



# 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 9, Number 1

Spring 2018

Sereena Hogan, President • Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President • Helen Brand, Secretary • Terri Fleming, Treasurer  
Kathleen Bisbikis, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative • [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)

## Welcome Music City Auxiliary No 431 - Nashville, TN



### Auxiliary 431 Organizational Meeting, Feb. 16, 2018

**Front Row, left to right:** Nat'l Auxiliary 1st Vice President/Outreach Coordinator Susie Burrola; Aux. 431 Legislative Rep. Lisa Rich, Secretary-Treasurer Jessie Perkins, President Debbie Wright, Vice President Katie Dean; Chaplain Nicole Mook; and Aubrey Green. **Second row:** Div. 129 LR Jeff Rich, TN State Leg. Bd. Chairman Rusty Jones, Div. 129 Vice Local Chairman Dan Perkins, Div. 129 Local Chairman Allen Tate; Nat'l Auxiliary President Sereena Hogan. **Back row:** Gavin Rich; Garrett Rich; General Chairman, CSX Western Lines, Keith Kerley; Jay Wright; Jerry Perkins; and Andrew Mook.

Music City Auxiliary No. 431 was organized on February 16, 2018, in Franklin, Tennessee, just south of Nashville. This auxiliary came together as a result of the tenacious efforts of BLET Division 129 Legislative Rep. Jeff Rich and his wife Lisa.

The organizing meeting and dinner was sponsored by the Law Office of Steele & Moss, LLP, Atlanta, Georgia. Paul Wingo, Director of Railroad Disability Claims and Benefits with Steele & Moss, was on hand to share some important information with those in attendance. Keith Kerley, General Chairman, CSX Western Lines; and Rusty Jones, Tennessee State Legislative Board Chairman, attended the meeting to show their support for the newly formed auxiliary, and Division 129 Local Chairman Allen Tate joined as an Associate Member. With this kind of support and the enthusiasm of its new members, this auxiliary is sure to be successful and have a positive impact on railroad families in the Nashville area and beyond!

## NATIONAL CONVENTION

*By Sereena Hogan, National President*

The National BLET Auxiliary Convention is scheduled to be held September 30 through October 5, 2018, in conjunction with the BLET National Convention, at the Rio Hotel & Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The national officers for the next term will be elected by the delegates during the National Auxiliary General Session at the convention. 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. A description of the duties of the national officers who will be elected at the 3rd Quadrennial Convention can be found on page 4. If you are considering running for a position as a national officer, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the current national officers with any questions or concerns you may have.

The only way our Constitution & Bylaws, and any forms used for auxiliary meetings, can be updated or changed is by a Resolution submitted during the General Session. The Resolutions for proposed amendments are voted upon by the delegation. Any auxiliary or member-at-large may submit a Resolution. Resolutions must be received by the National Secretary at least 60 days prior to the opening of the General Session. *See page 5 of this publication for proper format and a sample resolution.*

All Auxiliary members and any guests who are interested in the BLET Auxiliary are welcome to attend the General Session. However, parliamentary procedure mandates 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. Members who may not wish to speak before the entire delegation may choose to pass along their concerns or ideas 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.

— continued on page 4

### ***"Nevertheless She Persisted!"***

March is Women's History Month. Thank you Sister Kathleen Bisbikis for the reminder - I love the quote you included with your legislative article on Page 6! Women's History Month has been observed annually in the United States throughout the month of March since 1987. The celebration of this month for honoring women grew out of a weeklong celebration of women's contributions to culture, history, and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978. Presentations were given at dozens of schools, and hundreds of students participated in a "Real Woman" essay. A parade was held in downtown Santa Rosa. In the years that followed, the idea of celebrating women caught on within communities, school districts, and organizations across the country and, in 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring the week of March 8 as National Women's History Week. Six years later, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March.

The theme for the 2018 celebration of National Women's History Month is: *"Nevertheless She Persisted: Honoring Women who Fight all forms of Discrimination Against Women."* This phrase was born in February 2017 when Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) was silenced during Jeff Sessions' confirmation hearing for Attorney General. At the time, Warren was reading an opposition letter penned by Coretta Scott King (a past National Women's History Project honoree) in 1986. Referring to the incident, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell later said "Senator Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless she persisted." Women's rights activists immediately adopted the phrase in hashtags and memes to refer to any strong women who refuse to be silenced. (<http://www.nwhp.org/2018-theme-honorees>)

This year's theme presents the opportunity to honor women who have shaped America's history and its future through their tireless commitment to ending discrimination against women and girls. It embodies women working together with strength, tenacity and courage to overcome obstacles and achieve joyful accomplishments. Throughout the year, fifteen outstanding women are being honored for their unrelenting and inspirational persistence, and for understanding that, by fighting all forms of discrimination against women and girls, they have shaped America's history and our future.

I invite you to visit the website <http://www.nwhp.org/2018-theme-honorees> to read about these 15 honorees, some who have passed, and some who are still living. And, I implore you also to take this opportunity to celebrate the ongoing persistence of our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, neighbors, and friends. Let us celebrate all women this month and throughout the year.



Although women have come a long way since the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gave us the right to vote in 1920, the fight for women's rights is not over. The recent groundbreaking anti-sexual assault and women's empowerment movements #MeToo and Time's Up brought to light the obstacles women continue to encounter in their daily lives, both personally and professionally. The first time a U.S. court recognized sexual harassment in the workplace was in 1977, and in 1980 sexual harassment was officially defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Before that time, sexual harassment of women at work was rampant and there was nothing that women could do about it except quit. The Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, founded earlier this year, is a source of legal and financial support for women and men who want to fight sexual misconduct through the justice system.

The gender pay gap is another area where women have a ways to go. In 2017, women were earning an average of 20 percent less than their male counterparts performing the same job, according to the Institute For Women's Policy Research. Some experts argue that women won't reach pay equity with men until 2152. However, if you believe the adage that "with greater education comes greater wealth," the fact that Millennial women are vastly outpacing men in higher education, young women's wages could possibly overtake men's by as early as 2020.

I am grateful to be a woman living in these times rather than my mother's generation. Having reached adulthood about the same time as the emergence of the women's liberation movement, my old-fashioned mother and I often had disagreements about a "woman's place" in this world. I am also very grateful to the many women who, throughout the years, have fought for women's rights.

On another note, please take the time to review the information in this edition of the newsletter pertaining to our upcoming National Convention, especially if you will be attending as a delegate. And please take the time to review our Constitution & Bylaws. We must constantly make changes to this document to keep up with the times in order that we may better serve our members and to accomplish our goal of "working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families." Local auxiliaries and members-at-large are encouraged to submit resolutions to amend the bylaws. Information about the convention will soon be posted on our website. Have a great Spring everyone!

**Sereena Hogan, National President**  
**8720 N. Myrtle Drive**  
**Tucson, Arizona 85704**  
**520-297-0944, [vp3sereena@aol.com](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com)**

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## Never Give Up on Your Dreams!

*An inspiring message from Bree Jones, Red Willow Rails Auxiliary No. 623 Secretary-Treasurer*

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Congratulations to Bree Jones, Secretary-Treasurer and Mobilization Coordinator for Red Willow Rails Auxiliary No. 623 in McCook, Nebraska. Against all odds, Bree graduated from McCook Beauty Academy last November and passed the Nebraska Board of Cosmetology exam at the top of the class! On November 22, 2017, she posted the following on her Facebook page:

This morning, after I took my state boards, I stood there on the frozen sidewalk waiting for my husband to pick me up and the thoughts running through my mind surprised even me. I thought to myself, I'm a 33 year old wife, mother, and stepmother, and here I am just now finishing my college degree. How and why did I wait so long to accomplish this goal? It took my own parents' divorce, a rocky relationship with my step parents, making bad choices, having children at a young age, my father passing away, my own divorce, finding out my daughter had her innocence stolen at the age of 4, my son being diagnosed with ADHD and suspected of having autism, a new husband and children in my life, working and learning how to blend families and having to convince myself to not give up on life.

So many times I wanted to throw in the towel and quit, but instead I picked myself back up, decided to make something of myself and prove, to not only me but everyone else, that no matter what life

throws at you, you don't quit! Only a handful of times did I receive less than 100% on my graded tests, and now a 95% on my state boards. Those nights I sacrificed time with my husband and my kids to study and felt guilty - those sleepless nights wondering if I was ever going to be good enough to make the cut - it paid off. I finally proved to myself that no matter what life throws at you, you're still worth the effort.

So, if you're reading this thinking to yourself that you'll never amount to anything and you don't deserve better in life, let me be your example that you are! You are worth the sacrifice, the sleepless nights, the tears, and hopelessness you feel, you are worth the effort. It's never too late - and never ever give up! A huge thank you to my parents Jan Frosh Elliott and Rick Elliott for teaching me to never give in, my husband William Jones and our children for their amazing support and sacrifice, Jane Carlisle for teaching me to do my best no matter the result, and Jen Warwick for being my mentor throughout my journey. I love you all!

*Bree Jones lives in McCook, Nebraska. Prior to her studies at McCook Beauty Academy, she attended Mid-Plains Community College in McCook and also studied Criminal Justice at Southeast Community College in Lincoln, Nebraska. She is currently working as a Cosmetologist at BDK Salon in McCook.*

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## Operation Oliver

*By Kathleen Bisbikis, Secretary-Treasurer, Aux. 39, & National 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Rep.*

Nor-Cal 39 Auxiliary in California celebrated its eight-year anniversary on February 2, 2018, in Mokelumne Hill at the historic and haunted Hotel Leger Restaurant. It was established in 1851, at the heart of the Gold Rush, and has been in continuous operation ever since.

February is the month when our auxiliary comes together to celebrate and talk about how fast the time has gone since we first received our charter and all the amazing things that have happened with our families. This year we wanted to really show our appreciation to Susie and Oscar Burrola for their hard work, dedication, and loyalty to the success and growth of our auxiliary. Over the years, Susie has sacrificed so much of her time to the auxiliary, nationally and locally, that she has often had to miss her children's and family's events because of conflicting obligations. Oscar is one of our biggest supporters, always encouraging other families to come to our events and spreading information about the positive benefits and hard work the auxiliary does for others.

Oscar and Susie were both devastated when their daughter Mariah moved to Washington State last year with grandbaby Oliver. To show our appreciation to Susie and Oscar, we surprised them



**Jordan Drake, Oliver Drake, and Mariah, Susie, Alissa, and Oscar Burrola**

by bringing Mariah and her family back to California for our anniversary dinner, which also coincided with daughter Alissa's graduation from Nursing School. Nothing can replace the looks of happiness and shock on both of their faces when the family entered the room with little Oliver.

Nor-Cal 39 has a full calendar of events planned for 2018 and we look forward to giving back to our community and working hard to support our rail families both locally and nationally in the coming months.



## National Convention - continued from front cover

Below is a list of national offices to be filled at the upcoming convention. The office of National Treasurer is not listed as it will not be vacant at this convention. For a full description of the duties and compensation of each office, please refer to Article II of the National Constitution and Bylaws. For each of the national officer positions listed below, 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 (National President, National 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator, National 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Rep, National Secretary, National Treasurer).

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.

### National Officers of the BLET Auxiliary

#### President

Establishes the National Auxiliary headquarters at her home and oversees and facilitates the administrative duties and actions 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 that qualify to send a delegate but do not have a member who is able to attend as 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 dispensation when necessary. Orders payment of expenses for national officers while on official business and appoints members to serve as special representatives on behalf of the National Auxiliary when deemed necessary.

Acts as a liaison between the National Auxiliary and the BLET National Division. Ensures that the National Auxiliary has an article in the BLET Auxiliary section of the quarterly issues of the Locomotive Engineers &

Conductors Journal. 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.

#### 1st Vice President/ National Organizer

Takes over the duties of the National President in her absence.

Acts as National Outreach Coordinator/National Organizer, to promote the growth of the membership and establish new local auxiliaries around the nation. Works closely with the National President and other national officers in matters pertaining to recruiting, membership, and follow-up. Regularly reaches out to existing auxiliaries to offer support and address questions or issues that may arise.

Serves as Editor for the BLET Auxiliary News and submits a "From the Editor" article for each issue of the publication.

Serves as Chairperson of the Auxiliary Mobilization Program.

Must be able to travel to organize new local auxiliaries and to represent the National Auxiliary.

#### 2nd Vice President/ National Legislative Representative

Works closely with the BLET National Legislative Department and the officers and members of the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen. Keeps the membership advised of pending legislation in a timely manner through correspondence, website, e-mail, 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 Rail Conference. 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.

#### Secretary

Custodian of all records for the Auxiliary. Keeps an updated list of all members and their contact info. Records minutes of meetings, conference, calls, etc. Receives all money due to the National Auxiliary and remits funds to the National Treasurer each month. Prepares an article for each issue of the BLET Auxiliary newsletter. Receives scholarship applications, determines eligibility of applicants, and provides copies of all eligible applications

to Executive Council members prior to the annual meeting, and notifies scholarship applicants of the outcome of the review of their application. Prepares scholarship information articles for the BLET publications and website. Sends credentials to all attendees for the National Convention. Notifies the National President and the president and secretary of local auxiliaries whose dues become delinquent. Must have good writing, filing, and computer skills.

#### Chaplain

Presides over the opening of the General Session of the National Auxiliary and introduces national officers. Serves as liaison officer to the Memorial Committee. Reaches out to Auxiliary and BLET members during times of illness or loss of loved ones.

#### Alternate Secretary

Assists the President as requested. Requires secretarial skills in order to fill the temporary or permanent vacancy in the office of the National Secretary.

#### Alternate Treasurer

Assists the President as requested. Requires accounting skills in order to fill the temporary or permanent vacancy in the office of the National Treasurer.

## Instructions & Format for Submitting Resolutions to the National BLET Auxiliary

Resolutions to amend the Constitution & Bylaws of the BLET Auxiliary at the 2018 National Convention must be submitted to the National Secretary no later than August 2, 2018. Send to: Helen, Brand, 38768 Crescent Hill Road, Osawatomie, KS, 66064, or e-mail to her at: [hvbrand51@gmail.com](mailto:hvbrand51@gmail.com).

*The following is the format for composing a resolution:*

**Proposed Amendment to [Constitution (or National Bylaws, or Local Auxiliary Bylaws)]**  
**Resolution submitted by \_\_\_\_\_**

**[Article #, pg #, Title, Section]**

**Present Law reads:**

**[type what the Constitution or Bylaw says now]**

**Change to read:**

**[type as to how you think it should be changed]**

\*\*\*\*\*

**The purpose of this Amendment is to [insert the reason you feel the change is needed].**

*Sample resolution:*

**Proposed Amendment to National Bylaws**  
**Resolution submitted by National Auxiliary Executive Council**

**Article III, Page 11, Section 1. Election and Term of Office.**

**Present Law Reads:**

Section 1. National Officers. President, 1st Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, 2nd Vice President/NLR, 3rd Vice President/Assistant NLR, Chaplain, Alternate Secretary and Alternate Treasurer shall be elected at each General Session of the National Auxiliary.

No National Officer shall be eligible to serve in the same elected office more than one full term with the exception of the National Secretary and National Treasurer, who shall be limited to two full terms, keeping one experienced officer in office at all times.

**Change to Read:**

Section 1. National Officers. President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, 1st Vice President/NLR, 2nd Vice President/Assistant NLR, Chaplain, Alternate Secretary and Alternate Treasurer shall be elected at each General Session of the National Auxiliary.

A National Officer shall be eligible to serve in the same elected office for no more than two terms. The National Secretary and National Treasurer shall be elected to serve two consecutive terms, elected at alternate conventions, keeping one experienced officer in office at all times, but shall be limited to those two terms.

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**The purpose of this Proposed Amendment is to allow an officer to be a candidate for election for more than one term, but no more than two terms, if that officer so desires and the delegates agree with their vote. The Secretary and Treasurer would still be elected in alternate years to keep the financial continuity.**

# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE



*"She was not fragile like a flower; she was fragile like a bomb."*

— Unknown

## H.R. 233 the Safe Freight Act 2017

### Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31

On Monday February 26, 2018, the Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that union members fear could be a heavy blow to organized labor across the country. Simply explained, the case currently before the Supreme Court comes from Mark Janus, a child support specialist for the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. Janus is not a member of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees local chapter (the union working with many public sector workers in the state), but in Illinois and some 21 other states, workers are required to pay "fair-share" fees even if they decline to join the union because they still benefit from the union's bargaining activities. Nonmember workers

are not required to contribute to a union's political lobbying activities or backing of political candidates. Janus disagrees with the political activity the union has backed and because of that he does not want to have to pay fair-share fees to the union for the benefits he receives from union representation. Janus and his lawyers have stated that forcing him to pay the fees in this situation is an infringement on his First Amendment rights.

The court appeared to be divided while hearing arguments, with Associate Justice Elena Kagan noting that the court has never reversed a case in which the reliance on precedent was so significant. Justice Neil Gorsuch, the expected deciding factor, remained silent for most of the arguments. A decision is expected in June.

### Heitkamp Introduces Two-person Crew Bill in Senate

On January 30, 2018, Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) introduced S. 2360, the Safe Freight Act. This is the first time a minimum crew size bill for freight trains has been introduced in the U.S. Senate. The bill currently has four original co-sponsors: Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Senator Angus King (I-ME). Representative Don Young (R-AK) introduced a companion bill in the House on January 3, 2017, H.R. 233. It currently has 88 bipartisan co-sponsors.

Senator Heitkamp has long been an advocate for rail safety improvements, even more so since the occurrence of a collision between a crude oil train and a derailed grain train in Casselton, N.D., on December 30, 2013, which caused a huge fire and evacuation. The impact of the Casselton derailment was lessened significantly thanks to the bravery of the multiple crew members aboard the locomotive. According to the FRA, "the heroic actions of the grain train's (three) crewmembers potentially prevented the environmental and property damages from being much worse" in the Casselton derailment. They pulled a cut of 50 tank cars to safety, away from the burning derailed cars. The crew later went back and removed 20 additional cars from the scene of the fire. "That wouldn't have happened if there were only one-person crews," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce stated. "The BLET continues to oppose single-person freight operations as adverse to worker and public safety."

Like Senator Heitkamp, Senator King (D-ME) also is an advocate for rail safety. His home state of Maine is near Lac-Megantic, Quebec, where an oil train derailment and subsequent fire resulted in 47 fatalities and destroyed much of the town, on July 5, 2013. A one-person train crew operated the oil train in the Lac-Megantic tragedy.

*Source: BLET Newsflash, February 1, 2018*

### Ronald L. Batory – New FRA Administrator

On February 28, 2018, Ronald L. Batory was sworn in as the 14th United States Federal Railroad Administrator by Elaine Chao, U.S. Transportation Secretary. Batory began his railroad career in 1971 for the Detroit, Toledo & Ironton Railroad. He brings 47 years of railroad experience to his new position.

As Administrator, Batory is responsible for managing the agency's regulatory oversight of more than 800 railroads, including enforcement of safety laws and regulations. "He will provide leadership and direction for FRA-administered financial assistance programs and national freight and passenger rail policy, as well as research and development activities that support improved railroad safety, efficiency and reliability," FRA said.

Following his swearing in, Batory described his career as living his dream. "Rail safety is first and foremost," he said. "Its practice is non-compromising and non-negotiable. Safety is embedded into our lives. It is the keystone of the railroad industry. Railroad-ing is not unsafe, as you know, yet you can never assume. One mistake can be your last. Reducing and eliminating risk is paramount toward enhancing safety."

### NTSB Issues URGENT Safety Recommendations to FRA

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued three urgent safety recom-

mentations Thursday, acting upon the agency's findings in two ongoing railroad accident investigations. The Federal Railroad Administration received one urgent safety recommendation based on NTSB findings in the agency's investigation of the Feb. 4, 2018 collision of an Amtrak train and a CSX train near Cayce, South Carolina. The conductor and engineer of the Amtrak train died as a result of the collision. The NTSB issued two urgent safety recommendations to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) based on findings from its investigation of the June 10, 2017 Long Island Railroad (LIRR) accident in which a roadway worker died near Queens Village, New York.

In the investigation of the train collision in Cayce, South Carolina, investigators found that, on the day before the accident, CSX personnel suspended the traffic control signal system to install updated traffic control system components for the implementation of positive train control. The lack of signals required dispatchers to use track warrants to move trains through the work territory. In this accident, and a similar accident on March 14, 2016, in Granger, Wyoming, safe movement of the trains through the signal suspension depended upon proper switch alignment. That switch alignment relied on error-free manual work, which was not safeguarded by either technology or supervision, creating a single point of failure.

The NTSB concludes that additional measures are needed to ensure safe operations during signal suspension and so issued an urgent safety recommenda-

tion to the Federal Railroad Administration seeking an emergency order directing restricted speed for trains or locomotives passing through signal suspensions when a switch has been reported relined for a main track.

"The installation of the life-saving positive train control technology on the CSX tracks is not the cause of the Cayce, South Carolina train collision," said NTSB Chairman Robert Sumwalt. "While the collision remains under investigation, we know that signal suspensions are an unusual operating condition, used for signal maintenance, repair, and installation, that have the potential to increase the risk of train collisions. That risk was not mitigated in the Cayce collision. Our recommendation, if implemented, works to mitigate that increased risk," said Sumwalt.

During the investigation of the LIRR accident, the NTSB identified an improper practice by LIRR roadway workers who were working on or near the tracks. LIRR employees were using "train approach warning" as their method of on-track safety, but they did not clear the track, as required, when trains approached and their "predetermined place of safety" did not comply with LIRR rules and procedures. The NTSB is concerned LIRR management is overlooking and therefore normalizing noncompliance with safety rules and regulations for proper clearing of tracks while using "train approach warning" for worker protection. The two urgent safety recommendations to the MTA call for MTA to audit LIRR's use of "train approach warning" for worker protection, and, to implement corrective

action for deficiencies found through the audit.

*Source: NTSB Newsflash February 15, 2018*

### **Vice President John Tolman Testifies at Subcommittee Hearing on Oversight of Positive Train Control Implementation**

BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman urged Congress, the railroads, and governmental regulators to ensure that Positive Train Control (PTC) is fully implemented by the current deadline of December 31, 2018. During his testimony, Vice President Tolman also discussed the problem of electronic device distraction (Trip Optimizer and LEADER); the government and industry's failure to address rail worker fatigue; the danger of excessive train lengths; and the need for two-person train crews.

Vice President Tolman encouraged all members of Congress to consider bipartisan support for two-person crew bills that are progressing through the House and Senate. He thanked Representative Don Young for introducing the Safe Freight Act (H.R. 233) and Senator Heidi Heitkamp for introducing S. 2360, a companion bill in the Senate. Both measures would require two-person train crews on freight trains.

"On the railroad, train crews consisting of Engineers and Conductors, form a solid team that moves trains across the United States safely every day," Vice President Tolman said.

"True safety requires two crew members on every freight train, and such a goal should have no party lines."

*Source: BLET Newsflash February 15, 2018*

### **Right to Work – Not in Colorado**

Efforts made by state legislators in the State of Colorado to push a Right to Work bill (HB18-1030, Prohibit Discrimination Labor Union Participation) were stopped in committee by a 6-3 vote. Members of the Colorado House State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee voted to postpone the bill indefinitely, thereby killing it.

The bill was co-sponsored by State Representative Justin Everett and State Senator Tim Neville, both Republicans, as well as 10 additional Representatives and two Senators. This is the second time in two years politicians in Colorado have tried to push through a Right to Work bill and failed.

### **Washington State Oil Spill Response Plan in Place**

The Washington Department of Ecology has approved the state's first oil spill response plan for BNSF Railway Company (BNSF), the largest freight railroad company in the state.

Railroad companies transported about two billion gallons of crude oil through Washington State in 2017, traveling through communities, along major highways, the Columbia River, and Puget Sound, officials said.

— Continued on back cover



# Tidbits from National Secretary Helen Brand

Spring is a time for new beginnings - the grass turns green, trees bud out, and flowers start to peek out of the ground. But spring seems to be running a little late, or I am just being impatient? We had 60 degrees yesterday and today it's snowing!

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship applications are due to me by April 1, 2018. Just a reminder: In order to qualify for a BLET Auxiliary Scholarship, one parent must be a member of the BLET and one parent must be a member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year.

## MAL REMINDER

Thank you to the members-at-large who have sent in their dues. Some are still outstanding. If you have not already done so, please remit your 2018 dues as soon as possible.

## AUXILIARY REMINDER

Dues and year-end reports were due on March 1, 2018. Reports and dues **must** be to me by March 31, 2018 (the end of the grace period) in order for an auxiliary to seat a delegate at the 2018 National Convention later this year. Please let me know if I can help in any way.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Music City Auxiliary No. 431 was organized on February 16, 2018, in Nashville, Tennessee. The new members are very motivated and we hope to see them represented at the National Convention. Officers are: Debbie Wright, President; Kathleen Dean, Vice President; Jessie Perkins, Secretary-Treasurer; Lisa Rich, Legislative Representative; and Nicole Mook, Chaplain.

We also welcome Debra Hall Martin, a new Member-at-Large, from Denham Springs, Louisiana.

## OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Condolences to Guadalupe Auxiliary 28 members Jon and Kathy Hurst of Tucson, Arizona. Jon's mother, Dorothy "Coby" Hurst, passed away January 6, 2018, at the age of 97.

Our sympathies go to Debra Martin, Denham Springs, LA, whose mother Lois Hall, a long-standing MAL member, passed away October 15,

## Scholarship Applications are due

**April 1, 2018!**



Qualification requirements, instructions, and application form can be found on the Auxiliary website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net).

2017.

Condolences also to Auxiliary 28 members Becky and Clay Taylor, Tucson, AZ. Clay's mother, Ima "Jane" Taylor, died February 10, 2018, at the age of 89.

## CONGRATULATIONS

Congrats to MALs Jodi and Will Wallace of LaGrande, Oregon, who welcomed grandson Liam Crew Laurence, 6 lbs., 11 ozs., born December 20, 2017. Liam is the son of their daughter and son-in-law, Allison and Devan Laurence.

Congratulations to MAL Kate Giblin, who graduated from the Gerontology Program at Mid-State Technical College in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, in December 2017, and began her studies this January in the Masters of Social Work Program at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point.

Congratulations also to Bree Jones, Red Willow Rails Auxiliary No 623, in McCook, Nebraska, who graduated from McCook Beauty Academy last November and passed the Nebraska Board of Cosmetology exam at the top of the class.

## CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program (CAP) is our organization's way of helping out some of our long-time members living on limited incomes. The CAP provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. Please check to see if someone in your auxiliary may be eligible and encourage them to apply. Members-at-Large are eligible as well. Contact me if you have questions and for application forms.



*Helen Brand can be reached by phone at 913-256-2741, by mail at 38768 Crescent Hill Road, Osawatomie, Kansas, 66064, or by e-mail at [hybrand51@gmail.com](mailto:hybrand51@gmail.com).*

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!!

— Helen



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## *Living off the grid - well, somewhat at least!*

*By Debbie Keele, Alternate National Secretary*

About a year ago, my husband Jim and I were nearing the end of the all-consuming project of building our cabin. Some years ago, we had purchased a parcel of approximately 40 acres of land in southeast Kansas near the family farm, with the intention of building a cabin and spending time there with old friends and family. We now spend about half of our time there, and the other half at our home in Paola. It's been fun renewing friendships, getting to know our new neighbors, and seeing more of our extended family.

We don't really live completely "off the grid," as we have access to all the usual utilities. We have chosen not to have internet or connect our television to satellite or antenna, and cell phone service is sketchy at best. It's been really nice to not have all the distractions. We spend a lot more time outside, as well as watching DVDs on our television, and reading.

This brings me to the purpose of writing this article. I've read quite a few books over the past year and want to share one of them with you that has made quite an impression on me. The book is entitled **THIS FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT**, by Elizabeth Warren. As you may be aware, Elizabeth is the outspoken senior Senator from Massachusetts. She is truly a champion of America's middle class. Her book gives a history of how, after coming out

of the Great Depression, our country built a strong middle class. She goes into the value of unions and how they contributed to the strength of the middle class. The wellbeing of the middle class is now being undermined at every turn by corporate greed and special interests. Elizabeth tells it like it is and gives the reader much to think about. I highly recommend this book and wish it would be required reading for high school students. It's definitely a must read!



*Debbie Keele has been an auxiliary member for 34 years and has served as a national officer for the last 17 years. Her husband Jim retired from Union Pacific in 2012, after 42 years of railroading. In 2014, Debbie retired from her job at Emily Hart Bridal Shop in Leawood, Kansas, where she had worked for many years making bridal jewelry and as a seamstress. When she is spending time "on the grid" at her home in Paola, Kansas, Debbie can be reached at [debbie.keele@yahoo.com](mailto:debbie.keele@yahoo.com), or 913-645-4459.*

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### In Memoriam

Our heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Michael Kempf, member of BLET Division 35 in Jacksonville, Florida. Michael was killed when his Amtrak train collided with a CSX train tied down in a siding near Columbia, S.C., on February 4, 2018. Brother Kempf was 54 years old. He is survived by his wife and three children.

We also send our condolences to the family and friends of 36-year-old conductor Michael Cella, who was also killed in the crash. Brother Cella is survived by his wife and two children.

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### Going Green

With the distribution of each issue of this publication, a few more of you choose to "Go Green" and help reduce our footprint on the environment by receiving your 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](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com) to let us know.

As always, our newsletter is available on our website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net) even before the copies are mailed out.



## ***Greetings from your Editor, Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President***

### ***Do You Know the Way to Monterey?***

Spring is just around the corner and mother nature keeps playing tricks on us. I'm not one to rush time, but summer hurry up already!

The summer months are a busy time for the Auxiliary as we prepare for the annual BLET regional meetings. As you may or may not know, the majority of fundraising for our Scholarship Program takes place at these meetings. A portion of our members' dues also goes toward the Scholarship Fund, as well as the Care & Assistance Fund. So please remember to renew your membership, encourage new members to join, or start a local auxiliary in your area.

For those of you who are planning to attend the Regional Meeting in Monterey, California, June 18-22, registration is now open on the BLET website, [www.ble-t.org](http://www.ble-t.org). The Hyatt Monterey Hotel & Spa is a great venue for this meeting, and is located in the heart of Monterey, minutes from the Del Monte Golf Course and close to Fisherman's Wharf. If making reservations by phone, at 831-372-1234, be sure to mention the group code "BLET Regional Meeting." Room reservations must be made by May 17, 2018.

When flying into this area, you have a few airports from which to choose. San Francisco and Oakland airports are both about two hours away, and San Jose Airport is about 1-1/2 hours away. Monterey Regional Airport is three miles southeast of Monterey, with major carriers and their regional partners providing direct flights as well as easy connections

If you choose to fly into one of the airports in the Bay Area, you may want to drive along the infamous scenic California State Route 1 (SR-1), also known as Hwy 1, or the Pacific Coast Highway. It is easiest to catch this route from San Francisco, but you can also connect to Hwy 1 from Oakland by heading toward San Francisco on Interstate 80 and crossing over the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge. If you are hungry when you arrive in San Francisco, you may want to take the Embarcadero Exit to Fisherman's Wharf to experience the sights, sounds, and fabulous seafood of San Francisco's most famous waterfront community.

If you have some extra time before or after the meeting for a sight-seeing side trip to the city of San Francisco, City Pass offers some great deals on major attractions (go to [www.citypass.com](http://www.citypass.com)). The Alcatraz Island tours usually sell out fast, so booking ahead

is recommended. For even more adventure, you might consider taking U.S. Route 101, north of San Francisco, across the famous Golden Gate Bridge. From there you can continue north on 101 to catch Hwy 1-N to beautiful Bodega Bay (about an hour and a half north of San Francisco). This is a winding two-lane road that takes you past Muir Beach, Stinson Beach, and Point Reyes. For a little shorter route, you can take 101 north to Sir Francis Drake Blvd., then travel west on Hwy 1 through some small towns and giant redwood forests as you head toward Point Reyes.

If you fly into San Jose, just take CA-17-S and continue onto Santa Cruz Hwy, to Hwy 1. From there, you can either head south to Monterey, or travel north to see San Francisco and the other great sights mentioned above.

Traffic and road conditions can be an issue when traveling in Northern California. It is advised to check for mudslides and road closures on Hwy 1 before planning your trip. Go to the CalTrans website at <http://dot.ca.gov/cgi-bin/roads.cgi>, enter 1 (the highway number) and search. Rush-hour traffic can be an issue on Hwy 1, U.S. Route 101, and other major roads between 7 am and 9:30 a.m., and then again from around 3:30 p.m. until 6:30 p.m., turning a 1-1/2 hour drive into a 3-hour drive.

Once you arrive in Monterey, you will have an opportunity to experience some of the most beautiful coastal terrain, beaches, and hiking trails, as well as historic Cannery Row and the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium. Monterey was originally the state capital of California, and has more historic buildings in its downtown than any other city west of Santa Fe. And for those of you who enjoy wine, there is no shortage of great wineries in the area. To find out more about Monterey and the surrounding area, visit [seemonterey.com](http://seemonterey.com), [TravelBloggers.ca](http://TravelBloggers.ca), and Trip Advisor.

I look forward to seeing many of you this summer in my home state of Sunny California!

That being said, Sereena and I recently traveled to Tennessee to organize our newest auxiliary, Music City Auxiliary No. 431. I would like to thank the CSW Western Lines General Chairman, state and local legislative representatives, BLET Division 129 local union officers, and the new auxiliary officers and members for making this happen. I can tell already they are going to be a successful chapter!

*Susie Burrola can be reached by phone at 209-915-1512; by efax: at 1-855-806-7870; by mail at 1723 Rail Street, Manteca, CA 95337; or by e-mail at [BletAuxiliaryvp@yahoo.com](mailto:BletAuxiliaryvp@yahoo.com).*

## **Western Regional Meeting - Monterey, CA June 18-22, 2018**

**Hyatt Monterey Hotel & Spa, 1 Old Golf Course Rd.,  
Monterey, Calif. 93940, 831-372-1234.**

BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET's regional meeting website, [www.bletregionals.org](http://www.bletregionals.org). If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code "BLET Regional Meeting." Room reservations must be made by May 17, 2018.

## **Eastern Regional Meeting - Washington, D.C. August 13-17, 2018**

**Capital Hilton, 1001 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C.  
20036, 800-774-1500.**

Convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET's regional meeting website, [www.bletregionals.org](http://www.bletregionals.org). If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code "BLET." Room reservations must be made by July 7, 2018.

## **2018 National Convention - Las Vegas, NV September 30 - October 5, 2018**

**Rio Hotel & Casino.** More information and details forthcoming on the BLET National Auxiliary Website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net), the BLET Website, [www.ble-t.org](http://www.ble-t.org), and our Facebook Page, "The National B.L.E.T. Auxiliary."

### ***Other Important Dates to Remember:***

**April 1, 2018 - Scholarship Application Deadline**  
Completed scholarship applications must be received by BLET Auxiliary National Secretary Helen Brand **NO LATER THAN APRIL 1, 2018**. Applications received after that date **WILL NOT** be considered.

### **August 2, 2018 - Deadline for Submission of Resolutions for the 2018 National Convention**

All resolutions reflecting requested changes to the Constitution and Bylaws must be submitted to the National BLET Auxiliary President no later than August 2, 2018. Please refer to Page 5 of this publication for more information about how to prepare and submit resolutions.

## **John Edgar Thomson Foundation Provides Financial Assistance to Daughters of Deceased Railroaders**

The John Edgar Thomson Foundation, a nationally recognized non-profit organization, provides limited financial assistance to daughters of deceased railroad employees. The Foundation was established in 1882 and endowed by the will of John Edgar Thomson, who was the third president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, from 1852 - 1874. Although John Thomson never had children of his own, he often pondered on the difficulties of orphaned girls. In that era, a fatherless boy could usually get a trade school education or find employment; however, a girl had little opportunity for either. Mr. Thomson left a large endowment for orphaned daughters of railroad employees to help maintain their good health and to provide for their higher education.

To be considered for a grant, the deceased parent (regardless of gender) must have been actively employed by a railroad in the United States at the time of death, although the cause does not need to be work-related. The parent, while on the active rolls of the railroad, may have been receiving disability or sick leave benefits at the time of death.

Additionally, the daughter must be living with her remaining parent or guardian full time, unless attending college, to qualify for an award. To remain eligible, the Foundation specifically requires that both the daughter and her parent/guardian must remain unmarried in order to receive aid. The family's financial status is also considered in the selection process.

The monthly allowance made under the grant may cover the period from infancy to high school graduation, and in some circumstances up to age 24, for recipients in pursuit of higher education. The Foundation also offers special healthcare benefits.

All applications are subjected to the approval of the Thomson Foundation's Board of Trustees. The funding for the work of the Foundation is completely independent of any railroad, and it neither solicits nor receives funds from the public.

For further information, please contact Director Linda Dezenski, at The John Edgar Thomson Foundation, 201 S. 18th St., Suite 318, Philadelphia, PA 19103, 215-545-6083, 800-888-1278, [sjethomson@aol.com](mailto:sjethomson@aol.com), or go to [www.jethomsonfoundation.com](http://www.jethomsonfoundation.com).

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

**Sereena Hogan, Publisher**  
**BLET Auxiliary News**  
**520-297-0944**  
**[vp3sereena@aol.com](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com)**

**The next issue will be published in June 2018. Please have your submissions to Sereena on or before May 20, 2018.**



## **BLET Auxiliary**

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## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7**

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About 25 percent of all crude oil moving through the state was transported by railroads.

In accordance with the 2015 Oil Transportation Safety Act, the state's Department of Ecology mandates that rail lines have contingency plans guaranteeing that they can respond to a spill quickly and effectively. This is the same requirement the state has for vessels, pipelines, and oil facilities, the department notes.

"Washington joins California as the only two West Coast states to require oil spill contingency plans for railroad operators," the Washington Department of Ecology said.

*Source: RT&S March 5, 2018*

### **Not Guilty Verdict in Lac-Megantic Trial**

The trial against three former employees of the Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway (MMA) began in September of 2017, and the jury deliberated for nine days prior to reaching their unanimous not guilty verdict. The trial laid bare the dangerous tendency of certain rail carriers to cut corners on safety. Leading up to the tragic derailment of a MMA oil train in Lac-Megantic, Quebec, in July 2015, which killed 47 people and destroyed the center of the town, the MMA Railway had begun the dangerous practice of one-person train operations, and the trial exposed how employees were forced to work with equipment that contributed to the accident.

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