



# 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.*

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**Spring 2014**

Anita J. Caruso, President • Sereena Hogan, Vice President/National Legislative Representative • Lawana Poss, Secretary  
Helen Brand, Treasurer • Gina Forman, 1st Vice President /National Outreach Coordinator • [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)

## 2nd Quadrennial Convention at the Río in Las Vegas!

*Additional information about the National Convention will be posted on the Auxiliary website as it becomes available.*

**By Sereena Hogan**

Our 2nd Quadrennial Convention will be held this fall, from September 29 through October 2, in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Rio Hotel and Casino. The following information is provided to help our members, both old and new, understand what will take place at this important event. The proceedings that take place at these conventions are referred to as the "General Session."

At the General Session, we elect our national officers and make any necessary amendments to our Constitution and Bylaws, and any forms used by the Auxiliary. As stated in Article VII of the Constitution: "The Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote at any BLET Auxiliary Convention, provided previous notice of the amendment was distributed to all local auxiliaries and members-at-large at least thirty days prior to BLET Auxiliary Convention, or by referendum vote of all full members." All members-at-large and members of local auxiliaries are encouraged to review the Constitution and Bylaws in the months preceding the convention, with the intent of proposing possible changes that they feel would improve our organization or make it run more smoothly. This is also the time when "housekeeping" changes can be made to correct any grammar errors or wording that may be incorrect in the current Constitution and Bylaws, which can be found on the Auxiliary website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net). For those who do not have access to the internet, please call National Secretary Lawana Poss at 770-497-8898 to request a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws.

In December of the year prior to the National Convention, local auxiliaries shall elect a delegate and an alternate delegate to represent them at the General Session. Delegates and alternate delegates to represent the members-at-large of each region are elected at the regional conventions in the year preceding the National Convention. If for some reason neither the delegate nor the alternate is able to attend, the National President will appoint a proxy to act in their stead. Our delegate system allows a multitude of voices and opinions to be heard in one place.

Once the National Chaplain officially opens the General Session, each national officer gives a report on her activities over the last four years. Most of the rest of the time spent in the General Session involves addressing the resolutions that are submitted

prior to the convention, as well as those that are presented after the General Session has begun.

Pursuant to current Bylaws, resolutions must be received by the National Auxiliary sixty days prior to the opening of the General Session. This year, we are asking auxiliaries and members-at-large to submit their resolutions to our National Secretary, Lawana Poss, for receipt no later than July 31, 2014. Lawana will organize, photocopy, and distribute the resolutions by mail to all delegates in August. Delegates should review the resolutions with their auxiliary members at their August or September meeting to receive any instructions their auxiliary members may have as to how they wish to have their delegate vote on each resolution. Resolutions submitted by the July 31 deadline are to be read aloud at the convention and acted upon at that time. As the proceedings take place, it sometimes becomes necessary to submit additional resolutions. Those resolutions require two readings aloud at the General Session before they can be voted upon.

The delegates to the national convention elect the national officers for the next term. A description of duties of the national officers who will be elected at the 2nd Quadrennial Convention can be found on page 4. These officers serve for the term set forth in our bylaws, currently four years, with the exception of the Secretary and Treasurer who serve eight-year terms that overlap one another in order to ensure that at least one officer who is familiar with Auxiliary finances is in office at all times. At the upcoming convention, the office of National Treasurer will be up for election. Currently, our bylaws state that in order to run for a national office, other than the office of National President, a candidate must be a member of the Auxiliary for no less than two years. To run for National President, a candidate must have served at least one term on the Executive Council (Vice President/National Legislative Representative, Secretary, Treasurer, and 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator). Those who nominate a member for office are allowed to speak before the delegation for three minutes on behalf of the nominee. Members who have a desire to run for national office are encouraged to bring information for distribution to the delegates as to their experience, interest, and desire to run for a particular office. Again, please see page 4 for information about the requirements to run for national officer positions and the duties involved.

— continued on Page 3



## Auxiliary President's Message - BY ANITA J. CARUSO

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I hope that every one of you had a wonderful holiday season and that you are looking forward to the next season, spring, which is right around the corner. We have had a little snowfall so far this winter in Nebraska, but our friends in the east coast and the

southern states have not been quite so lucky! I hope that we've seen the last of the white stuff for one winter! I have a feeling that is not going to be the case, though. A girl can dream!

The winter has been relatively quiet with respect to my traveling schedule on behalf of the National Auxiliary. I have not traveled since returning home from the SWCM in New Orleans, Louisiana. I must admit that I was just about "traveled out" and am happy for the break thus far. I will be well rested by the time I attend the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen's Meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, in late May, if nothing comes up sooner.

As spring approaches, I am focused on the process of organizing our yearly Executive Council Meeting. This year's meeting will be held the week of April 6-10, 2014, at my home in Omaha, Nebraska. I am anxious for the members of the Executive Council to visit our new home that we moved into about a year ago. I do enjoy hosting this very important meeting at my home.

Typically, we award our BLET Auxiliary Scholarships, administer the International Western Convention Scholarship Program, review our finances via teleconference with our financial consultant Brian Moland, report on our activities during the past year, review the membership roster of local auxiliary members and members-at-large, discuss ways to grow our membership, and a myriad of other topics.

A main focus this year will be to review our current Constitution & By-Laws and propose resolutions for our delegates to review, discuss, and vote on at our National Auxiliary Convention later this year. This is an important right that every member, with the exception of our associate members, has available to them. Members of local auxiliaries, as well as members-at-large may propose and submit resolutions to the office of the National Secretary 60 days prior to start of the National Auxiliary Convention, which is July 31, 2014. Please check our website ([www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)) for a form to guide you through this process.

The BLET Auxiliary will hold our Second Quadrennial Convention, in conjunction with the BLET's Third Quadrennial Convention, the week of September 28 - October 2, 2014, at the Rio Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Our National Secretary will provide a letter

with detailed information to our delegates and national officers in mid to late April.

We have already held elections for the delegates who will represent the members-at-large in the four regional areas, and we will learn the name of the delegates who have been elected to represent the local auxiliaries when the local auxiliary secretaries submit their Annual Report forms and dues to our National Secretary, Lawana Poss. The due date for those reports is March 1, 2014, and we encourage all auxiliary secretaries to submit their reports by that date. If your Auxiliary's dues are not received by the National Secretary on or before the closing date of the 30-day grace period, March 31, 2014, your Auxiliary will forfeit the right to seat a delegate at the National National Convention and no proxy will be assigned. (Please refer to *page 13, Article IV (Representation); Section 1. Delegates.*) As voted by our delegates at the 1st National Auxiliary Convention in 2010, our Constitution & By-Laws are available on the BLET Auxiliary website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net).

On page 4 of this issue, you will find a comprehensive overview of the positions open for election during the National Auxiliary Convention, qualifications for office, term of office, eligibility requirements, etc. If you are interested in running for any of these positions, please read this important article. If you have any questions or wish to find out more about becoming a national officer, please contact any of your current national officers and we will be happy to help you.

As you can see, we have a busy year ahead of us. The members of the Executive Council are up to the task and welcome any suggestions and/or input you might have in how the BLET Auxiliary is run. This is not just our Auxiliary; this Auxiliary belongs to all of our members. Your contributions are important to us, so if you have any ideas you would like to see presented, discussed, and voted on by the delegates at the National Auxiliary Convention, please submit a proposed resolution and we will see that it gets presented at our meeting and acted on accordingly.

It has always been my practice to be available to our members. If you have anything you would like to discuss with me, please feel free to contact me. I regularly check my e-mail and return every call that comes my way. If I don't have the answer you need, I will find it for you! Have a great spring and let's get out there and recruit new members for our great organization!

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Anita J. Caruso  
National President - BLET Auxiliary  
7660 S. 162nd Street  
Omaha, NE 68136  
(402) 330-6348 ~bunziegia@cox.net

## 2nd Quadrennial Convention

*continued from front cover . . .*

Auxiliary members who are in attendance at the convention but are not elected delegates for the convention, as well as other guests who are interested in the BLET Auxiliary, are welcome to attend the General Session. However, parliamentary procedures mandate that only elected delegates and national officers may participate in floor debates during the General Session. If members wish to express their opinions, an open forum may be provided during breaks from the official General Session to accommodate them. For those members who may not wish to speak before the entire delegation, you may choose to pass along your concern or idea to a delegate or national officer during breaks from the General Session. That delegate or national officer can bring your ideas before the body on your behalf. This is your National Convention, so please take the time to let us know your concerns and/or recommendations.

To help our members who wish to submit resolutions, or to learn more about the National Convention, a section is being set up on our website to guide you through this process. The suggested form for submitting resolutions, along with other convention information can be found there. The proper format for submitting a resolution also appeared on Page 3 of the Winter 2013 issue of this publication. Please check back on the website often as it will be updated as new information is received.

### Delegate Information

If you are a delegate, you will receive a letter with information needed to make hotel reservations for the convention, as well as information pertaining to your responsibilities as a delegate; committee assignments, if applicable; and local auxiliary verification of your election, to be signed by your local auxiliary president and secretary. This verification form needs to be completed and returned to our National Secretary Lawana Poss. In August, delegates will receive a packet containing the resolutions we have received by the July 31 deadline, a copy of the Constitution & Bylaws, and a copy of the Journal of Proceedings from the 2010 National Convention. If you have never attended a convention before, please take time to read over the Journal of Proceedings to familiarize yourself with what takes place at these conventions. Also, please review the resolutions with the other members of your auxiliary prior to the convention so they can advise as to how they wish to have you vote on each one.

Following your arrival at the hotel, you will be asked to register for the convention. At that time, you will receive a packet containing your credentials for attendance, an agenda, and other information. As a delegate, you are paid for your time at the National Convention, but you must attend all required meetings in order to qualify for that pay. The Auxiliary will reimburse you for travel and for hotel expenses for those days you are required to attend the General Session. Additional information pertaining to reservations, reimbursements, and other details regarding the convention will be explained in the letter you will receive from our National Secretary and on the website.

## River City Auxiliary Annual Christmas Gathering



**Front row:** Anita Caruso, Connie Tippery, and Vicki Leaders, **Middle row:** Darla Fent, Annie Rangel, and Jean Weatherill, **Back row:** Pam Dennis and Michele Keefer. Gina Sequenzia not pictured.

### By Darla Fent, River City Auxiliary No. 12

As has become a tradition for River City Auxiliary #12, we meet at the home of one of our active members for our Christmas fellowship and great food. This year, the meeting was held at the home of Michele Keefer. At our December meeting we set our calendar for the upcoming year and make any changes to our officers. We have a fairly small group now with only 10 active members and two others who are not able to attend our meetings. Of that number, eight have spouses who are retired and four have spouses still out on the road (or rail in our case). We are lucky that there have been few changes to our original group, allowing us to form very close bonds of friendship and love.

Since this is the year the National Auxiliary meets to make changes to our bylaws and elect national officers, River City #12 is happy to have our national officers who are members of the Executive Council meet in Omaha this April, hosted by National Auxiliary President Anita Caruso. While here, they will review scholarship applications and prepare for the convention later this year. I look forward to seeing all of them, especially our new National Secretary, Lawana Poss, and having the rest of Auxiliary#12 get to meet her. While they are in Omaha, we will share a potluck meal at Anita's home.

Although River City Auxiliary #12 may be a small group, we can still be effective if we stay active and speak up.

# National Officers of the BLET Auxiliary

Below is a list of national offices to be filled at the 2nd Quadrennial Convention. The office of National Secretary is not listed as it will not be vacant at this convention. For a full description of the duties of each office, please refer to Article II of the National Constitution and Bylaws, which can be found on pages 4-10. Depending on the vote of the delegates at this year's convention, some eligibility requirements and duties for these offices may change.

For each of the national officer positions listed on this page, other than the office of National President, a candidate must be a member of the Auxiliary for no less than two years. In order to run for National President, a candidate must have served at least one term as an elected officer of the Executive Council (President, Vice President/National Legislative Rep, Secretary, Treasurer, 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator). Members of the Executive Council are compensated a nominal monthly salary for performing their duties, as outlined in the National Bylaws, Article II, Section 10, on page 10. All of these officers, except the National President, must attend their "home convention" in the region in which they reside, at their own expense. They may also choose to attend one additional regional convention each year, with expenses paid by the National Auxiliary. The National President represents the National Auxiliary at **all** regional conventions and her expenses for this travel are paid by the Auxiliary.

All of the national officers are responsible for writing articles for the BLET Auxiliary News and for the BLET National Division's monthly and quarterly publications when assigned to do so by the National President. Each officer must have access to e-mail and be responsible for checking it on a regular basis, and must be willing to travel to represent the BLET Auxiliary.

<p><b>President</b></p> <p>Establishes the National Auxiliary headquarters in her home and sees to the administrative decisions of the Auxiliary. Presides at all sessions of the National Auxiliary. Calls the annual meeting of the Executive Council and serves as Chairperson. Appoints committees for the National Convention and assigns proxies for local auxiliaries ineligible or unable to elect a delegate. Fills vacancies in National offices not otherwise provided for. Grants and signs charters for new local auxiliaries. Gives counsel and advice to local auxiliaries and grants special dispensations when necessary. Orders national officers paid for expenses while on official business and appoints members to serve as special representatives on behalf of the National Auxiliary when deemed necessary. Ensures that the National Auxiliary has an article in the BLET Auxiliary section of the monthly and quarterly publications of the BLET National Division, by writing the article or assigning the writing of the article to other officers and/or members. Must have served at least one term as an elected officer on the Executive Council and be able to travel to represent the National Auxiliary.</p>	<p><b>Vice President/NLR</b></p> <p>Takes over the duties of President in her absence. Serves as editor and/or publisher of the newsletter. Serves as liaison to the Jurisprudence and Bylaws Committee at the National Convention.</p> <p>The office of the Vice President currently includes the duties of the National Legislative Representative (NLR); however this may change by a vote of the delegates at this year's convention. The NLR duties include working closely with the BLET National Legislative Department; keeping the membership advised of pending legislation in a timely manner through correspondence, website, and phone. Represents the legislative interests of the National Auxiliary, providing action alerts and any other information our members need to support the efforts of the BLET and the Rail Conference in Washington, DC. Recruits and recommends State Legislative Reps as needed. Requires good writing skills and ability to travel when necessary to promote legislation, and to represent the National Auxiliary.</p>	<p><b>Treasurer</b></p> <p>Receives all money from the National Secretary and maintains a duplicate set of books utilizing computer bookkeeping software designated by the National Auxiliary. Issues checks to cover all expenditures, provides monthly financial reports to the National President, and yearly reports at the annual Executive Council meeting concerning the investment of funds, accumulation of interest, and the general condition of the Treasury, including any budgetary shortfalls, detailed revenues and expense accounting, and balance of all accounts and funds as of the Auxiliary year-end, currently March 31. Keeps a record of all securities and interest paid.</p> <p><b>1st Vice President/NOC</b></p> <p>Acts as National Outreach Coordinator (NOC) to promote the growth of the membership. Works closely with the National President and national and local officers in matters pertaining to recruiting, membership, and follow-up. Regularly reaches out to existing auxiliaries to address questions or issues that may arise. Provides quarterly written report to the National President outlining activities and information</p>	<p>pertaining to membership, organizing, and recruiting. Acts as Mobilization Program Chair.</p> <p><b>2nd Vice President/ Assistant NLR</b></p> <p>Acts as assistant to the National Legislative Representative (NLR). Acts as NLR upon request or in the absence of the NLR.</p> <p><b>Chaplain</b></p> <p>Presides over the opening of the General Session of the National Auxiliary and introduces national officers. Serves as liaison officer to the Memorial Committee.</p> <p><b>Alternate Secretary</b></p> <p>Assists the President as requested. Requires secretarial skills in order to fill the temporary or permanent vacancy in the office of the National Secretary.</p> <p><b>Alternate Treasurer</b></p> <p>Assists the President as requested. Requires accounting skills in order to fill the temporary or permanent vacancy in the office of the National Treasurer.</p>
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# Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

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## LOCAL AUXILIARY NEWS

Annual report packets and dues notices were mailed to all auxiliary secretaries in December. Please have these back to me before March 1, 2014. If you have any questions about the forms, please give me a call or send an e-mail with your questions. I will be more than happy to assist you in getting these forms properly filled out and processed.

Please keep in mind, if your annual report and dues are not received in my office by the end of the grace period, March 31, 2014, you will not be eligible to seat a Delegate at the National Convention this fall.

Auxiliary Secretaries, please call or e-mail me, or any officer, when there is a death of one of your members or the death of one of their family members. We want to be able to send our condolences out to the family. We would like to share in your joys also. If any member has news that they would like to share, please send me an e-mail.

## MAL NEWS

Dues notices have been mailed to all members-at-large. Please make sure all of your information is correct and return with your dues payment to me no later than March 1, 2014.

## SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

If you have children who are college bound, they may be eligible to apply for a scholarship with the BLET Auxiliary. To qualify, one parent must be a member of the BLET **and** one parent must be a member of the BLET Auxiliary for a minimum of two years.

BLET Auxiliary scholarship information and applications can be obtained on our

website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net). You can also find a link from the BLET website at [www.ble-t.org](http://www.ble-t.org) under "Departments," then "BLET Auxiliary." Scholarship applications for the 2014-2015 academic school year are due in my office April 1, 2014. Late applications will not be considered.

### Our deepest sympathies:

Our sympathies go out to the family of Sister Mildred Jo Raleigh. Sister Mildred Jo, who passed away in October of last year, was a past International Auxiliary Chaplain.

Sister Terri Fleming's mother, Betty Montgomery, passed away in December. Our thoughts and prayers are with Terri and her family. Sister Terri is our National Alternate Treasurer.

We are sending our thoughts and prayers to Sister Gina Forman and her family. Sister Gina's father passed away January 11, 2014. Sister Gina Forman is our National 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator.

Please keep in mind that our wonderful BLET Auxiliary Cookbooks are available for purchase! They make great hostess gifts and wedding gifts. They are great gifts for any occasion! Send me an e-mail or call for more details!

Congratulations to our son Michael and family! Michael and Molly have a new baby girl, born February 12, 2014! Elise and Cayman are very excited to have a baby sister! Carrera Brooke Poss welcome to the world!!

Please call or e-mail me with any questions that you may have. I truly look forward to the opportunity to meet many of you at one of the upcoming Regional Meetings!

Spring is just around the corner!



*Lawana Poss can be reached at 770-497-8898, by e-mail at [Lewp2007@bellsouth.net](mailto:Lewp2007@bellsouth.net), or by mail at 1394 Bywood Court, Suwanee, Georgia 30024.*

## **Two-Year Budget Bill Signed into Law**

President Barack Obama signed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 on December 26, providing \$63 billion in sequester relief over two years, split evenly between defense and non-defense programs. The bill also includes \$85 billion in deficit reduction.

The savings in the bill are from a new airport security tax and from an increase in fees paid by companies that offer pensions that are guaranteed by the federal government. Deficit reduction also comes from a controversial measure that would reduce cost-of-living increases for retired members of the military under age 62. House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan stated that the bill offers proof that both parties can work together, putting aside their differences and finding common ground. I guess only time will tell if this is a reality or just wishful thinking.

## **Debt Limit Raised/Military Retiree Benefits Restored**

In spite of the protest led by tea party Republicans in the Senate, legislation passed in the second week of February in both the House and the Senate to raise the U.S. debt limit. On Saturday, February 15, well before the February 27 deadline, President Obama signed the legislation into law, taking that volatile issue off the table. Passage of this legislation marks the first time that Congress has dealt with the debt ceiling issue without a last-minute standoff over policy issues.

On the same date, the President also signed a measure to restore those benefits that had been cut for younger military retirees in the budget bill last December.

## **Placing Cameras in Cabs of Locomotives is Not the Answer!**

Prompted by the 2008 tragic collision of a commuter train and a freight train in Chatsworth, California, resulting in numerous casualties, and fueled by more recent incidents, including the derailment of a Metro North passenger train in New York late last year, as well as the derailments that occurred in Casselton, North Dakota, and Keithville, Louisiana, there have been a number of media stories about the need for inward-facing cameras in locomotives, as if that measure would somehow prevent such incidents.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce responded, stating that cameras are not the answer. Cameras are an investigation tool, he said, not an accident prevention tool, and the installation of cameras on locomotives will provide nothing more than a false sense of security for the public and yet another distraction for the engineer inside the cab.

He went on to explain that the real problem is that of fatigue and pointing a camera at a very tired locomotive engineer does nothing to alleviate that fatigue. He explained that there are steps that can be taken that will truly reduce the effect of fatigue on safety in the railroad industry and safeguard against those occasions

where fatigue overwhelms an engineer while operating a moving locomotive.

He has called on all railroads that are currently suspending and/or terminating engineers for taking time off due to fatigue because they cannot with certainty be rested for an unknown on-duty time to stop this counter intuitive behavior immediately. Pressuring engineers to work tired through threat of the loss of their jobs is contributing to fatigue in the railroad industry and all but ensures that another fatigue-related accident will happen.

President Pierce stated that equally as important as addressing the attendance issue is the implementation of positive train control technology on the nation's railroads and he again called on Congress, the FRA, and the railroad industry to ensure that this technology is implemented according to the deadline of December 31, 2015, as mandated by Congress.

## **Safe Freight Act**

During the week of February 9-15, an informal poll was conducted by Progressive Railroading, asking, "Do you think all freight trains should be required to have a minimum crew size of two people?" This poll follows the introduction of the Safe Freight Act (H.R. 3040) in Congress, a piece of legislation backed jointly by the BLET and SMART Transportation Division (former UTU) that would require two person train crews. The poll is now closed and the results are in. Of the 1,546 votes cast,

94% voted Yes to the question and 5% voted no.

H.R. 3040 would mandate that "no freight train or light engine used in connection with the movement of freight may be operated unless it has a crew consisting of at least two individuals, one of whom is certified under regulations promulgated by the Federal Railroad Administration as a locomotive engineer pursuant to section 20135, and the other of whom is certified under regulations promulgated by the Federal Railroad Administration as a conductor pursuant to section 20163."

BLET members, retirees, the BLET Auxiliary, and all concerned family members are being urged to contact their member of Congress to ask for their support of H.R. 3040.

## **Health Care Coverage Extended to Legally Married Same-sex Spouses**

Effective January 1, 2014, the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare Plan (GA-23000), the Railroad Employees National Dental Plan (GP-12000), the Railroad Employees National Vision Plan, and the Railroad Employees National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit Plan (GA-46000) will provide dependent coverage for legally married same-sex spouses of eligible employees.

Although the benefit is not required by law or under current collective bargaining agreements, Rail Labor and Rail Management reached an agreement to extend dependent coverage to same sex spouses of eligible employees who are legally married.

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## **BLET Supports High Speed Rail Funding Provisions in California**

In a January 13 News Release, the BLET praised California Governor Jerry Brown's budget proposal to help fund bullet train construction with \$300 million in revenue from the state's cap-and-trade program. BLET National President Dennis Pierce expressed his support of the proposal, stating: "High-speed rail is an integral part of California's transportation future. Without it, California's overcrowded highways cannot meet the future transportation needs of the state's ever-growing population. Building high-speed rail and its successful operation will boost the state's economy and will provide much needed middle class jobs for years to come."

"Cap-and-trade," also called "emissions trading," is a market-based approach to control pollution by providing economic incentives for reducing greenhouse gases, emissions, and other pollutants. A limit, or cap, is set on the amount of a pollutant that may be emitted and that cap is allocated to firms in the form of permits. Firms are required to hold a number of permits equivalent to their emissions. If a firm needs to increase its number of permits, it must purchase permits from other firms that require less. The transfer of permits is referred to as trade, thus the term "cap and trade."

Using California's cap-and-trade funds to construct high-speed rail makes sense. The high speed rail project that will connect the Bay Area with Los Angeles and

other cities will improve travel options and reduce the time needed to cross the state, thereby resulting in less pollution and carbon emissions. In addition, it will provide good paying jobs. The governor's budget plan would also provide investment in rail modernization, including upgrades to urban, commuter, and intercity rail systems.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen have also expressed their support of Governor Brown's budget proposal.

### **Please Join the Teamsters' Effort to Oppose Fast-Track Legislation**

On January 31, Teamsters members across the nation took action in an effort to get their members of Congress to join in opposition to the fast track negotiating authority for trade agreements. Congress is currently debating a bill to reauthorize a procedure called the trade promotion authority (TPA), also known as Fast Track.

Fast Track is a formal legal authority granted to the President by Congress, which allows the White House to fast-track international treaty negotiations with foreign partners, sign the completed agreement, and write the implementing legislation. Congressional committees have only 30 days to review the text, and then it goes directly to Congress. Congress then has only 60 days to consider the legislation and then vote on it. They are limited to 20 hours of debate, and no amendments or filibusters are permitted.

So, although our Constitution provides that Congress has the sole authority to "regulate commerce with foreign nations," fast track legislation gives this authority, almost unchecked, to the executive branch.

Fast Track would make it easier for job-killing trade agreements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) to become law. TPP is a giant free trade agreement among the U.S. and Canada and 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The nations involved in the talks account for nearly 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and 26 percent of the world's trade. The treaty deals with everything from financial services to telecommunications to sanitary standards for food. The impact of this treaty is far reaching, yet weekday evening television news programs have largely ignored the topic.

BLET and auxiliary members are being asked to join alongside Teamster Local Unions and Joint Councils to stand up against Fast Track by:

1. Contacting your area members of Congress and tell them to vote NO on Fast Track (H.R. 3830). You may use the Teamster Fast Track Hotline (1-888-979-9806) to make these calls. For talking points on this topic, go to <http://teamster.org/ftcampaign>
2. Visiting the Teamsters "Fast Track is the Wrong Track" website at <http://teamster.org/fast-track-wrong-track-teamsters> and signing the petition against Fast Track. You can also send an e-mail to your member of Congress on this site and sign up for text message updates.



*Sereena Hogan can be reached by phone at (520) 297-0944; by mail at 8720 N. Myrtle Dr., Tucson, Arizona 85704, or by e-mail at [vp3sereena@aol.com](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com).*

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***"It should be the power of our vote, not the size of our bank accounts that drives our democracy."***

*— President Barack Obama  
2014 State of the  
Union Address*

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# Nor Cal Auxiliary Celebrates Four-Year Anniversary and the Bonds of Sisterhood



By Kathleen Bisbikis, Nor Cal Auxiliary 39

Sisterhood is one of those amazing things—it is something special that develops and grows over time. You feel it, but you can't always explain it. It only comes with joys and hardships that are shared by a group of women who are passionate about something they have in common — a group of strong woman who, when they come together, can leave their egos at the door and are able to encourage the ideas of each other to promote the common good.

The Nor Cal Auxiliary has that amazing bond of sisterhood. We celebrate this February our four-year anniversary as an auxiliary. It's hard to imagine that all of those women at our initial meeting would come to be the tight knit group we are today. It wasn't always easy and it didn't happen overnight. We had our struggles in the beginning, but eventually we figured it out, and trust and progress began to happen.

As a group, we set goals in the first year: we wanted to develop a scholarship; we wanted \$1000 in our general fund; we wanted to bring rail families together, both for fun and for education. We are happy to report that we now award two scholarships each year. We have, through hard work and creative fundraisers, met our goal of \$1000 in our general fund. And the parties — they are amazing! We have also educated our families by bringing in representatives from the Railroad Retirement Board, United Healthcare, and our legal counsel in the area. We work hard, but we make it fun and we grow as we do it.

While we are a young auxiliary compared to most, we have been faced many challenges along the way. We have marched on City Hall in the "War on Workers;" we have comforted those who lost family members much too soon; we have seen cancer fought and beaten; we have shared in the joy of retirement; we have laughed until our sides hurt, danced until our feet ached, and we have had disagreements and then made up with one another. No matter what the situation that is put in front of us, I never for a second doubt that all that any of us has to do is pick up the phone and one or ten of our sisters will be at our door. That's what sisterhood really is — it's knowing, really knowing, that when you need one of us, no matter what the reason, all you have to do is ask.

## Quotes from the sisters of Nor-Cal 39:

*"It's nice having women to turn to who know exactly what it's like living the railroad life. The support system is awesome!"*

– Jennifer Hayden

*"An amazing group of women, who bring unique goodness to the table to create a balance of life within a railroad family."*

– Jana Bauerson

*"It's nice to know that there are other women out there who can relate and actually understand being a rail wife, and what it means to live in a railroad family. Comforting to know I will have sisters to help should something devastating ever happen!"*

– Lori Bencivengo

*"My sisters are like my own group of super heroes. They show up when I need them the most and they each have their own special type of super power."*

– Kathleen Bisbikis

*"We function as safety nets in a chaotic world of railroading simply by being there for each other."*

– Heather Barto

*"Nor-Cal 39 is more than an auxiliary – it's a way of life."*

– Susie Burrola



# Retirement Rocks!

## *Life in the Retirement Lane*

**By Candace Blue, Member  
NorCal Auxiliary #39  
Stockton, California**

When any of us go through a significant life style change, I think the lead-up can involve some apprehension and worry. I retired from my job about four years ago and have rejoiced in having my own free time and the sense of being my own boss and in total charge of my own destiny. When my husband, Scott Wiesemann, retired from his job as a railroad engineer from Mormon Yard in Stockton, California, we experienced many changes. I, for one, worried that he would criticize how I spent my day and that he would get in my way. I also worried that he'd fall into bad habits—boredom, dissatisfaction or worse. Well, knock on wood, none of those happened. Lots of adjustments happened, and we are constantly fine tuning the process.

I have a real routine that I follow every morning, and I refuse to be rushed about it. I must have my coffee; the TV news weather report; and computer time to check the bank account, answer e-mails, and do some research on the internet. I then want time to read my book and the newspaper before I get ready for the day. Scott, on the other hand, is raring to go as soon as he gets up. He makes the coffee and breakfast. Then, weather permitting, he wants to get outside, do projects, go to the gym, take a walk, or whatever will keep him moving. Now if these two life styles appear not to mesh, it isn't true. He tolerates my need for routine, and I respect his need to get moving. So we have our individual lives, and we also come together for all sorts of fun.

Scott has said retirement is like one big weekend. He definitely misses the camaraderie of his co-workers at the yard, but that is offset by our involvement in the BLET Nor Cal #39 Auxiliary where we attend meetings, and help plan and put on events. That keeps Scott in touch with many of his buddies. It also allows us to stay on top of issues, especially involving legislation.



**Candace Blue and  
Husband Scott Wiesemann**

We also receive BLET California State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Smith's updates on a regular basis.

We feel financially secure, and I am personally grateful for Scott's years of service that have resulted in benefits for both of us. We thoroughly enjoy this free time that we've never had before. We can participate more in our hobbies, like boating, music, and travel. It's fun when every day is a holiday. For example, we can go out on our boat any day of the week. It is nice not having him go to work even though Scott thoroughly enjoyed being an engineer.

We now enjoy going to the San Francisco Bay and other cruises with our boat club. I am being sworn in as commander of our boat club this month, and we are teaching boating classes in our free time. We also take RV trips to state and national parks and manage to get some tent camping in as well. Scott is an electric bass player in a blues band. We love to exercise and party!

So you can see, retirement can be wonderful, but it is a constantly moving piece of art. Scott and I wish all of you wonderful retirements when that time comes for you!

## Guadalupe Auxiliary 28 working hard to provide fun, fellowship, and educational opportunities in Tucson, Arizona

Together, BLET Division 28 and Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28, in Tucson, Arizona, hosted a festive Christmas party for the BLET families in the area on December 20, 2013. The turnout was great, with around 120 guests. Santa arrived early in the evening to visit with the children and hand out gift bags filled with items donated by the local Operation Lifesaver coordinator, as well as some other fun trinkets provided by Division 28. A lavish Mexican buffet was provided, along with a special table of menu items for the children. Auxiliary members baked desserts and offered them for a donation to raise funds for the Division 28 Scholarship Fund. A combination 50/50 and prize raffle was also conducted, with prizes donated by In-n-Out Burger, thanks to the efforts of Auxiliary 28 Associate Member Henry Zappia, and gift cards and thermal mugs donated by FELA Attorney Fred Bremseth. The Bremseth Law Firm also contributed funds to help offset the cost of the banquet, and Investigator John Hiatt and Attorney Chris Moreland of that firm joined in the festivities. Guests who brought donations for the clothing drive to help the homeless high school students in Tucson's District 1 School district received a coupon for a free meal at In-n-Out Burger.

Throughout the evening, background music was provided by a local DJ. After the raffle, the music became more lively and guests of all ages broke out their moves on the dance floor. Thank you to all who made this year's party another great one!

In January, the auxiliary sponsored an Information Seminar for the members and spouses of Division 28. The seminar featured speakers from the Railroad Retirement Board, income protection providers Brotherhood's Relief and Compensation Fund and Locomotive Engineers and Conductors Mutual Protection Association, and local FELA Attorney Chip Rabb, of Rabb & Rabb, PLLC. Many thanks to all of these presenters, some of whom traveled a long way to participate in this event. They each did a great job of providing important information for railroad families.



Auxiliary 28 member Kathleen Kaveloh, President Kathy Hurst, and Vice President Joanna Zappia stand ready to serve the kiddies at the Children's buffet table at the annual Christmas party.

## From 1st VP/National Outreach Coordinator Gina Forman



Hello and Happy Spring to all from Indiana! I am sure that most of us are ready to break free of this winter 2014 once and for all! While the passing of each season has its own special meaning to me, spring is the chance for new life to flourish no matter what happens. Like clockwork, even after the harshest conditions, flowers begin to grow and brighten the landscape and the air comes alive with their sweet scents. New leaves spring out on the trees to shade us from the warming sun, and once again we plant our crops for the upcoming growing season.

Much like these wonders of nature, we too can claim this time of year to create new opportunities in our life. Take time to look around and find good in all things you do. Studies prove that it is human nature to get down during these cold and dreary months. No matter what your circumstances are, take this time to create positive results in all aspects of your life. Go ahead and exercise even when you do not feel like it. Make the effort to keep those goals you set for the new year.

It is no accident that Easter happens this time of year. The message sent is clear — all things can become new; all trespasses can be forgiven. While it may not be beautiful flowers and trees you create, I think you will be pleased with the results of your efforts.

I would like to share a wonderful recipe with you all. It is simple and a winner at our Easter gatherings. Happy Easter to all!

### Goey Lemon Bars

#### For the crust:

1 box (18.25oz) Lemon Cake Mix (I used Duncan Hines)  
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened  
1 egg

#### For the filling:

8 oz. cream cheese, softened  
2 cup powdered sugar  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
2 eggs

In a large mixing bowl, combine cake mix, butter, and egg. Press into the bottom of a 13x9 baking dish. Combine cream cheese, sugar, vanilla, and eggs in a mixer. Beat until fluffy. Pour over crust. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 30-35 minutes. Remove from oven and cool completely. Refrigerate for 4 hours (or overnight) for best flavor. This is always an Easter favorite at our home. Enjoy!

Gina Forman can be reached at 765-432-1050, by e-mail at [tweety95@yahoo.com](mailto:tweety95@yahoo.com), or by mail at 63 S. Hood Street, Peru, Indiana 46970.

## Mark Your Calendar Now with these important dates!

**June 15-19, 2014**

### **87th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) - Savannah, Georgia**

Arrangements Chairman D.C. Dickey, Local Chairman of Division 646, will host the 2014 SMA at the Westin Savannah Harbor Golf Resort & Spa in Savannah.

**June 29-July 3, 2014**

### **74th Annual International Western Convention (IWC) - Minneapolis, Minneapolis**

Arrangements Chairman David K. Brown, Chairman of the Minnesota State Legislative Board and Legislative Representative of BLET Division 517, will host the 2014 IWC at the Hilton Minneapolis.

**August 4-8, 2014**

### **76th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) - Cleveland, Ohio**

Arrangements Chairman Patrick Redmond, Local Chairman of Division 607, and Co-Chair James R. Blum, Legislative Representative of Division 526, will host the 2014 EUMA at the newly-renovated Westin Downtown Cleveland, which is within walking distance of BLET National Division headquarters.

**September 7-11, 2014**

### **79th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) - St. Louis, Missouri**

Arrangements Chairman Dave W. Grimes, Local Chairman of Division 42, will host the 2014 SWCM at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark Hotel. For more information, visit the SWCM website: [bletswcm.org](http://bletswcm.org).

### **BLET Auxiliary Second Quadrennial National Convention**

September 29 - October 2, 2014, at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## **Greetings from the Editor Sereena Hogan**

Hope this issue of the newsletter finds everyone in good health and good spirits. It's been such a rough winter for so many across the nation and I really feel for those who have had to deal with ice, snow, freezing, and below-freezing temperatures. It make me feel almost guilty about enjoying the weather that we have experienced these last couple of months here in Tucson. We have had record highs for this time of year and today, as I write this, on Valentine's Day 2014, at 5:00 p.m., the sun is shining brightly and it's 84 degrees. The doors and windows of our home are open to enjoy the fresh air. It does make us wonder, however, about what we might be in for this summer. Does this warm, dry spell mean that this summer will be hotter and drier than ever? I will try not to think of that just now and enjoy the present.

I am looking forward to some of the great locations we will visit this year for the regional conventions and some of the legislative meetings that are coming up. It will be very different having my husband Ken attend as my guest this year rather than him having to keep up the hectic pace of his former position as BLET Special Rep and Coordinator of Education and Training.

This is an important year for both the BLET and the BLET Auxiliary as we all convene in Las Vegas to do the work necessary to move our organizations forward. I hope that some of our younger Auxiliary members will step forward to run for the national officer positions that will be voted on at our convention this fall. I am happy to speak with any of you who wish to know more about the positions or to help you decide if one of them may be right for you. Please send me an e-mail or give me a call. My contact information is provided below.

**We welcome your submissions for our publication. Please send your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., to:**

**Sereena Hogan, Editor & Publisher**  
**BLET Auxiliary News**  
**8720 N. Myrtle Drive**  
**Tucson, Arizona 85704**  
**520-297-0944 - [vp3sereena@aol.com](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com)**

**The next issue will be published in June 2014. Please have your submissions to Sereena by May 25, 2014.**



## **BLET Auxiliary**

Sereena Hogan, Publisher, BLET Auxiliary News  
8720 N. Myrtle Drive  
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