing red lights, or a gate. It can take a mile or more to stop a train, so a locomotive engineer who suddenly sees someone on the tracks will likely be unable to stop in time. Trains overhang the tracks by at least three feet in both directions and loose straps hanging from rail cars may extend even further. If you are in the right-of-way next to the tracks, you can be hit by the train.

Do not cross the tracks immediately after a train passes. A second train might be blocked by the first. Trains can come from either direction. Wait until you can see clearly around the first train in both directions.

Flashing red lights indicate a train is approaching from either direction. You can be fined for failure to obey these signals. Never walk around or behind lowered gates at a crossing, and DO NOT cross the tracks until the lights have stopped

flashing and it's safe to do so. Be aware trains do not follow set schedules. Any Time is Train Time!

2. It is illegal

Trespassing onto railroad property, including tracks, bridges, buildings, and signal towers, is illegal and violators are subject to a citation for trespassing. Union Pacific Railroad has stated that they will seek removal from publication any photograph or video that violates this policy. If you really want to photograph on the tracks or other railroad property, contact the railroad company to request permission.

3. It sets a bad example

In an article on the Union Pacific blog Community Ties, one photography studio was criticized for simply using an artificial backdrop that depicted railroad tracks because it communicated to children and teens that it is okay to walk and play near tracks. Some photographers might justify the fact that photographing on tracks that are no longer in use is safe, but people seeing those images would not know any difference. People tend to think that if everyone else is doing it, it is okay for them to do it too, which may be why so many photographers continue to photograph on tracks.

4. It has become cliché

Photographers love railroad tracks because they create great leading lines for their images. They can lend a romantic or edgy feel to portraits. But truthfully, photos of high school seniors sitting or standing on tracks are a little overdone.

So, photographers, please get creative and try to find a way to incorporate trains and tracks in our images in a legal and safe way. It's perfectly okay to photograph from the shoulder of a public road or parking lot with tracks in the background, or maybe from a hillside overlooking the train yard.

Resources:

<http://mcpactions.com/2014/12/08/how-to-stay-safe-and-legal-with-photography-and-railroads/>

<http://www.slrlounge.com/4-reasons-shouldnt-take-portraits-railroad-tracks/>



Greetings from your Editor, Susie Burrola

Where has the year gone?

I can't believe we are approaching our one-year mark since taking office. I am thankful to be part of such a great group of ladies I call my sisters. Our president, Sereena Hogan, has worked tirelessly with all the

hats she has to wear. I am so appreciative of all she does and am thankful she stayed on board instead of retiring with her husband Ken. She is a true example of a selfless leader. I am also very grateful for the support, encouragement, and help that all of us on the Executive Council get from our wonderful husbands. They have all become close friends with one another, as have we.

Sereena and the rest of our council members have been running full-throttle since we were elected last October. Each of us has different talents and skills that seem to complement one another and I believe it is no coincidence that the five of us were brought together at this time to serve this organization.

With the political circus currently going on in our nation, the importance of the Auxiliary is at an all-time high. We must encourage our members to get involved in the political and legislative process in order to protect the rights and benefits that our union has fought hard to attain for us and to promote legislation that will enact laws to ensure a safe workplace for our train crews, which in turn protects the safety of the communities through which they travel.

That being said, we are seeing an increase in our membership. The officers of local BLET divisions are reaching out to us, requesting help in sharing information with the family members of their division's members. Let's face it, railroaders are exhausted when they get home and oftentimes barely have time to get rested before they are called back to work. It is often difficult for them to find the time and energy to focus on health, safety, and legislative issues. This is one of the reasons why we became organized. I look forward to continuing on my quest to educate and support our members, to recruit new members, and to organize more new local auxiliaries all over the country.

*Be the change
you want to see
in the world*

-Mahatma Gandhi

Going Green!

You can help us to save on the costs of printing and mailing this publication and reduce our footprint on the environment at the same time, by going green. As always, our newsletter is available on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net even before the copies are mailed out. We now offer readers the option to receive the newsletter in digital format. If you would like to receive your newsletter as an e-mail attachment sent to you each quarter, please e-mail publisher Sereena Hogan at vp3sereena@aol.com to let us know.

2015 Regional Convention Schedule

Beginning next year, there will be two annual regional meetings sponsored by the BLET National Division:

Eastern Regional Meeting

July 11-14, 2016

Hilton Drake Hotel

Chicago, Illinois

Western Regional Meeting

August 22-25, 2016

Hyatt Regency

Long Beach, California

Mark your calendars now and look for more information in future issues of this publication and on the BLET website at www.ble-t.org.

Please help us create an interesting and informative publication by sending us information about things going on in your area that pertain to the Auxiliary and railroad life. We welcome your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc. Please send to:

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