



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.

Kathleen Bisbikis, President • Rachel Pharris, 1st Vice President • Lawana Poss, Secretary • Terri Fleming, Treasurer
Jessica Cole, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative • www.bletauxiliary.net

4TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE BLET AUXILIARY TO TAKE PLACE IN LAS VEGAS

The 4th National Convention of the BLET Auxiliary is scheduled to be held October 10-13, 2022, in conjunction with the BLET's 5th National Convention, at Bally's Hotel & Casino 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 Treasurer who serves an eight-year term. For a description of the duties of the national officers, please refer to Article II of the Constitution & Bylaws of the BLET Auxiliary. The Constitution and Bylaws can be found on the Auxiliary website at www.bletauxiliary.net, under the dropdown list entitled "General Information."

For each of the national officer positions, 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 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).

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 the 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. (See sample on Page 10.) Resolutions must be received by the National Secretary at least 60 days prior to the opening of the General Session.

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.



The National Auxiliary is currently working with families to form new local auxiliaries in the current cities:



Fresno, CA
Columbus, OH
Great Falls, MT
Alliance, NE
Missoula, MT
Kansas City, MO
Chicago, IL



To become connected with one of these in-information auxiliaries please visit our facebook page or send us an e-mail at bletauxiliary@gmail.com.





From the President

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS

"Where there is darkness, let there be light"

— Francis of Assisi

Hello Families, and welcome to 2022, another fun-filled year of surprises! You never know what to expect in this railroad life regardless of how high you set your expectations on New Year's Eve.

I was hopeful that in 2022 we could put COVID behind us and move forward in a positive light, with our focus being on the National Convention in Vegas this October. As usual, a railroad family can never really count on anything going as planned despite our best efforts.

The BNSF Railroad decided that on February 1, 2022, they would implement their High-Viz attendance policy, similar to the Union Pacific's except that, with BNSF, workers are given a total of 30 points for their entire lifetime careers. Understandably, families across the nation and the workers themselves were outraged, and mobilization was quick to follow by the union and the auxiliary. You can read more about this ongoing struggle on the opposite page.

We are excited that due to the BNSF attendance policy and their buyout of the Montana Rail Link lease and taking back that territory, many wives have had just about enough and decided it's time to do something to help in their areas. We currently have approximately ten auxiliaries in the formation stages, three of them in Montana alone. It is understandable as Montana Rail Link was one of the better places to work and the transition of their employees into the BNSF Railway culture amid everything else is likely going to be a difficult transition.

In other not-so-dramatic news, the National BLET Auxiliary Scholarship, as well as our partner scholarship with LECMPA, is reaching its deadline. We encourage all eligible students attending, or planning to attend an accredited college, university, or trade school, to apply. One of the things that brings the National Auxiliary Executive Council much joy each year is being able to help railroad families with the cost of higher education.

The National Auxiliary also has plans for a Spring/Summer online fundraiser, similar to the ones we have offered during the last two years. Please keep your eyes open for that on our website and social media.

It's convention year, and we are busy planning what we hope will be an uplifting experience for all our delegates, officers, and members in attendance. I remember the first convention I attended in Reno, Nevada, and the sense of renewal and excitement I felt as I returned to my local auxiliary, Nor Cal 39. We hope to provide that same kind of exhilarating experience for all of this year's attendees.

Lastly, I am aware that many of us have had moments of sadness, frustration, and hopelessness, not just the BNSF families but also the Union Pacific families and others dealing with the attendance points system. People have said things like "you can't change it; what's done is done." It's easy to fall down the rabbit hole of despair. I don't believe that we cannot make a change; I don't believe that what's done is done. I saw for myself what a group of railroad wives could accomplish recently (story on opposite page), and while it may appear to be a dark time, the light breaks through when we all join together in solidarity and fight this as a team. We are the light, and while they have tried, they learned quickly you cannot dim us or stomp us out.

Please do not give up the fight; I will not stop and I hope you won't either.

Kathleen "Kat" Bisbikis
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Find us on the web at www.bletauxiliary.net
Also...

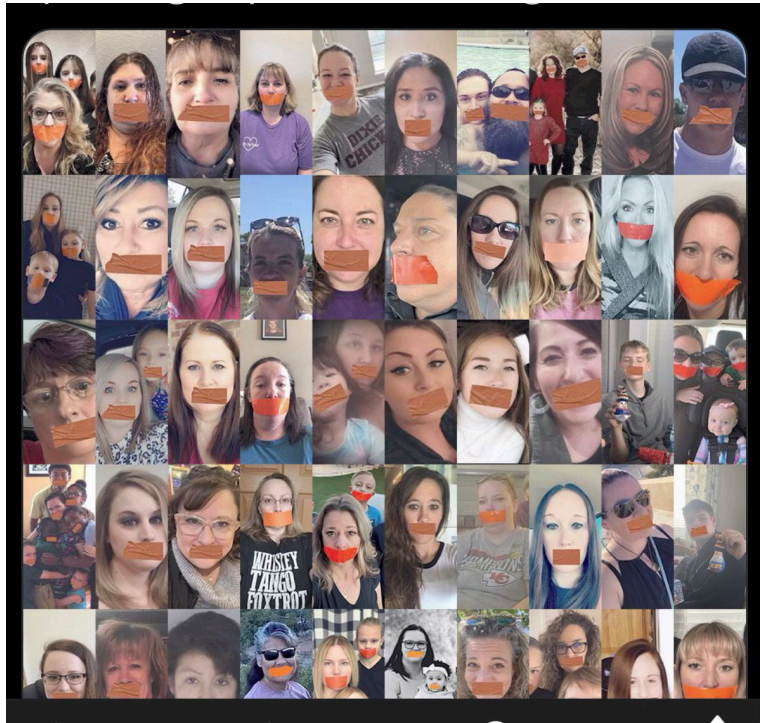
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THE NATIONAL B.L.E.T. AUXILIARY

BNSF SPOUSES & FAMILIES RAIL AGAINST BNSF HY-VIZ ATTENDANCE POLICY

By Kathleen Bisbikis, National President, BLET Auxiliary

It's hard to say what will bring people together in joy, pain, or in that David and Goliath moment when you can't back down, despite the odds. I can't say why the BNSF High Viz points system was the straw that broke the camel's back among rail families across the country. Still, it was, in fact, this single threat from the Carrier that resulted in spouses and family members all along the 35,000 miles of BNSF track coming together and deciding that this time, this Carrier, this moment, was the time to stand up and fight.

The calls and messages flooded in to me and others on Facebook groups and local auxiliaries. There was not enough information available, and we could not get the information to the people who needed it quickly enough. Across the country, mobilization was happening at record speeds, and protests, petitions, letters, e-mails to BNSF upper management, and news interviews were happening. It was a feeling of collective effervescence, being part of something so significant, with such heightened emotion shared among those involved. A solidified movement was more important than ourselves or any past petty differences because this was a threat to our families.



National 1st Vice President & President of Springfield Auxiliary 417, appeared on the local news in Springfield, Missouri, to speak about the issue.

It was a proud moment to see the auxiliary members come together and take action... to fight for our spouse's welfare, to speak when they cannot, and fight for a safe workplace. All these things are exactly what we, as an organization, have set forth as our mission, and we recognized this was a solid reason to do just that.

almost daily for families. We had multiple news interviews planned in California and other parts of the country, with more requests coming in from all over the country. We could see our mobilization effort was making forward movement and bringing awareness.

Sadly, we believe the BNSF saw that as well. Shortly after that, Judge Pittman issued a federal temporary restraining order and silenced us all across the nation, spouses, family members, and employees. It was a collective blow to the families who had invested so much in this movement. I can say for myself and those close to me, it was a kick to the stomach. In the days that followed, the anger and frustration built up, and feelings of helplessness plagued those in railroad households.

Our motto when all this started was simple: "We won't sit down; we won't shut up," yet here we were, silenced by a federal judge who did not care or understand the percentage

On the first day of the court hearing in Ft. Worth, Texas, spouses and children lined up in front of the federal courthouse to be seen and heard in support of our unions and to demonstrate our disgust at the railroad. As we waited for a decision from Judge Pittman, we continued to plan. National 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris, in Springfield, Missouri, spoke on the local news; the Amarillo auxiliary made plans for a huge well-thought-out protest; and Kelly Pettus from our San Antonio Auxiliary came forward as a wordsmith and fireball, pumping out new information



San Antonio Auxiliary Member Kelly Ann Pettus appeared on local news on January 21 to express how the Hy-Viz Attendance Policy will create further struggles for BNSF families.

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AUXILIARY 417 CHRISTMAS PARTY Springfield, Missouri

By Rachel Pharris, President, Auxiliary 417 and National 1st Vice President/Outreach Coordinator

Auxiliary 417 in Springfield, Missouri, celebrated the holiday season by gathering together at The Barley House at Moontown Crossing in Springfield on December 16, 2021. The menu for the event featured a taco bar catered by Tortilleria Perches. Activities included music by a live DJ, door prizes, and a 50/50 raffle.

Sister Heather Williams served as the emcee for the evening. She also gave attendees an overview of some of the activities and accomplishments for our auxiliary from this past year. Tim Stipp, from the law office of Jerry Schlichter, briefly spoke and thanked the auxiliary for the support they have shown the unions during the pandemic. We appreciate his continued support.

It was great to be together in person. We were elated to be joined by a few of our local guys who had been off on medical leave.

We had about 50 people in attendance from: Springfield BLET Auxiliary 417; SMART-TD Local 303; BLET Divisions 237, 567, and 83; as well as General Chairman Jeff Thurman and Vice-General Chairman Kyle King, of the BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee; Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Groose; and SMART TD General Chairman Mike LePresta. We welcomed several new members to the auxiliary during the party.

Generous support from Mr Jerry Schlichter of Schlichter, Bogard & Denton, LLP, made our Christmas party possible. Many thanks to Mr Schlichter and to all who joined.

Photos at right:

Top: The fun bunch at the 2021 Christmas party.

Middle: Auxiliary 417 members Heather Williams, Rachel Pharris, Kelsey Epperson, and Amy Walters.

Bottom: Kyle King, Vice General Chairman of the BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee; and Jeff Shelton, Local Chairman, BLET Division 83.





**Pacific NW Auxiliary Number
503 President Jessica Keene**

Jessica Keene appointed as Oregon Operation Lifesaver Assistant State Coordinator

Jessica Keene, President of BLET Pacific Northwest Auxiliary No. 503 in Salem, Oregon, aims to reach more of the public in her new role as the Oregon Operation Lifesaver Assistant State Coordinator.

"Teaching the public about being safe around tracks and trains has always been a passion of mine," stated Jessica. "It's not only important to our railroaders' safety to keep the tracks clear but also to the safety of our communities the trains run through. Train vs. vehicle or pedestrian accidents are 100% avoidable."

Train safety is why I organized a local auxiliary, why I've spent hours at the Oregon State Capitol advocating for safety for our crews and communities, and why I have become a volunteer for Operation Lifesaver. I am excited to join the state team to reach even more people and share why train and track safety is so important."

Jessica started in her new position in March, doing a lot of behind-the-scenes work and learning the ropes of running this nonprofit. Eventually, she will be giving educational presentations, awards, and interviews to the media.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for Operation Lifesaver in your area, visit their website to find your local state coordinator's contact information. Education saves lives - join the team!

BLET AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP



The BLET Auxiliary Scholarship program provides multiple \$1000.00 scholarships to the sons & daughters of both auxiliary and BLET members, each having one year of concurrent membership.

LECMPA members - we are also proud to offer a \$2500.00 scholarship for students who have one parent that is a member of the BLET as well as LECMPA and another parent who is a member of the BLET Auxiliary for a minimum of one year.

The application and additional information can be found on our website at: www.bletauxiliary.net

The deadline to apply is April 1, 2022

For more information or questions please contact National Secretary, Lawana Poss at lwposs@gmail.com

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By JESSICA
COLE,
NATIONAL
LEGISLATIVE
REPRESENTATIVE

My half of the Winter 2021 newsletter took a departure from some of the recurring issues to report on some of the intricacies of the FRA instead. This report will update some of the recurring topics.

Two-Person Crew Bill Introduced in Michigan

From the BLET website, here are the details on a recent state bill introduced in Michigan to mandate crew size on freight trains:

From BLET Newsflash dated December 10, 2021: On December 2, 2021, a railroad safety bill requiring qualified two-person train crews was introduced in the state of Michigan's House of Representatives and Senate.

House Bill 5596 and Senate Bill 767 read in part: "...a railroad shall not operate a train or locomotive engine engaged in transporting freight unless the train or locomotive engine is operated by a crew of not fewer than 2 individuals."

BLET Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman B.J. Trumble said he has been working with Don Roach, his counterpart at SMART Transportation Division, to lobby in favor of H.B. 5596 and S.B. 767.

"Two members in a locomotive is common sense legislation for the state of Michigan," Brother Trumble said. "This legislation will make our state safer for train crews and the public. BLET and SMART-TD have been attacking this issue from all angles with the legislators in Lansing and we are

now waiting for hearing dates in the subcommittees."

Brother Trumble said H.B. 5596 was introduced on December 2 by Rep. Tim Sneller (D-Dist. 50). The bill was co-sponsored by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Rep. Jack O'Malley (R-Dist. 101), along with: Rep. John Cherry (D-Dist. 49); Rep. Jim Ellison (D-Dist. 26); Rep. Darin Camilleri (D-Dist. 23); Rep. Ranjeev Puri (D-Dist. 21); Rep. Tullio Liberati (D-Dist. 13); Rep. Terry Sabo (D-Dist. 92); Rep. Yousef Rabhi (D-Dist. 53); Rep. Lori Stone (D-Dist. 28); Rep. Cara Clemente (D-Dist. 14); and Rep. Brenda Carter (D-Dist. 29).

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Transportation.

In the Senate, S.B. 767 was introduced on December 2, 2021, by primary sponsor Sen. Erika Geiss (D., Dist. 6). It has been referred to the Senate Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

The state of Washington is the most recent state to enact a two-person crew bill, which was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on March 27, 2020. In 2019, state governors in Illinois, Nevada, and Colorado signed two-person crew bills to help make train operations in their states as safe as possible.

Source: BLET Newsflash December 10, 2021

Two-Person Crew: The National Picture

With the election of President Biden and the new Democratic majority in Congress, railroaders had brief hope that Federal legislation mandating two people on a freight train crew might become a reality. These hopes have faded as that provision of the House INVEST Infrastructure

bill was ultimately removed by the Senate to help garner more bipartisan support for the infrastructure bill.

The FRA, now being steered by a more labor-friendly and balanced perspective than during 2016-2020, offers some hope that a rule may be passed requiring a Two-Person Crew for most freight trains. Should that happen, it will be applied Nationwide and have the effect of Federal legislation. However, an FRA rule does not have the same long-term durability as Federal legislation. A new Presidential Administration can change the complete tone of a regulatory agency within weeks of an election.

As BLET President Dennis Pierce has reminded us of so many times: "Elections have consequences." Therefore, no one need get too complacent even if an FRA Two-Person Crew Ruling is achieved. The push for Federal Legislation should be continued, and the BLET and SMART-TD have now been fighting for such legislation for more than a decade.

On a statewide basis, eight states now have Two-Person Crew laws in place. They include Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, Wisconsin, Washington, and West Virginia. Several other states have introduced Two-Person Crew Legislation, but as of this report, it looks like Michigan is the only state where legislation is actively moving forward at this time.

Author's Note: I digress from reporting "just the facts" for a moment to share some perspective: The state-to-state fight on Two-Man Crew is a long, costly, and uncertain way to get to a uniform safety standard across the Nation, and in fact, the railroad carriers should see it as

such—how will it complicate their operations to be regulated differently every time they cross a state line?

Additionally, 50 individual fights for what might be done one time by a few lines of new Federal Statutes is a daunting goal line for our Brothers and Sisters. Nonetheless, it's essential the fight be continued for our families and for Public Safety.

As I mulled over my frustration that this commonsense issue is so hard, even under a Labor Friendly Majority in Congress, I had to remind myself that when I took on my LR position four years ago, there were only four states that had Two-Person Crew Laws on the books. So, the number of states with such laws has doubled, even though most of the time period I mentioned was spent under the highly Labor-Unfriendly direction and shadow of Former President Donald Trump.

Like most of my auxiliary sisters, I will be eager to see what the next step in the Federal fight will be! It calls to mind a story about the great Heavyweight Boxing Champion Muhammad Ali. He was interviewed after a fight in which he'd been knocked down, but managed to get up and eventually win:

Reporter: "You must have really been worried when you got knocked down like that, huh?"

Ali: "What are you talking about? I didn't get knocked down. I never get knocked down."

Reporter: "But you did get knocked down in the fourth round! Remember?"

Ali: “No, no. I never get knocked down. I’m either up, or I’m GETTING BACK UP.”

Source: www.railworker-sunited.squarespace.com, www.fightfortwoperson-crews.com. Story about Muhammad Ali: Radio Pre-Pandemic

Vaccine Mandate Update

President Biden’s COVID-19 vaccine mandate stated that all employers with more than 100 employees were required to mandate that their employees EITHER be vaccinated for COVID-19 OR submit to weekly testing to ensure that they were negative to continue their work duties.

President Biden used the Emergency Temporary Standard framework of OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, to implement his mandate, citing the worldwide emergency the pandemic has created.

As all of the major rail carriers fell under the definition of large employer, and further fall under the umbrella of government contractors, they were subject to this mandate and announced they would be requiring all employees to comply.

Much dissension arose among those employees who are vaccine hesitant. The BLET and SMART-TD filed suit to challenge the mandate on the basis that such a requirement cannot be made without contractual negotiation outlined under the Railway Labor Act. Eventually this argument was struck down in court, but the bigger fight remained.

After months of discord and court cases over the mandate involving thousands of employers nationwide, the final say under the current circumstances at last fell to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court, dominated by a Conservative Majority, struck down

the mandate for non-medical employers, saying that the President’s mandate overstepped the bounds of the Emergency Temporary Standard framework. The Liberal Minority dissented with this decision.

Meanwhile, the Court did uphold the Vaccine Mandate for health-care workers, finding that the COVID pandemic represented a grave enough emergency that the Emergency Temporary Standard order delivered by OSHA was indeed a valid application. This part of the decision was in recognition of the unique responsibilities of healthcare workers to minimize the risk of spreading disease and the unique risk the unvaccinated worker poses to patients in a healthcare setting.

Despite the changes brought about in the court cases, many large employers are still choosing to require the vaccine. Such employer requirements are generally legal. They are not mandated by the government, but they are legal and effective at prevention of severe COVID disease.

United Airlines was the first airline carrier and was also one of the first large employers of any kind to require COVID vaccination. A recent letter to employees by United CEO Scott Kirby outlined the changes that the vaccine requirement has meant for the company and its workforce.

In the letter, Mr. Kirby stated that there were currently 3,000 United employees with active cases of COVID, out of a workforce of 85,000, but that none of the 3,000 were hospitalized. Prior to the vaccine requirement, the company was losing at least one employee per week to COVID death.

Based on these statistics, Mr. Kirby stated that he could be fairly certain that the company’s vaccine requirement had saved eight to ten employee lives so far.

Additionally, like many other companies, United did experience approximately 250 employee resignations from people who did not wish to comply with the vaccine requirements. Those resignations were balanced by more than 2000 new hire applications.

OSHA has withdrawn its ETS for non-medical workers in workplaces employing 100 or more people, but states that it “strongly encourages vaccination of workers against the continuing dangers posed by COVID-19 in the workplace.”

Source: www.nbcnews.com, www.osha.gov, www.businessinsider.co, BLET News-flash@ www.ble-t.org

Railway Labor Act

Contention between employees and rail carriers is as old as trains and railroads themselves. The often-horrific abuses of labor as the railroad system marched across America in the 1800s are legendary and recounted in history books and high school curriculums to this day.

As labor found its voice around the turn of the century, strikes and stoppages sometimes paralyzed parts of the country that had quickly grown dependent on the rail’s vital link in the supply chain. Such stoppages and demonstrations often turned violent. At the same time, there was no denying that company abuses of human resources were barbaric.

Congress enacted the Railway Labor Act in 1926, and it was subsequently amended in 1934 and 1936.

In brief, this act places equal burdens on unions and carriers to exhaust every opportunity to voluntarily settle disputes with arbitration and mediation before strikes and stoppages are called for. It also protects employees’ contracts as written from modification by rail carriers without mandatory bargaining with the

unions. Unlike contracts under the National Labor Relations Act, RLA contracts remain in effect while the two sides negotiate, and that is why crew size has not changed while the unions bargain over crew size issues. The RLA was also the first law to give employees the right to unionize without interference or intimidation from the employer.

The ins and outs of the Railway Labor Act are extremely complex, and disputes over whether an action by a rail carrier outside of contract negotiations rises to the level of a strikable “major offense” have long been the subject of court decisions. Those court decisions often interpret the RLA to require that disputes are “minor disputes” subject to arbitration. But that does not mean that the dispute is over, or that the Union is done fighting. Arbitrators have the same power to strike down bad policy as judges do; once a court settles the issue, arbitration is the path required by the law.

With so many workplace issues facing our Brothers and Sisters, it is instructive to take a look at the link below to understand why it often seems that resolution of disputes and settlement of contract negotiations moves as slow as it does. More importantly, it helps to understand the different processes used to handle dispute resolution and contract negotiations. The first, often the subject of court decisions, has its own processes. They are different from contract negotiations, which have their own processes, including the President of the United States appointing a panel to make recommendations on a settlement, and Congress having the right to impose a settlement. The framework for our Union to fight all of these issues is there, regardless of what pathway is taken under the law.

Source: https://railroads.dot.gov/sites/fra.dot.gov/files/fra_net/1647/Railway%20Labor%20Act%20Overview.pdf

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My Quest to Honor My Father, Russell Elley

By Member-at-Large Kreschendalyn (Shenda) Elley Backus

Born into a railroad family in 1958, my father, Russell Elley, followed in his father's footsteps and became a die-hard railroad and union man. In June 1977, he was hired as a signalman with Southern Pacific Railroad, in San Antonio, Texas. He became an engineer in 1980. In 2001, his involvement with other BLE members in mapping the location of sidings on his runs from San Antonio to Houston led to encouragement from the members and officers of BLE Division 197 in San Antonio, to run for a union office.

He served as Local Chairman for that division from 2001-2009, and Legislative Rep. from 2001-2003. In 2003, he was elected as the 4th Union Pacific Southern Region Vice General Chairman and moved up the ranks on the General Committee from 4th Vice General Chairman to 2nd Vice General Chairman in 2008, a position he held until 2012. He participated in negotiations and arbitrations, and helped develop several new programs. He also served as a member of the BLET Safety Task Force, participating with the National Transportation Safety Board during investigations of train accidents in Texas and Oklahoma. His major goal was to work to ensure the safety of engineers and conductors. He helped bring Operation Red Block and several other safety programs to the San Antonio Service Unit and served for several years as the Operation Red Block Coordinator. He spent the rest of his railroad career fighting for his brothers and sisters. He retired in 2017. Within a few years, like so many

other railroaders, cancer took his life after an extremely short, swift battle. He passed away on September 19, 2021.

His top three passions were his family, the railroad, and the union. Our family was with him through two strikes in Houston and in Fort Worth. He bribed me in the early 2000s to picket in San Antonio, but the strike was precluded by court action the night before we were set to "take to the streets." He even took us all to Las Vegas one year for the BLET's convention and sold it to us as a "family vacation."

Throughout the years, my dad and my grandparents filled our heads with wonderful stories about the railroad and the mighty union. They shared stories with us about life the way it used to be on the rails, and how the union did its best to create a family for men whose railroad lifestyle left them alone. My father told me many times, if anything ever happens, lean on your family. At the time, we didn't know how important those words would become for us.

Before his passing, it became very evident to me that his love for his brothers and sisters needed to live on and I spent hours searching for a way to do that. For months after he passed, cards, calls, letters, e-mails, gifts, and texts came in from railroaders and their families across the country. I was astonished by the number of people whose lives he had touched. The stack of cards and letters filled with love and appreciation still brings tears to my eyes.

Division 197 owned numerous cemetery plots dating back from before my dad was born. By the time he became a union officer, they had no need for these and they were sold. So, I knew there was something more! I called the BLET National Division, our BLET Aux-

iliary National President, and other BLET members across the country, hoping to find something, anything, about what the union did decades ago when members passed away.

I saw pictures of cemeteries and tombstones and read old stories that were filled with the description of sacred rituals of the Union. I have a philanthropic passion for the preservation of historic cemeteries, so I was familiar with digging into history. Being a member and descendant of other age-old fraternal and lineal organizations, I knew a lot of groups held special ceremonies in remembrance of deceased members and presented their families with memorial markers to place at their graveside, or seals to be placed on the tombstone.

One night, while sitting by my dad's bedside, and after countless days searching online, I saw an old BLE ritual book from the 50s for sale on eBay,



Brother Russell Elley

- BLE/BLET Member, 1977-2021
- Legislative Representative, BLET Div. 197, 2001-2003
- Local Chairman, BLET Division 197, 2001-2009
- Delegate to BLET National Convention, 2006-2010
- Union Pacific Southern Region Vice General Chairman
- 4th Vice General Chairman, 2003-2006
- 3rd Vice General Chairman, 2006-2008
- 2nd Vice General Chairman, 2008-2012

along with an old version of a cemetery service and the custom of draping of the division charter. There were also listings of the Auxiliary ritual book and I learned that some of our auxiliary members still have copies. I knew that was the route I wanted to take. I ordered the BLE ritual book and showed it to him. His eyes lit up, but that spark was soon gone. After some internal research, I learned that the Auxiliary ritual services had become optional in the early 90s and eventually the ritual instructions were no longer distributed with the copies of the BLET Auxiliary Bylaws.

I contacted our General Chairman and other BLET officers and members. Before my father passed, I pleaded with my dad's union brothers to provide the BLE ritual and funeral service for my father. After asking for permission to allow me to have a marker forged for his grave, I received a reluctant yes and a beautiful BLE medallion was created.

The service was performed by San Antonio's Historic Sunset Division 197, chartered in 1882, and the symbolic medallion was presented to my mother. Our railroad and auxiliary sisters handed out black memorial ribbons, which was a past practice at the church service and gravesite. At the end of the graveside ceremony, railroad wives and families placed pink carnations, the official flower of the Auxiliary, on his casket. The South Texas Railroad Wives donated the carnations. Everything was so moving, so momentous. I heard that the last time the funeral ceremony was performed was around 70 years ago. I feel so blessed to

be able to see this beautiful demonstration of love again.

The age-old ritual of draping the division charter was conducted a week later at Division 197's monthly meeting. The ceremony entailed a black cloth draped over the Sunset Division's 139-year-old charter. I know my father would have been so honored.

As my family and I watched and listened to his brothers give grand tributes to my father, tears streamed down our faces. The show of love for him, for us, and the expressions of gratitude for his service were abundant! I can only imagine how jubilant

he must be to see all his family, both blood and union, working together in solidarity to make his remembrance services worthy of one of the oldest organizations still in existence today, and to see his legacy live on.

Endnotes regarding history of BLET Auxiliary, added by editor:

1. At the 1991 Convention of the Grand International Auxiliary (GIA) in 1991, in an effort to modernize the organization and conduct meetings in more of a business-type format, the delegates voted to make the ritual work optional rather than mandatory. Eventually, the ritual

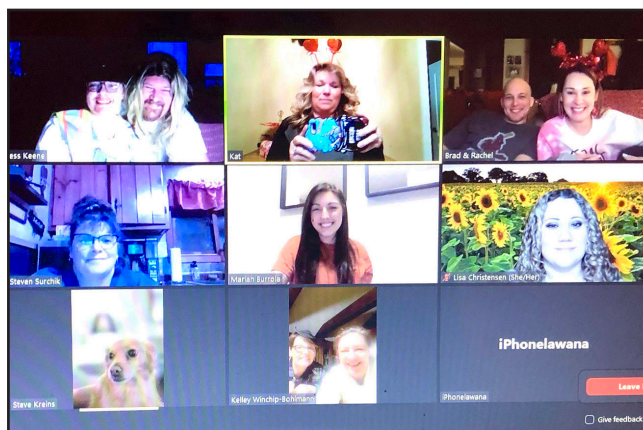
instructions were no longer included and distributed with the copies of the Bylaws.

2. At the International Convention in 2006, the GIA changed its status from an international organization to a national organization, in keeping with the changes that had occurred when the BLE merged with the Teamsters and became the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). The delegates at that convention voted to change the name of the organization to BLET Auxiliary and to hold its national conventions every four years in conjunction with the BLET national conventions.

February Game Night on Zoom featured a Valentine's Day Theme

A huge thank you to Jessica Keene and the members of Pacific Northwest Auxiliary No. 503 in Salem, Oregon, for hosting our February game night on Zoom. The theme was Valentine's Day and the evening included some challenging games and great prizes. Everyone in attendance enjoyed their time together, testing their holiday-themed knowledge.

The auxiliary started game nights on Zoom during the COVID pandemic to bring our members together and break up some of the monotony of being stuck at home. Those who attended enjoyed seeing each other on Zoom and the fun competition that ensued between different groups. It was also an opportunity for members-at-large and local auxiliary members across the country to have the opportunity to meet each other, albeit online, who may not otherwise have ever had that chance. Check our social media for more game nights coming this fall!



Duties of the Local Auxiliary Chaplain

By Katy Dory, Chaplain, Twin Ports Auxiliary No. 6388, Duluth-Superior, Minnesota

The purpose of the BLET local auxiliary chaplain is to reach out to railroad families who are facing an illness or loss. I send them a card, and usually include a gift card. I also include our Twin Ports Auxiliary card, my name and cell phone number, and that I am the Vice President/Chaplain. We also send birthday cards to our auxiliary members, and thank-you cards for donations received.

The chaplain should say a prayer before each monthly meeting. I then give a report to our members about who we have reached out to, and then we discuss if there is anyone who needs our help. I also share any thank-you notes that I have received from members.

During my time with the Twin Ports Auxiliary, I have formed bonds with several of the railroaders in our area, and their families, through my work as chaplain. They contact me by phone, and I also use private messenger on Facebook if they are comfortable with that. The chaplain should be available to speak with and visit face-to-face with family members whose railroader has been in an accident, or visit someone in the hospital, but I have not yet had to perform those duties for my auxiliary.

In short, it's my job to reach out to those in need and let them know that they are in our thoughts, and that if they need anything to feel free to contact me. We are here for them, as we are all one big railroad family!

Twin Ports Auxiliary No. 6388 Christmas Party 2021

By Roseanne Surchik, President, Auxiliary No. 6388, and Alternate National Secretary

Once again, the much anticipated Clyde Larson Christmas party was a huge hit, with around 275 attendees. For the 2021 party, we raffled a five-day Igloo cooler that contained \$400 worth of meat shop gift certificates, bottles of Gray Goose vodka, Captain Morgan rum, Crown Royal, Baileys Irish Cream, 12 singles of local IP beer, a 12-pack of Bud Light, two bottles of wine, swag from our auxiliary, and swag from three local BLET divisions and three SMART-TD locals. Second-place prize was a \$150 gift card for the local grocery store, \$100.00 in gas cards, and \$50 at a local hardware store. We also had a 50/50 raffle and a \$ 5-per-square lottery.

The nine BLET divisions in the area and the Minnesota legislative board donated money for door prizes. We had forty \$100 gift cards and ten

\$100 cash door prizes. Our division donated \$5,000 in prizes for our Christmas party. The law firm of Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas paid for the venue, all the food, and drink tickets. The Auxiliary, SMART-TD, BLET, and the Duluth-Missabe & Iron Range Railway (DM&IR) collected \$500 for a Christmas gift to a railroad family who is fighting ALS. BLET Division 188 sold 50/50 tickets for Dustin Davey who continues to fight brain cancer.

We gifted our retirees with custom bottles of Jack Daniels, compliments of the BLET divisions, SMART-TD divisions, DM&IR Railway, and our local auxiliary. It was great to celebrate Christmas safely and see the solidarity among all the various entities who participated. Here's to a wonderful New Year!



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.

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.

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

This year's BLET National Regional Meetings will be held June 13-17, 2022, in Denver, Colorado, and August 1-5, 2022, in Baltimore, Maryland. Make your plans to attend!! More information to follow. Can't wait to see you!

The BLET National Auxiliary 4th Quadrennial Convention will be held at Ballys Las Vegas Hotel & Casino, in conjunction with the BLET National Convention, October 10-13, 2022.

Resolutions for proposed amendments and changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of the BLET Auxiliary should be sent to me on the completed resolution form (See sample resolution on Page 10.) Proposals will be presented and voted on by the officers and delegates in attendance at the Auxiliary Convention. If you do not have a copy of the resolution form, please send me a text or e-mail and I will send you a copy to complete and submit. The Constitution and Bylaws can be found on the Auxiliary website at www.bletauxiliary.net, under the dropdown list entitled "General Information."

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Dawn Comeau, Cindy Dirck, Katelyn Langley, Linda Washam, Lynn Drangstveit, Jasmine Lucansky, Kathi Odenbreit, Cody Tucker, Megan Lundy, Jamie Gipe-Geike, Rachel Melone, Alex Kosanda, Mark Cappis, Rebecca Pichette.

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

If you have children who are college-bound, they may be eligible to apply for a BLET Auxiliary Scholarship. Scholarship information and applications can be obtained on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net. Applications for the 2022-2023 academic school year are due in my office **on or before April 1, 2022. Incomplete and late applications will not be considered. Changes have been made to the application and eligibility requirements. Please read ALL instructions!**

AUXILIARY SECRETARIES

Annual reports and 2021 dues for local auxiliaries were due March 1, 2022. If you have not already done so, please submit the annual report for your auxiliary to me ASAP. If you have any questions about the forms, please call or e-mail me. I will be more than happy to assist you in getting the forms properly filled out and processed. **All checks should be made payable to BLET Auxiliary, or you may use PayPal or VENMO.** The PayPal and VENMO links are located on our website.

Please send your annual report as quickly as possible and be sure to verify your elected delegate for the upcoming National Convention. As stated in the Local Auxiliary Bylaws section of the BLET Auxiliary Constitution and Bylaws, Article VII, Section 4, dues are due March 1 of the current year and are considered delinquent if not received by the National Secretary within the 30-day grace period. If your auxiliary's annual report and dues are delinquent (i.e., not received by me by March 31, 2022), you will not be eligible to send a delegate to the convention in October 2022.

Any resolutions for proposed amendments to the BLET Auxiliary Bylaws that your auxiliary wishes to submit should be sent to me on the completed resolution form. Proposals will be presented and voted on by the officers and delegates at the convention. If you do not have a copy of the resolution form, please send me a text or e-mail and I will send you a copy to complete and submit.

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Dues payments for members-at-large were due by March 1, 2022. If you have not already done so, please make sure to send your dues to me and ensure that all of your information is correct so that you will continue to receive your newsletter. **Checks should be made payable to BLET Auxiliary or you may use PayPal or VENMO.** The PayPal and VENMO links are located on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net.

Members-at-large are eligible to submit resolutions for proposed changes to the Auxiliary Constitution and Bylaws, to be considered at the upcoming National Convention in October. Proposals will be presented and voted on by the officers and delegates at the convention. Resolutions should be sent to me on the completed form. If you do not have a copy of the resolution form, please send me a text or e-mail and I will send you a copy to complete and submit.

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES

Our thoughts and prayers to Kreschendalyn Backus, Member-at-Large from Texas. Her father passed away September 19, 2021.

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

Thank you for your support and membership!



Lawana Poss can be reached at 770-497-8898, or Lewp2007@bellsouth.net

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

— Charles Darwin

Did you know?

You can choose to GO GREEN and receive your newsletter via e-mail; it's so easy to do! Just send an e-mail to me at lwposs@gmail.com requesting your newsletter be sent to you by e-mail instead of regular mail. You will then receive your full-color digital copy of the newsletter attached to an e-mail from Editor Rachel Pharris.

Past newsletters are also available to read anytime on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net.

Legislative Update

Continued from Page 7

Jessica Cole lives in Baraboo, Wisconsin. She can be reached at jcts1987@gmail.com, or 262-672-9742.



By Becky Schneider,
Asst. National Legislative Representative

In 1941, more than 80 years ago, Santa Fe's 3751 was clocked at 103 mph, making it California's first high-speed train, according to Bill McEwen. The locomotive, built by Baldwin Locomotive Works, served for many years on AT&SF's passenger lines throughout the Midwest. It was converted from coal to oil in 1936, and just prior to its retirement in 1953, it ran on the Del Mar Racetrack runs, and routes between L.A. and San Diego. According to Mr. McEwen, the San Bernadino Railroad Historical Society acquired and restored 3751 in the mid-1980s, running on Santa Fe's route between Los Angeles and Chicago. They fired it up again in 2017 and, even though the pandemic restrictions have put a damper on its return to mainline excursions, the Historical Society hopes to announce new trips this spring.

Source: GV Wire, Bill McEwen, News Director

Amtrak – Gulf Coast Passenger Service. Jim Matthews, President & CEO of the Passenger Rail Association (RPA) posted a response to CSX's assertion that "One New Passenger Train is One Too Many." Amtrak's Gulf Coast passenger train was taken out by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and during the 16 years hence, advocates have tried to restore this last, missing portion of the Sunset Limited. There have been 16 years of studies, and

16 years of negotiations. On February 3, CSX sent a message to its customers asking them to sign on to legal action it's taking against Amtrak to make sure this "new service is not irresponsibly forced through." Sixteen years of trying to get it restored is not irresponsible forcing through.

As Mr. Matthews concludes, it's not about these 150 miles of track between New Orleans and Mobile, it's more about the "slippery slope" that could be opened up if any new routes are allowed on Amtrak's nationwide network -- a precedent that would require the Class 1 railroads to finally live up to the agreement they made that bailed them out of passenger rail. They continue to "benefit each year from the 1971 'Grand Bargain' they struck with the U.S. taxpayer, who pays some \$2 billion every year to relieve the railroads from their common-carrier obligations in exchange for access to tracks and infrastructure." Evidence shows the new service will bring many benefits and only minimally affect traffic requiring little in the way of infrastructure upgrades.

The DOT has filed an amicus (friend of the court) brief declaring that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) should order the restoration of the Gulf Coast service, and which undercuts much of the evidence the railroad submitted. The DOT believes the railroads are acting in bad faith to block this restoration, and that Congress has always intended that host railroads prove that new service will harm their operations – not just allege it. The brief goes on to say, "In the Department's view, it is important to set a precedent in this case that vindicates the government statutes and the purposes underlying it. Rail carriers have obligations in hosting Amtrak service, and these obligations were part and parcel of Congress's decision five decades ago to create Amtrak and relieve rail carriers of their obligations to carry passengers. The board

should not countenance an interpretation of the statute that makes passenger rail service illusory."

"Nothing in the governing statute indicates that Congress anticipated a protracted period of time or the expenditure of extraordinary sums as a condition precedent to the addition of passenger trains along an existing rail line."

According to Mr. Matthews, it's not just about the route between New Orleans and Mobile, it's about stopping the rail renaissance before it can gain any traction. The Carriers see the public getting more excited and involved about expanding passenger rail, and they see funding start to flow. Mr. Matthews is expected to testify before the STB on February 15. So, if you are a passenger rail fan, please voice your support for Gulf Coast Restoration to the Board and to your congressional representatives.

Anyone interested in participating in an RPA conference, *RailNation: DC 2022 Spring Advocacy Summit & Day on the Hill* will be held at the Embassy Suites, Alexandria, Virginia, March 27-30, 2022. *The Southwest Rail Conference* will be held in Dallas at the DoubleTree Hotel at Campbell Center, April 1, 2022. For more information, go to narprail.org.

Source: RPA; Railway Age

New Rolling Stock– Finally!

Amtrak introduced the first of their new Venture Coaches on February 1 on the Lincoln Service Line between Chicago and St. Louis. These cars were ordered for Midwest trains back in 2017 and are just now arriving. After passage of the first infrastructure bill, Amtrak placed an order with the California-based Siemens Mobility for as many as 83 trains, replacing their antique rolling stock (some almost 50 years old). The new order set to arrive in 2024 will be a welcome

update to Amtrak's most heavily traveled Northeast Corridor.

The new cars were based on the European Viaggio Comfort and some of their "coolness" includes their generational leap in accommodating passengers with disabilities. Most of the equipment now being used went into service before the ADA existed, so improvements in that regard will add to the comfort and convenience of all passengers.

Included are wider aisles to allow more mobility throughout the train; married-pair coaches for easier movement between cars; dedicated space for wheelchair and baggage storage; retractable stairs in lieu of the conductor's step stool; and bathrooms that don't give you claustrophobia and are big enough to accommodate a wheelchair or walker. Overhead displays have been added for passenger information and most cars are equipped with Wi-Fi. Each seat will have better access to AC plugs and offers USB ports. The windows are "massively" bigger than the old coach cars and a designated bicycle storage area will be available on every coach. Best of all, the environmental footprint will be much less because of the diesel and electric capabilities of the trainsets.

The first coach cars that include a business cabin will start to be delivered in March, and café cars should begin arriving late this year or early in 2023.

Source: Runawaygirl.net-work; Trains Newswire

Railroad Retirement Update

Tier I and Medicare Taxes. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have announced their premiums for 2022. The Tier I and Medicare taxes taken out of your paychecks will remain 7.65% (6.2% for Tier I and 1.45% for Medicare), with the maximum earnings subject to the 6.2% increasing to \$147,000.

There is no maximum cap on earnings subject to the Medicare hospital insurance. An additional Medicare payroll tax of .9% applies to individuals making over \$200,000 or married couples making \$250,000. For individuals that hit the threshold, an employer should automatically take the additional tax, but for married couples, they would be responsible for reporting the additional tax on their tax return.

Because there were so many employees making claims under the RR Unemployment Insurance, a 3.5% surcharge was triggered on the railroads in 2022. The surcharge for 2021 was 2.5% .

You may need to increase your tax withholding at age 62. Because benefits can be paid at 60 years of age with 30 years of service, for tax purposes they are treated differently than they would have been under social security. Tier I is basically railroad retirement's Social Security Equivalent Benefit ("SSEB"), one of the reasons retirees receive a RRB-1099 and a RRB-1099-R. The 1099-R covers the Non-SSEB portion of Tier I, Tier II, and Supplemental annuity. All benefits paid between 60 and 62 years of age are considered Non-SSEB and are fully taxable and reported on Form 1099-R. Once the employee and spouse turn 62, part of Tier I is considered Non-SSEB, but some is considered SSEB because social security benefits are payable at 62. Unlike social security though, they are not reduced for early retirement.

Because the taxability of benefits changes at 62, the withholding automatically decreases, sometimes significantly. Since the annuitant's total income also affects the amount of tax that should be withheld, the RRB encourages annuitants to discuss whether a new RRB W-4P (pertaining to the SSEB portion) needs to be filed with the Board.

From personal experience, it is a good idea to make sure enough taxes are being withheld to avoid

coming up short when you file your tax return. The first year my husband Larry retired, and I was still working, we were into penalty shortfall. We were able to work around the penalty, but it was certainly an unpleasant surprise. So, check your withholding the first year and again when you turn 62. You will also see an increase in your annuity when you turn 62, so that could be your reminder. Anything having to do with the IRS or government benefits gets complicated, so I suggest you go to the RRB.gov website for more detailed information and whether you need to file a new RRB W-4P or increase your voluntary withholding by filing a W-4V to cover additional taxes you may owe. The Board cannot give you tax advice, so you may need to seek out a professional.

RRB does well in Customer Service evaluation. The RRB's Customer Service Plan promotes the following principles of quality public service: openness, accessibility, accountability, feedback, and timeliness standards. Their findings showed that 2021 performance standards met or exceeded fiscal year 2020 in all areas. If you're interested in the details based on types of services, you can go to RRB.gov to check out the January publication.

National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust. Our RR Retirement Trust fund continues to perform well. Highlights from last year ending December 31, 2021, include:

- Market Value of Trust-Managed Assets increased \$1 billion over the last quarter of 2021;
- Change in Trust-Managed Assets since inception of the fund increased \$29.4 billion; and
- Trust-Managed Assets and RRB Assets held in reserve are up \$0.9 billion.

A copy of the full quarterly report can be found at RRB.gov. As an aside, we can all be thankful for once-in-a-lifetime coalition of

Carriers, Rail Labor and Retirees who worked to change the way the system could invest its assets. If it had not been changed in 2001, it probably would have been rolled into Social Security by now. I still remember former Senator Phil Gramm, who told me he would not vote for the change because he represented the taxpayers, not railroaders. He was positive that if the change was made, the government would have had to already bail out the system. Proof, politicians often don't know what they're talking about. Railroaders **are** taxpayers.

I can't help but notice how eerily similar today's Senate makeup is compared to the Senate in 2001. The body was split 50/50 with Al Gore presiding over the Democrat majority. George W. Bush was inaugurated on January 20, 2001, giving the tie-breaking vote to Dick Cheney and flipping the majority to the Republicans. In June, Jim Jeffords left the Republican party and became an independent caucusing with the Democrats giving them a 51-49 advantage and again changing the Majority Leader back to a Democrat. If that sequence of events had not happened, the Reform bill would never have been allowed to see the light of day even though three-quarters of the Senators (75 out of a 100) were co-sponsors. The late Senator Reid did not foresee that the hoops we jumped through procedurally in 2001 would become the norm. At the time, he believed it would be written up in graduate level textbooks as an exception to the normal course of business. I wish he had been right.

Source: RRB.Gov Publications; Wikipedia

Happy Easter to all our members and their families. Continue to stay safe out there.

Becky Schneider lives in El Paso, Texas. She can be reached at beckybat@att.net, or 915-581-1373.

BNSF SPOUSES & FAMILIES RAIL AGAINST BNSF HY-VIZ ATTENDANCE POLICY

— continued from Page 3

of their lives our spouses would be giving to the railroad once High-Viz was implemented. It felt like my brain would not shut off in the days that followed, trying to think of something we could do to show all railroaders that while we have been forced to silence our voices, we are still here with you, fighting, and, although we can't scream, we can and will make a show of solidarity.

Once again, mobilization was set into play with simple instructions to the families: take a selfie with orange duct tape (a symbol of the bright orange BNSF locomotives) over your mouths and post it at noon in whatever time zone you live in. We would flood social media with photographs of families who were forced into silence by a federal judge. We needed everyone at that moment to know our voices had been silenced only temporarily, and we are still here, as a group, standing in solidarity with every railroad employee—regardless of locomotive color—who was affected by this points system or one like it.

For me, it was fantastic to watch it all unfold. Slowly, across the country, Facebook profile pictures of wives and children, and others who supported our efforts, were popping up with the orange duct tape as a silent show of our solidarity. Yes, BNSF, for a brief moment you took our voice, but never once could you steal from us our spirit or our willingness to fight. We are railroad wives, and we won't sit down, and we won't shut up!



North American Railway Foundation®

founded by the BR&CF



Many thanks to the North American Railway Foundation (NARF) for sponsoring our newsletter and making it possible to share educational articles and information with our members across the nation, to keep railroad spouses and their families up-to-date on changes affecting benefits, and to educate our members about important legislation that helps promote safety on the nation's railroads.

The North American Railway Foundation, founded by the Brotherhood's Relief and Compensation Fund (BR&CF), was formed on October 22, 1996, as a nonprofit organization (a private operating foundation). Its purpose is to explore, nurture and support railway safety, efficiency, and technology, and to educate about and preserve the history of railroads in the United States and Canada. The goals of the Foundation are achieved by providing direct and active financial support to deserving non-profit institutions and projects, which exemplify the Foundation's purpose.

The Brotherhood's Relief and Compensation Fund, a non-profit corporation established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, was founded on June 12, 1912, by Luther G. Smith, a locomotive engineer for the Pennsylvania Railroad, to provide job income protection to railroaders throughout the United States and Canada who were "held out of service" due to suspension or dismissal. Brother Smith did not object to the railroads using a method to discipline employees when such discipline was necessary, but he did not see the logic in innocent family members having to suffer when the head of the home made an error in the performance of his duties that resulted in a suspension or dismissal.

North American Railway Foundation

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Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund

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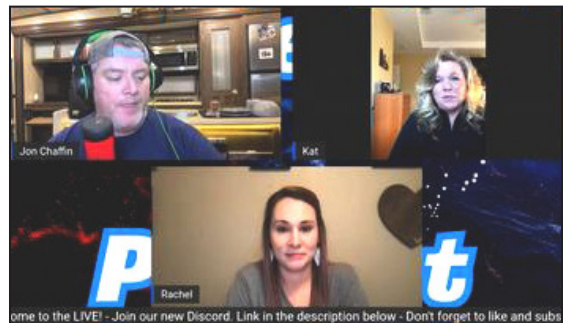
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

(717) 657-1890

BLET Auxiliary Officers Made Guest Appearance on Rails, Tails & Trails Podcast

National Auxiliary President Kathleen Bisbikis and National 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris were delighted to be invited to appear on the Rails and Trails live-stream podcast with host Jon Chaffin, on January 29, 2022.

"I have a real love for organizations that have deep roots in American history and I can't think of a better group to talk about than these ladies," states Chaffin on the podcast website.



Rachel and Kathleen shared details about the origination of the Auxiliary, its rich history, and its mission and purpose today. Being a live podcast, Rachel and Kathleen were able to field questions from viewers and share information about membership and ways to get involved.

If you haven't had a chance to watch this informative and entertaining interview, you can watch it anytime on YouTube at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLIiVDvuVDk>



Rails Tails & Trails is the YouTube creation of railroad employees Jon & Taylor, bringing you our life in one not-so-pretty package! Our journey as a railroad family, living in a 5th wheel, and traveling around the country. Along with rail news and the home our our podcast - Off The Rails!



Greetings from your Editor, Rachel Pharris

The National Auxiliary is excited to announce we currently have ten, yes ten! new local auxiliaries in formation! We have some very motivated wives across the country who have taken the initiative to unite railroad families in their area. If you live in California, Montana, Ohio, Texas, Nebraska, Missouri, or Illinois, then be on the lookout for a new auxiliary you can join in your state. More than anything, a local auxiliary forms a bond between the families that area. Railroad kids who have grown up with the benefit of having parents involved in an auxiliary grow up with wonderful memories of time spent with their "railroad family," and, as we have published in other editions of our newsletter these "rail kids" build bonds with one another that last a lifetime.

If you don't have a local auxiliary near you, we would be happy to talk to you about what is needed to get one started. We have the tools to help you organize a successful group in your area.

Our National Convention in Las Vegas is scheduled for October 10-13 of this year and we are hopeful that some of the newly formed auxiliaries will be eligible to have a delegate represent them at the convention. There is nothing more exciting than attending the national convention and being able to take that enthusiasm and knowledge back to the railroad families at home.

As we head into spring, we will be posting information about upcoming fundraisers, so please keep your eyes peeled for announcements on our Facebook page and website.

Rachel Pharris
BLET Auxiliary National Vice President and
Outreach Coordinator
404 South
Willard, Missouri
417-872-9641
rachel-rae@live.com

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Save These Dates!

June 13-17, 2022
Denver Regional Meeting
at the Hilton Denver City Center

August 1-5, 2022
Baltimore Regional Meeting
at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor

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

Rachel Pharris, Editor
BLET Auxiliary News
rachel-rae@live.com
417-872-9641

The next issue will be published in June 2022. Please have your submissions to Rachel on or before May 15, 2022.



BLET Auxiliary

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