



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 12, Number 2

Summer 2021

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

BLET Regional Meetings are on for Summer 2021!

BLET Regional Meetings provide an excellent opportunity to join your brothers and sisters for a week of fellowship, solidarity, education, inspiration, and information. Registration is open now for both of the 2021 Regional Meetings - Please join us at one or both of these exciting locations!



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The state capital of Texas, Austin is known around the world for its live music and great food!

Austin, Texas July 12-16, 2021

The 2021 Austin Regional Meeting will be held at the Hilton Austin, July 12-16, 2021.

Registration for the meeting and reservations for the hotel can be made using the BLET's regional meeting website, <https://bletregionals.org>. Deadline for making hotel reservations at the Hilton Austin is June 18. If making hotel reservations by phone, use group code "BLET2021."

Nashville, Tennessee August 2-6, 2021

The 2021 Nashville Regional Meeting will be held at the Grand Hyatt Nashville, August 2-6, 2021.

Registration for the meeting and reservations for the hotel can be made using the BLET's regional meeting website, <https://bletregionals.org>. Deadline for making hotel reservations at the Grand Hyatt Nashville is July 1. If making hotel reservations by phone, use group code "G-BLET."



iStock.com/f11photo

Nashville is the place to be for live music, authentic Southern cuisine, and a rocking good time!

At both of the 2021 regional meetings, CDC guidelines regarding COVID-19 protocols will be strictly enforced to protect the health and safety of everyone in attendance.



From the President

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS

“The question isn’t who is going to let me; it’s who is going to stop me.”

Ayn Rand

Greetings,

Summer is finally upon us, and with that we have received the uplifting news that once again we will be able to join together at the BLET summer regional meetings in Austin, Texas, and Nashville, Tennessee. I am thrilled to be able to see everyone. I am excited to hear what President Pierce and the other BLET National Division Officers will share with us and also excited for our newest national officer, Rachel Pharris, to experience her first regional meeting. I think we all need a good dose of union inspiration.

As I write this article, the rail yard shooting in my home state of California has just occurred. This morning, I listened to the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) officials speak about the senseless mass shooting that took nine of their employees’ lives yesterday. Several people spoke at the news conference, but the one thing that was said repeatedly were the words solidarity, family, union, and a bond that they all shared. We are all familiar with these words. We hear them and we use them to describe our relationship with our fellow rail families. Because of our union, we understand the word solidarity and what it means; we have a true extended family and when something like this happens, regardless of if we have a direct connection, we feel the pain and share in the sorrow. I sadly have to add that one of our own local BLET Division 839 members lost his son in this shooting, and while I do not know the family personally, I grieve for them as I cannot imagine the pain they must be suffering.

In this edition, on page five, you will find the true definition of the meaning “for our bright future.” Ten young men and women who have worked hard and proven themselves through their efforts in the classroom and their community have been chosen for BLET Auxiliary scholarships. Awarding these scholarships each year to the families of BLET members is one of the biggest joys that we as national officers enjoy. Our congratulations go out to all the winners and their families on this achievement.

April 28 was declared “A Day In Honor Of Railroad Workers” in Nevada, thanks in part to BLET Legislative State Chairman Matthew Parker. You can read about that on page 9 of this edition. Thank you, Brother Parker, for bringing a much-needed thank you to all of the selfless essential workers in Nevada and across the country.

In Pennsylvania, our sisters in Auxiliary 71 declared their own Railroad Appreciation day by presenting over 200 gift bags to the crews at the Suburban Station in Philadelphia. What a great way to boost morale and show appreciation for these hard-working crews!

If you haven’t had a chance to purchase a ticket for the Blackstone Grill, there is still time. You can jump over to our website at www.bletauxiliary.net and buy a ticket or two. The grill would make a great Father’s day gift for any hard-working railroader.

The Auxiliary is always in a “state of growth.” We encourage anyone who has felt like they need a community that understands the complications of being a railroad family to consider finding out what it takes to start a local auxiliary in their area. We indeed are a family in every sense. Solidarity is not a word just for the union members; it’s a word to describe what auxiliary families share. We are here for each other, regardless if it’s across the street, across town, or across the country. Having the support of others who understand and live our lives is the biggest blessing you can bring to your area. Please contact any national officer and they can tell you how to get a local auxiliary started.

I wish all of my Auxiliary and BLET family and happy and safe summer.

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

Find us on 
THE NATIONAL B.L.E.T. AUXILIARY

Auxiliary 71 Celebrates 1st Annual Railroad Appreciation Day!

By Susan Lafferty, Vice-President, Auxiliary 71

Philadelphia BLET Auxiliary 71 celebrated our First Annual Railroad Appreciation Day on Friday, May 7, 2021. One of the primary goals of the almost year-old auxiliary was to help improve crew morale. We hoped the Appreciation Day would aid in that goal.


We began by soliciting donations for personal care items, including hand sanitizer, tissues, and lotions. We were fortunate to receive an abundance of items from several businesses and a large health insurance company in the region. In late April, our Secretary Sharay Austin hosted a gathering of the auxiliary members so we could organize and prepare the gift bags. Our Legislative Correspondent, Zhane Austin, created an insert, which was placed into the water bottles, to spread the word about the role of our auxiliary and to communicate our appreciation to the crew members. Overall, approximately 200 gift bags were created!

Members Jewell Hill and Zhane Austin personally delivered the gift bags to the crew members at the Suburban Station crew room on May 7. Suburban Station was built by the Pennsylvania Railroad and originally opened on September 28, 1930. It is referred to as the “heart of the city” in the transportation industry.

Philadelphia’s regional rail BLET members work closely with the members of the Transit Workers Union (TWU), Local 234, to ensure the riding public are transported safely to and from their destinations. It is truly a team effort. One of the conductors with the TWU, Alberty Ramos, was overjoyed to have the support from the auxiliary – his smile says is all!

We are beyond grateful to our loved ones in the BLET & TWU and look forward to continuing this tradition in the years ahead!





Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen

Railroad Appreciation Day

A THANK YOU FROM THE
71ST CHAPTER OF THE
PHL BLET AUXILIARY

With special thanks to AmeriHealth Caritas and Keller's Market for their donations!
If you are interested in joining the Auxiliary, please contact us at bletauxiliary71@yahoo.com

Photos: top: Jewell Hill and Zhane Austin; center left: Sharay Austin, Zhane Austin, Jewell Hill, and Erica Hill preparing gift bags; center right: water bottle with insert; bottom: Conductor Alberty Ramos.

Amarillo Auxiliary Members Certified as Operation Lifesaver Volunteers

By Victoria Delahay, President, Auxiliary 99, Amarillo, Texas

The members of Yellow City Bomb Squad Auxiliary No. 99 in Amarillo, Texas, are so thankful that we are growing and staying busy in our community, even when COVID is still a conversation. Four of our members recently trained to become certified volunteer presenters with the nonprofit organization Operation Lifesaver. This allows us to give educational presentations emphasizing safety around railroad tracks in our community, at schools, and at public events. (See www.oli.org for more information about Operation Lifesaver.)

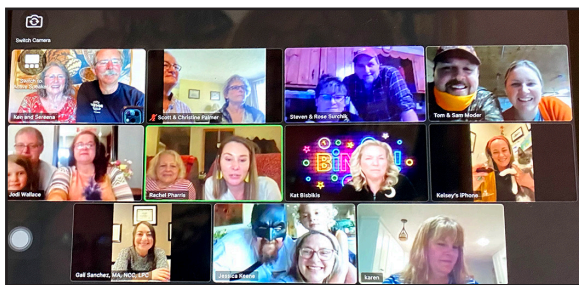
On Saturday May 1, 2021, our families joined the community for a fun event entitled "Fiesta on the Square." It was a block party that brought in many local artists, designers, and food trucks. Our auxiliary sponsored a booth at the event. Operation Lifesaver provided us with activity books, pens, bookmarks, a quiz book, keychains, and general information to distribute at our booth, in an effort to educate the public about rail safety. We provided bottled water and popsicles in return for donations, and also held three raffles to help build our funds. We found ourselves engaging in many wonderful conversations and discussions about our auxiliary and what we do. Amarillo came out and supported us and helped us raise over \$500 for our local auxiliary!

We are truly blessed to have so many supporters. We hope all of you are doing well and staying safe! Love to you all from Amarillo!

Photos, from top to bottom: top: Shannon Denney, Victoria Delahay, Pam Winbolt, Christy Snider; middle: Fiesta on the Square, Amarillo, Texas; bottom: Yellow City Bomb Squad Auxiliary 99 Booth

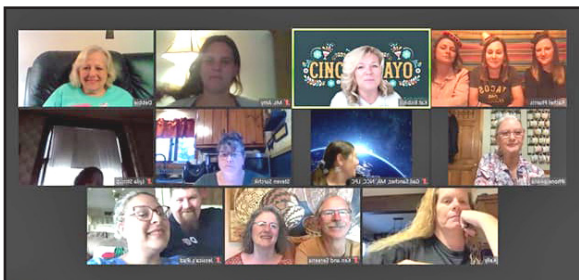


Auxiliary Game Nights Zoomed on through May



By Rose Surchik, President, Auxiliary 6388

The April Game Night was hosted by Twin Ports Auxiliary 6388, in the twin port cities of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin, on April 17. Zoom game nights are a fun way to connect with auxiliary members all over the country and are advertised in advance on The National Auxiliary Facebook page. For our game night, we had fun playing Bingo and another game called Blurt. We had some great prizes for the winners, donated by Zeeke's Bees, Katy and Tom Dorin, and Karen Urban. Thank you to all who participated, and congratulations to the winners!



By Heather Williams, Auxiliary 417 Member

The Springfield Missouri Auxiliary 417 hosted a trivia game night on May 4. With a Cinco de Mayo theme and some Star Wars force, the event went off without a sith (pun intended). Auxiliary 417 President Rachel Pharris, Secretary Kelsey Epperson, and I (Heather Williams) hosted the event. We had a great turnout online and enjoyed the tricky and funny trivia questions. We awarded prizes to three winners, including a taco-themed gift basket, Amazon gift card, and Darden Gift Card. Thank you to everyone who attended! We will start up our monthly game nights again in the Fall.



BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Awards for School Year 2021-2022

Congratulations to all of our scholarship winners. We wish you all the best in the year ahead as you pursue your goals for a successful future!

RECIPIENTS OF LECMPA \$2500 AWARDS



ALISON ANDERSON

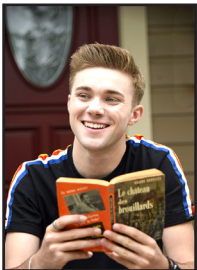
Alison will be attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Her father, Mark Anderson, is a member of BLET Division 333 in St. Paul, Minnesota and works for Union Pacific Railroad. Her mother, Nancy Anderson, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



NATALIE KING-SHAW

Natalie will be attending the University of San Diego as a Junior. Her father, James Forrest King-Shaw, is a member of BLET Division 158 in Sparks, Nevada. Her mother, Linda King-Shaw is an auxiliary member-at-large.

RECIPIENT OF \$1000 AUXILIARY AWARD IN MEMORY OF LEONA A. LOUIS



JARED BISBIKIS

Jared will be attending the University of San Francisco as a Junior. His father, Jason Bisbikis, is a member of BLET Division 839 in Stockton, California, and works for the BNSF railroad. His mother, Kathleen Bisbikis, is a member of the NorCal Auxiliary in Stockton, California.

RECIPIENTS OF \$1000 AUXILIARY AWARDS



CAMBRYANA BACKUS

Cambryana will be attending West Texas A&M University as a Freshman. Her father, Shane Backus, is a member of BLET Division 299 in Amarillo, Texas, and works for the BNSF railroad. Her mother, Cindy Backus, is a member of the Amarillo Auxiliary No. 99.



JASON BALDWIN

Jason will be attending the Aveda Institute in Portland, Oregon. His father, Steve Baldwin, is a member of BLET Division 362 in La Grande, Oregon, and works for the Union Pacific Railroad. His mother, Christine Baldwin, is a member of the Eastern Oregon Auxiliary in La Grande, Oregon.

RECIPIENTS OF \$1000 AUXILIARY AWARDS, cont'd

JONATHAN CHENCHAR

Jonathan will be pursuing a Masters Degree at the University of Wyoming. His father, Mark Francis Chenchar, is a retired member of BLET Div. 115, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and is retired from the Union Pacific Railroad. His mother, Marta Chenchar, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



DANIELLE FINCHAM

Danielle will be attending the College of Pharmacy at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska. Her father, Fred Fincham, is a member of BLET Division 224 in Marysville, Kansas. Her mother, Nancy Fincham, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



CHAD MARTIN

Chad will be attending Otero Junior College as a Freshman. His father, Troy Martin, works for BNSF Railroad, and is a member of BLET Division 430 in Trinidad, Colorado. His mother, Lisa Martin, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



MAYA RAMSEIER

Maya will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as a Freshman. Her stepfather, Eric Stroik, works for CN Railway, and is a member of BLET Division 174 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and an auxiliary member-at-large. Her mother, Kate Giblin, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



BRENDEN RUNION

Brenden will be attending the University of Wyoming in Cheyenne, Wyoming. His father, Cory Runion, works for the Union Pacific Railroad, and is a member of BLET Division 116 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. His mother, Jacqueline Runion, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By JESSICA
COLE,
NATIONAL
LEGISLATIVE
REPRESENTATIVE

American Rescue Plan Act Summarized

The American Rescue Plan of 2021 (ARP) earmarks \$43.2 billion in resources for the U.S. Department of Transportation to continue its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Transportation workers have been on the front lines delivering personal protective equipment (PPE), essential goods and services, and vaccines to help combat the pandemic,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. “The American Rescue Plan makes a historic investment in our transportation system, helping to keep workers on the job and get travelers to where they need to be. The benefits of this package are already being felt — with airline workers tearing up furlough notices, Amtrak announcing expanded routes, and critical assistance reaching those who are struggling during this pandemic.”

As summarized in a US DOT news release:

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) contains transportation relief funding in three main categories:

- **Transit:** ARP helps hard-hit public transit agencies avoid layoffs and service reductions, which disproportionately harm workers who are more likely to depend on public transportation.

ARP contains \$30.5 billion to assist with operating costs, including payroll and PPE expenses. This

includes dedicated funds to support rural transit agencies, transit service for the elderly and individuals with disabilities, and transit on Tribal lands.

- **Aviation:** ARP ensures that airports can continue to function to provide the transport of essential goods and essential trips even as we are still waiting for travel to return to normal for all Americans.

ARP contains \$8 billion to cover costs of operations, personnel, and cleaning, including a set-aside for rent relief and other costs of airport concessionaires primarily directed toward small businesses and minority-owned firms. ARP contains an additional \$3 billion for the establishment of an Aviation Manufacturing Payroll Support Program to protect aviation manufacturing jobs.

ARP also contains an additional \$15 billion to continue payroll support for airlines that will be administered by the Treasury Department with support from USDOT.

- **Amtrak:** ARP gets Amtrak workers back to work and restoring service on routes across the country. ARP contains \$1.7 billion to recall employees furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restore daily long-distance service, and help states cover lost revenue in state-supported routes.

The American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law on March 11 by President Biden after being passed in both

congressional houses.

Source: US DOT news release

For The People Act: H.R. 1 H.R. 1, also known as the “For the People Act,” was originally introduced by John Sarbanes (D-Maryland) in 2019. Seen as a “signature piece of legislation,” it expands voting rights, limits gerrymandering on partisan lines, reforms campaign finance to reduce the political influence created by money, and reforms ethics rules for the federal government.

H.R. 1 passed the House in March of 2019, but was blocked from coming to a vote in the Senate by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, despite receiving broad popular support among 68% of likely voters, according to dataforprogress.org.

Congressional Democrats reintroduced the act in the 117th Congress on March 3, 2021, and the House passed it on a virtual party-line vote of 220 to 210. This sent it on to the evenly-divided Senate, but Vice President Kamala Harris holds the tie breaking vote.

There is speculation that Senate Republicans may try to filibuster to block the bill, a move that could be countered by Democrats if the filibuster is abolished. However, some Democrats have expressed reservations about taking such a controversial step.

Sources: Various

Initiative Petition Legislation May Suppress the Vote in Missouri: An Important Letter from Brother Calvin Groose Missouri State Chairman:

Brothers and Sisters,
I know that you have heard me talk about the initiative petition legis-

lation introduced in the Missouri legislature. I just want to clarify why it is so important to us that this legislation does not change the law in Missouri.

Missouri has a statute which allows Missouri citizens to petition legislation passed by the legislature. If citizens can acquire five percent of the registered voters' signatures in six of the eight congressional districts, then the measure will go on a ballot to be decided by voters. This is how we challenged and overturned “Right to Work” legislation in 2018.

The current legislature is trying to change the initiative petition process to require more signatures and require that higher number in all districts. The goal is to effectively render legislation nearly impossible to overturn by citizens. If they can change the initiative petition process, then “Right to Work” legislation will become unchallenged. Rarely is legislation challenged and successfully overturned by voters because it takes an organized effort and extensive resources.

We attained more than twice the signatures required to put the measure on the ballot. When the people spoke, nearly seventy percent of voters voted against “Right to Work” in 2018.

Weakening unions is a priority of Corporate America and we will do all we can to prevent this attempt in Missouri.

If you can call your legislators and tell them that you oppose any changes to the initiative petition process, it would be helpful.

Thank you

Calvin Groose, Chairman, BLET
Missouri State Legislative Board

Canadian Pacific Railway and Kansas City Southern Propose Merger

In a deal worth \$29 Billion dollars, Canadian Pacific Railway (CP) plans to take over Kansas City Southern (KCS), notifying the U.S. Surface Transportation Board of the deal on March 20th.

The STB must approve the plan and has 16 months to issue a decision by two Class I carriers to merge.

The improving trade relationship between Mexico and the United States under the Biden administration is likely to be beneficial to the success of the merger.

The merger comes as trade between the U.S. and Mexico is expected to increase as the two North American nations are enjoying far better relations following U.S. President Joe Biden's inauguration.

"The transaction will combine the two railroads to create the first rail network connecting the U.S., Mexico, and Canada," CP and KCS said in a joint statement. "Joining seamlessly in Kansas City, Mo., in America's heartland, CP and KCS together will connect customers via single-network transportation offerings between points on CP's system throughout Canada, the U.S. Midwest, and the U.S. Northeast, and points on KCS's system throughout Mexico and the South-Central U.S."

"The combined network's new single-line offerings will deliver dramatically expanded market reach for customers served by CP and KCS, provide new competitive transportation service options, and support North American economic growth. The transaction is also expected to create jobs across the combined network. Additionally, efficiency and service improvements are

expected to achieve meaningful environmental benefits.

Source: Railway Age

Precision Scheduled Railroading Helps Spur Stronger Demurrage Rules

Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR), the new car flow management system, has found favor with the Freight Carriers as a means to enhance profits, but can cause serious shipping delays that frustrate freight clients.

Demurrage is the term for charges assessed by railroads when cars are detained beyond a specified time for loading and unloading. Several shippers had contacted the Surface Transportation Board two years ago with concerns about greatly increasing demurrage charges related to the implementation of PSR.

Class I carriers responded to the complaints by saying the charges were intended to motivate shippers to turn assets around as quickly and efficiently as possible. Shippers counter that, in many cases, Carriers were not living up to their part of the Contract, delivering cars at their convenience and not in accordance with shipper requests. Shippers say they were unfairly punished with unjustified demurrage charges when Carriers delivered more shipments than the suppliers could handle in a timely fashion.

The STB has addressed the issue with a new STB regulation that will go into effect on October 6 and will tighten the rules for how and when demurrage is billed. Class I carriers are required to "include certain minimum information on or with demurrage invoices and provide machine-readable access to the minimum information."

A demurrage invoice must now include the time and date that

cars were received at an interchange by a Class 1 carrier. This is intended to help shipping clients identify when to adjust their own conduct in response to variables further up the shipping chain.

The invoice should include other information such as the date that the waybill was created, whether each car was loaded or empty, what commodity was shipped, and the dates and times for original estimated arrival, actual placement of each car, and release of each car, according to the STB.

Source: Freightwaves; Railway Age

Federal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Rules for Two-Person Crew: Direct News Flash from the BLET Website

CLEVELAND, Ohio (Feb. 23, 2021) — Two of the country's largest freight railroad unions achieved a favorable decision in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on Tuesday regarding an attempt by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to preempt legislation passed by a number of states that established a minimum of two-person operating crews on freight trains.

The case, brought by the states of California, Washington, and Nevada, and by the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers — Transportation Division (SMART-TD) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), challenged former FRA Administrator Ron Batory's attempt to cancel the laws of those and other states while at the same time attempting to authorize nationwide one-person crews. The unions and states argued that Batory's May 2019 order violated the notice-and-comment procedures of Administrative Procedure Act (APA) and that his agency could not implicitly preempt the state safety rules.

The Court of Appeals ruled that FRA's Order was "arbitrary and capricious," taking particular note that the assertions by FRA and the rail carriers that reducing the number of crew members in the cab to one person could improve safety "did not withstand scrutiny" and "was lacking." The Court also criticized the Order as not being a "logical outgrowth" of the two-person crew proposal, because "[t]here was nothing in the [proposed regulation] to put a person on notice that the FRA might adopt a national one-person crew limit."

The Court chided FRA for basing its negative preemption decision on "an economic rationale" instead of what is its main obligation — safety.

The Court also found the Order's "real and intended effect is to authorize nationwide one-person train crews and to bar any contrary state regulations." In that it utterly failed to address the safety concerns raised by nearly 1,550 commenters who support two-person crews, the Court found the Order's rationale was arbitrary and capricious, thus violating the Administrative Procedure Act.

Likewise, the Court eviscerated the lack of a sound factual basis in the Order, which merely cited a study funded by the Association of American Railroads, holding that "a single study suggesting that one-person crew operations 'appear as safe' as two-person crews seems a thin reed on which to base a national rule."

"First, we thank the more than 1,500 BLET and SMART-TD members who took the time to comment on the need for two-person crews, because you have made a difference," said SMART-TD President Jeremy R. Ferguson and BLET President Dennis R.

— continued on Page 12



Words from the Chairman

By Ryan K. Snow, Chairman, California State Legislative Board

When asked to write this article, I thought, why sure I can do that! But then I sat and wondered what I should write about. So instead of a whole lot of something, I decided on a little bit of everything.

The first time I rode a real train was in 1983, heading for basic training from Los Angeles, California, to San Diego, California. I remember the crew being very nice to those of us who were condemned to be incarcerated for nine weeks in basic training. That was my only experience with the railroad until the late 90s when I was strongly encouraged to apply with the Union Pacific Railroad out of Bakersfield, California. A friend had told me how great it was, how great the insurance was, and how great the earnings were. He had a brother-in-law who worked as a conductor. So I guess the main reason I went to work for Union Pacific was because a good friend pestered me for over a week to submit my application and to shut him up, I did it. I am fortunate to never have been furloughed, and when we were augmented (forced to work in another town with pay and hotel), we felt like we were being abused. That was when I worked as a conductor.

Seniority is everything, at least that is what they told me, so I decided to jump into the saddle and put in my bid for the first fireman class that came along. I had two people underneath me, just two people. They were both friends and both BLET Members. For many years, it would pain me

to exercise my seniority. That is how it rolled—sleeping in my car, commuting 200 miles, etc.

I signed up for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Union almost immediately in my railroad career. The United Transportation Union (UTU) was not doing anything for me at the time locally, and it just seemed the right thing to do; after all, it was for my future I would be voting. The right thing to do!

I went for many years without attending a union meeting. I thought it was sort of a “members-only” thing, and if you were not in the club, so to speak, you were not welcome. I was wrong! I knew nothing about unions until I started attending union meetings and becoming more involved. I began to ask questions and, at times, became frustrated. During this time, I was a card-carrying, Fox News worshiping, Rush Limbaugh ditto head. I was convinced that the only trustworthy news was Fox News; - remember, they were fair and balanced?

In 2010, the legislative representative for our division stepped down and it was then that I stepped up! In April of that year, I went to my first convention. My eyes were opened a little, and it was a hard pill to swallow! I started doing some reading and concluded that the political party that I supported did not support me! Then I learned to split social issues from professional issues. This

epiphany made it much more apparent, and it was easy to decide that maybe I should not support those who are doing everything they can to destroy my chosen occupation as a locomotive engineer.

Many members do not agree with the union’s recommendations or endorsements. These very same people will not suggest a single rail labor-friendly candidate. They will also tell you that the union doesn’t need to be engaged in politics. After the last four years, and barely surviving Ron Batory, I say it is all about politics! The FRA was gutted during the previous administration. They called it reorganization! I call it sabotage! We are currently in a phase of FRA operation where we can see that the regulatory force that we depend on for enforcement is coming back to life. Thank you, Mr. Bose, and BLET Vice President/National Legislative Representative Vince Verna, for your efforts.

Just paying your union dues each month is not enough! As BLET members, you need to be involved; you need to be engaged; you need to participate locally and be ready to take action when requested by your union. One way to help is to donate to the BLET Political Action Committee (PAC) fund. The PAC fund enables the state chairmen and National Legislative Office to garner influence and allows our name to be recognized and our issues heard. Friends in politics! The

use of union dues for political purposes is prohibited by law; however, voluntary contributions to the BLET-PAC fund enable us to be helpful to those who share our interest on the state and national level. Members can start small - 10 or 20 dollars a month. Contact your local legislative representative for a form today, and your PAC contribution will be taken out of your check. It’s painless, and you will most likely not even miss it.

We also need your help in supporting the greatest auxiliary organization in the country. You don’t have to be a spouse to be a member of the BLET Auxiliary. As a BLET member, you are eligible to join as an associate member. You can also support their fundraising efforts and/or donate to them. The BLET Auxiliary is a valuable tool in our political tool belt and a support network of some of the most incredible volunteer people that you would ever want to meet. Amongst other goals that help support BLET members and their families, auxiliary members are focused on promoting legislation that supports the safety of railroad employees and maintains and enhances the lifestyle of the employees and their families.

In closing, I will sum it all up to this: **Be Involved!** Talk to your neighbors, learn who your city, county, state, and national representatives are! Your local legislative rep or your auxiliary will be more than happy to get you this information. Keep the faith, stay safe, and be well. God Bless!

State of Nevada Proclaims "A Day in Honor of Railroad Workers"

Submitted by Matt Parker
Nevada State Legislative Chairman

The following is a joint statement from the SMART-TD and BLET State Legislative Boards Governor's Proclamation of "A Day in Honor of Railroad Workers"

Every day, front-line railroad workers report for duty as required and perform the tasks of their jobs in a manner which ensures that the movement of freight and passengers by rail which is needed to keep this nation's economy functioning is accomplished. In spite of various objectives and circumstances which create hurdles to be crossed in providing this vital service, the work which you do continues to deliver for those counting on it.

We are pleased on this April 28th, a date designated in this country as "Workers Memorial Day," to join with Nevada Governor Steve Sisolak in honoring the railroad workers whose efforts every day ensure rail traffic into, out of, and through Nevada continues to move. It is your effort, above all other factors, which delivers on the promise of safe, reliable rail transportation for the public at large.

On this special day, we salute and thank you for the work that you do, while encouraging you to stay focused on safety in the course of your work. We also ask that you join us in remembering those workers who have passed on before us, some in the line of duty, while committing to continue fighting for all still among us with whom we share struggles.



A Proclamation by the Governor

WHEREAS, since the first railroad was chartered to carry freight and passengers in the United States in 1827, this nation's railroads have been vital to the national economy and defense; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that each American freight rail job supports 9 jobs elsewhere in the U.S. economy; and

WHEREAS, over one-fourth of all freight movement in ton-miles annually in this country occurs by rail, including many of the goods upon which Nevada's residents and businesses rely; and

WHEREAS, thousands of passengers arrive, depart, and travel through Nevada on Amtrak passenger trains annually; and

WHEREAS, the rail lines crossing Nevada provide a vital transcontinental link facilitating the movement of this freight and these passengers; and



WHEREAS, the safe and efficient movement of the trains transporting this freight and these passengers through Nevada is due foremost to the dedication and professionalism of those employees who are directly involved in train movements, including Train and Crew Dispatchers, Maintenance of Way personnel, Signal Maintainers, Mechanical personnel, and train crews;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, STEVE SISOLAK, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, do hereby proclaim the day of April 28, 2021, as

A DAY IN HONOR OF RAILROAD WORKERS



In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Nevada to be affixed at the State Capitol in Carson City, this 5th day of April 2021.

By the Governor:  Governor
By  Secretary of State
Deputy



Springfield Auxiliary 417 May Membership Drive

Springfield, Missouri Auxiliary 417 members hosted a mixer at Tie and Timber Beer Company in Springfield on Saturday, May 22. The ladies enjoyed some time together. It has been great weather to get out and enjoy socializing again. The mixer was planned as part of the Auxiliary 417's May membership drive.

Pictured, from right to left: Rachel Pharris, Heather Williams, and Kelsey Epperson.



Springfield
BLET AUXILIARY 417



**COME BEE A
PART OF THE
AUXILIARY FAMILY**




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BACHELOR'S DEGREE COMPLETION PROGRAM

A bachelor's degree at no cost for you and your family members

Bachelor's degree completion program for union families

The program is available to current and retired union members, their spouses, domestic partners, children (including stepchildren and children-in-law), financial dependents and grandchildren. Family members do NOT need to be financial dependents or living with the member to be eligible. All courses are 100% online.

An Associate degree or 60 or more transferable college credits are required to enroll. Students who have not yet earned an Associate degree or are just getting started in higher education can begin with the Free College program at Eastern Gateway Community College and then transfer into the Bachelor's Degree Completion programs at CSU.

Central State University is regionally accredited

Union Plus has partnered with Central State University (CSU), a regionally accredited public, non-profit university near Dayton, OH. Credits you earn can transfer to other schools.

Zero out-of-pocket costs

Members and their families can earn a Bachelor's degree online with no out-of-pocket costs.

Students must apply for federal financial aid and use any grants to pay the tuition. Students must also use any employer-sponsored tuition assistance. The Student Success Grant covers the difference between any federal grants and employer assistance and your tuition, fees and e-books at CSU.

Bachelor's degrees offered

- **Business Administration**
- **Teacher Education**
Licensure and non-licensure (PreK-5th grade)
- **Criminal Justice**
- **Interdisciplinary Studies - Humanities**
- **Additional degree programs coming soon!**

Students may enroll part time, but continuous enrollment is required. Students must complete the FAFSA and any required verification.
*For additional degree programs, there may be required fees.

THE STUDENT SUCCESS GRANT

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FREE COLLEGE BENEFIT

“The Union Plus Free College Program is an extremely valuable benefit. I really appreciate my union membership giving me access to this opportunity.”
—Lorraine L., Free College student

Free College for you and your family members! A life-changing opportunity from your union to earn your Associate Degree

Free associate degree for you and your family

Union Plus Free College offers working families a debt-free and convenient higher education opportunity. Current and retired union members, their spouses, domestic partners, children (including stepchildren and children-in-law), financial dependents and grandchildren can all take advantage of this exciting opportunity! Family members do NOT need to be financial dependents or living with the member to be eligible.

Zero out-of-pocket costs

Members and their families can earn an Associate Degree online, with no out-of-pocket costs. A last-dollar scholarship covers the difference between any federal grants and your tuition, fees and e-books at Eastern Gateway Community College (EGCC).

Eastern Gateway credits are transferable

Eastern Gateway Community College is a public, non-profit school in the University System of Ohio and is regionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Credits you earn can transfer to other schools, saving you as much as \$15,000 on your education!

The Free College benefit covers the cost of tuition, fees and books after any PELL or other federal grant, or employer reimbursement is applied. The remaining amount will be cleared with the Free College scholarship. As long as your financial aid file is complete, there is no cost to the student and students are never asked to take out any loans.

Higher Education IN JUST 4 STEPS

- 1 **APPLY to Eastern Gateway**
Go to unionplusfreecollege.org and select the Get Started Today button.
- 2 **COMPLETE the FAFSA**
Complete the form online: FAFSA.ed.gov (school code: 007275)
- 3 **SUBMIT proof of high school graduation or GED completion**
- 4 **ENROLL in classes**
Work with an enrollment advisor to register for classes.

Enroll anytime. Classes start every 8 weeks.





1-888-590-9009

unionplusfreecollege.org

Union Plus is a nonprofit consumer benefits organization created to improve the quality of life for union members and their families, provide benefits and services that strengthen the ties of union members to their unions, and contribute funding to the labor movement. These benefits and programs are FREE to union members and their families. There is no membership —if you're a current or retired union member or a family member — you're in. These opportunities for higher education at no cost to you are available now to union members and their families:

Open Enrollment through June 30 for Cornerstone's New and Improved CI/ACC PLAN

New in 2021: A COVID-19 Benefit has been added to the BLET Critical Illness Plan, which now covers you should you have a COVID-19 diagnosis by a physician and be confined in an intensive care unit (ICU) for 5 days or longer.

Critical Illness (CI) coverage, underwritten by Sun Life, provides: (1) Increased benefit amount up to \$40,000 for Members and Spouse (previously was \$20,000 for Members and \$10,000 for Spouse); (2) Child(ren) benefit also increased to \$20,000 (was previously \$10,000); (3) Annual Health Screening benefit increased to \$100 dollars for each covered family member (including children). This includes receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Guaranteed Approved during Open Enrollment — you cannot be denied coverage.

Lump sum payment directly to the member if any of the following occur: Heart Attack, Stroke, Cancer, Major Organ Transplant, End-Stage Kidney Disease, Coronary Artery Bypass Graft, Benign Brain Tumor, Coma, Paralysis, ALS and Severe Burns. Premium never changes and members can keep the coverage at the same rate after retirement.

The Accident (ACC) coverage underwritten by Sun Life provides: Increased payouts for covered injuries and medical services due to an accident. Covered Injuries include: Fractures, Burns, Concussion, Dislocation, Torn Ligament, Lacerations, and others. Covered Services include Ambulance, ER visit, Xray/MRI, Surgery, Wheelchairs/Crutches/Casts, Physical Rehab, etc. Guaranteed Approved during Open Enrollment — members cannot be denied coverage.

Member can elect coverage on themselves, spouse and/or child(ren). Premium never changes and members can keep the coverage at the same rate after retirement.

Annual wellness benefit of \$50 dollars for each covered family member (including children). This includes receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. All members have been mailed an enrollment packet and are encouraged to contact Cornerstone at 224-770-5307 to discuss their options with a benefit specialist. Also, members and their spouses can go online at www.blet-ci-acc.com to enroll.

Open Enrollment ends June 30, 2021.

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

Greetings everyone!

We are so very excited to attend the BLET Regional Meetings this year in Austin, Texas, on July 12-16, and Nashville, Tennessee, August 2-6. Please stop by our table and say hello; we are looking forward to seeing you!

Scholarship recipients have been announced! Congratulations to you all!

BLACKSTONE GRILL RAFFLE

Our Spring Raffle is a Blackstone 36" griddle with accessory package, valued at \$400! Get your tickets today! Tickets can be purchased through PayPal on our website. The drawing will be held on Facebook live June 20 at 5 p.m. Pacific Time!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Tracy Dougan and Tasha Lynn Becker, Auxiliary 417, Springfield, Missouri

Lisa Christensen, Pacific Northwest, Auxiliary 503

CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program (CAP) is our organization's way of saying thank you to long-time members. These members are usually elderly and their incomes are such that some of life's little pleasures are out of their reach. The CAP provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. Our CAP recipients are grateful for what we do.

Please check to see if someone in your Auxiliary may be eligible and encourage them to apply. Members at Large are eligible also!

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Second notices for members-at-large unpaid dues have been mailed. Please make sure to send your dues to me and that all of your information is correct so that you will continue to receive your newsletter. All checks should be made **payable to BLET Auxiliary, or you may use PayPal**. The PayPal link is located on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net.

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES

Erica Hill, President of Auxiliary 71 in Philadelphia. Erica's mother passed away on March 14, 2021.

Annie Rangel, Member of Auxiliary 12 River City, in Omaha, Nebraska, passed away May 29. Annie could always make you laugh and loved being around people. She is truly missed.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Amanda and Ray Arnold welcomed a beautiful baby girl. Sadie Joi Arnold was born on February 10, 2021. Amanda is a member of Auxiliary 71 in Philadelphia.

THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Our thoughts and prayers to all BLET members, auxiliary members, and our family members and friends battling COVID.

To Dwayne and Debbie Massengale's daughter, Robin, we send healing thoughts and prayers for her recovery. Dwayne is the Chairman of the Georgia State Legislative Board and Debbie is an Auxiliary member-at-large.

Jessica and Matt Keene and their family have been battling COVID and Matt was hospitalized. We send our thoughts and prayers to them. Matt and Jessica are both members of Auxiliary 503 Pacific NW, of which Jessica is the President.

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 like to also share in the joy! Please let me know of any exciting happenings!

GOING GREEN!

Have you made the move to GO GREEN? You can choose to GO GREEN and receive a full color digital copy of your newsletter by e-mail! It's so easy to do. Just send an e-mail to me at lwposs@gmail.com requesting your quarterly newsletter be delivered to you as an e-mail attachment instead of a black-and-white hard copy by regular mail.

Past Newsletters are also available to read anytime and they are located on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net.

Thank you all for your continued support and membership!!



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

"The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new."

— Socrates

Legislative Update

Continued from Page 7

Pierce. “We also congratulate the judges in this case for recognizing the former Administrator overstepped his bounds, and we look ahead to working with the FRA when crew size is again considered on a national level by the agency as a matter of public and operational safety.”

“We assert, and will continue to assert, that having two sets of eyes and two people working in concert together with any improvements in technology, will be the best way to serve public safety and to continue the effective and efficient movement of our nation’s railroads,” the union presidents said.

The court ruling, in vacating and remanding the FRA Order, sends the matter of a potential rule-making for freight railroad crew size back to FRA for the Agency’s consideration. It also means that two-person crew legislation in the states that had been targeted by FRA’s order remain in effect.

A copy of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling is available here (PDF): https://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/9th_Cir_Opinion.pdf

Two-Person Crew Update: The State Story

A mosaic of State Two-Person Crew Legislation is re-lighting as 2021 unfolds. So many states have legislation in various stages that it is impossible to give a full report in the space allotted in this newsletter and still leave room for all the other important items.

The BLET and the BLET Auxiliary encourage all their members to check their respective websites and Facebook pages for news releases and updates, which are posted frequently. When legislation comes up in your state,

please contact your state lawmakers FREQUENTLY and VOCALLY to support Two-Person Crews.

As the states chip away at this legislation, there’s also renewed hope that National Legislation on Two-Person Crews may simplify and standardize requirements across state lines so that the various state battles for Two-Person Crews are not as important. In the meantime, however, these battles are very important and please help fight them!

Sources: Various

FRA Issues Emergency COVID Safety Order (E.O.)

FRA is issuing this E.O. to implement Executive Order 13998, which directs the Secretary of Transportation to take action to require masks to be worn in compliance with CDC guidelines in or on trains.

On January 31, 2021, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) issued Security Directive (SD) 1582/84–21–01, Security Measures—Face Mask Requirements (TSA SD), to implement Executive Order 13998 and to enforce the CDC Order with respect to conveyances and transportation facilities used in various modes of surface transportation, including passenger rail.

On February 12, 2021, the Secretary of Transportation issued an Action Memorandum to further USDOT’s efforts to implement the President’s Executive Order 13998. Finding that COVID–19 and its variants continue to present unprecedented challenges to the health of the traveling public in all modes of transportation, and that the wearing of masks on all modes of transportation can mitigate the risk of travelers spreading COVID–19 and can instill safety and confidence in transportation systems, the Secretary directed

FRA to take action to support and carry out enforcement of the CDC Order with respect to transportation entities subject to its jurisdiction.

In issuing this E.O., FRA is exercising its emergency railroad safety authority to the extent necessary to require mask wearing in accordance with the CDC Order and implement Executive Order 13998 with respect to freight rail operations and those portions of passenger rail operations not already covered by the TSA SD. FRA is not exercising its authority over any other aspect of the COVID–19 pandemic and does not otherwise intend by this E.O. to affect working conditions for employees and contractors engaged in railroad operations.

Source: Federal Register/Vol. 86, No. 38/Monday, March 1, 2021/ Rules and Regulations as published at govinfo.gov (footnotes omitted)

PTC Implementation Deadline Met - Two Days Ahead of Extension Deadline

A press release from the FRA updates us on the long fight to get PTC fully implemented:

Positive Train Control (PTC) systems are designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, overspeed derailments, incursions into established work zones, and movements of trains through switches left in the wrong position. On December 29, 2020, FRA announced that PTC technology is in operation on all 57,536 required freight and passenger railroad route miles, prior to the December 31, 2020 statutory deadline set forth by Congress. Furthermore, as of that date railroads had reported that interoperability has been achieved between each applicable host and tenant railroad that currently operates on PTC-governed main lines. In addition, as required, FRA certified that each host railroad’s PTC system complies

with the technical requirements for PTC systems. This accomplishment was the culmination of over a decade of sustained and direct engagement and collaboration among FRA and the 41 railroads currently subject to the statutory mandate, including seven Class I railroads, Amtrak, 28 commuter railroads, 5 other freight railroads that host regularly scheduled intercity or commuter rail passenger service, as well as key railroad industry associations, material suppliers, and service providers.

Source: United States Department of Transportation Website/ Railroads: <https://railroads.dot.gov/train-control/ptc/positive-train-control-ptc>

An Update on Federal Safety Legislation

If you’ve ever wondered what ever became of the Safe Freight Act that drew so much support from the BLET and other safety-minded unions, you are not alone. BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative Vince Verna reviewed the timeline of Federal Legislation recently, explaining that the Safe Freight Act was essentially replaced by the House version, H.R. 2, called the Moving Forward Act.

H.R. 2 was a massive \$1.5 trillion Transportation Infrastructure Act that also contained language mandating Two-Person Crews on Freight Trains, regulations limiting Train Length, and provisions to address the ongoing issue of Cross Border Crews from Mexico running into the United States for several miles, thereby taking those miles and that pay away from U.S. crews.

H.R. 2 passed the House in July of 2020 but was stalled in the Senate by then Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. With the inauguration of a new Congress in January, all the bills must be reintroduced, although the work

on them remains to be used as a foundation for new efforts.

Plans are underway to introduce new national legislation in the new Congress, and it is likely to address most of the aforementioned rail issues in a framework built upon the work already done on The Safe Freight Act and, subsequently, H.R. 2. The BLET continues to spearhead work on these issues.

Sources: Multiple, but primarily BLET Vice President/National Legislative Rep. Vince Verna

Jessica Cole lives in Baraboo, Wisconsin. She can be reached at jets1987@gmail.com, or 262-672-9742/



By Becky Schneider,
Asst. National
Legislative
Representative

Transportation Secretary continues to advocate for Passenger Rail

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg continues his high-profile role advocating for passenger rail, appearing before the House Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee on April 15. He defended the Biden Administration's proposed increase for transit and rail in the FY-2022 budget. "We need to position transit as a means of choice for getting around, not only for a commuter who doesn't have an alternative, but simply the best way to get from point A to point B."

Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR) pressed the Secretary on plans for investing in rail outside of the Northeast Corridor, asserting that rail ridership is low outside of the East Coast, a statement which is factually incorrect. According to the Rail Passenger Association (RPA), almost 84% of Amtrak's annual ridership is on state-supported

and long distance trains and three of Amtrak's top five routes are in California; Chicago's Union Station ranks 4th in the nation for ridership and LA's Union Station and Sacramento Valley Station are both in the top 10. All of these rankings happen with minimal federal investment, and if meaningful investment was made in frequencies and additional routes, those numbers would increase.

The Secretary also espoused the economic benefits to the communities that are served and those that would be added, especially rural communities that are underserved by the airline industry.

According to Jim Matthews, President & CEO of the RPA, "... it's not a question of if trains make money, but about who trains make money for. Highways and airports don't make a profit, but we invest in them because they are a necessary precondition of a functioning economy. We've used hundreds of billions to build the highway and airport networks that critics point to as a reason not to build passenger rail networks. It's time to create a meaningful alternative to congested highways, and to airlines that increasingly only serve major metropolitan areas..."

As previously reported at the Secretary's confirmation hearing, he indicated that he wants to bring a more balanced approach to investment, rather than continuing the highway-dominated approach to funding infrastructure. He believes creating a trust fund similar to the Highway Trust Fund will allow for more stability in funding longer term projects across the nation.

Source: RPA Hotline, April 16, 2021

Restoration of Amtrak Long-Distance Routes

Within hours of President Biden signing the American Rescue Plan of 2021, Amtrak announced that it will restore 12 long-

distance routes to daily service between May 24 and June 7. In a statement released by Amtrak President Bill Flynn, "This critical funding will benefit the entire Amtrak network... With this support, we can restore daily long distance service, bring back furloughed employees, and continue our progress on capital projects. We will work closely with Congress and the Administration on the next steps for funding to support Amtrak's long-term growth. Funding options include expanding the Amtrak Network through new corridor routes, that will create thousands of new jobs, reducing our nation's carbon footprint, and helping the economy recover and flourish in the years ahead."

Sources: RPA; Amtrak Press Release

Railroad Retirement Update

From John Bragg, RRB Labor Member: In the March 30, 2021 BLET News Flash, John Bragg provided an update following the signing of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP). Essentially, Congress extended the benefits originally created by the CARES Act, including the extension of the \$600 recovery benefit to September 6 that was due to expire March 14, and extended unemployment benefits an additional 200 days for employees who have otherwise exhausted benefits. The waiver of the 7-day waiting period for unemployment and sickness benefits was extended to September 6, 2021.

In addition, ARP provides that up to \$10,200 in unemployment benefits may be exempt from income tax. This provision is administered by the IRS.

The ARP also provided long overdue money for RRB's administrative budget, including the remaining amount needed for the multi-year IT moderniza-

tion plan which will eventually provide more online services. In addition, money for hiring Field Service and headquarters staff that handle sickness and unemployment applications will improve customer service.

The RRB website has updated the information, as well as FAQs. Most RRB field offices are still closed to the public, but self-service options are still available to help avoid lengthy wait times. Railroaders should set up a myRRB.gov account on the RRB.gov website to help avoid any possible delays.

Source: BLET Newsflash, March 30, 2021, with links

Improved RRB Toll-Free Service

The RRB has implemented changes to their toll-free service improving customer access to staff and services. To address lengthy wait times, callers to their 877-772-5772 number will be able to utilize a virtual hold option allowing them to request a callback when their place in line comes up.

In addition, the RRB will be increasing the number of hours per week, Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., that claims representatives will be available. The automated system will continue to operate 24 hours per day. For more detailed information about what is available on the automated service, please visit RRB.gov/myRRB. You can also send secure messages to your local office by accessing the Field Office Locator on RRB.gov and clicking on the link at the bottom of their servicing office's page.

Source: RRB News Release February 2021; Gary Faley, NARVRE

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



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

Philip J. Sullivan II, Executive Director

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Sunny Summer Greetings from your Editor, Rachel Pharris

Remember your dreams and fight for them. You must know what you want from life. There is just one thing that makes your dream become impossible: the fear of failure.

-PAULO COELHO

We are going to summer conferences! I am thrilled to be attending the Nashville Regional Convention in August. Last year I had plans to attend the convention in Milwaukee, but COVID killed all of our in-person get-together meetings. I am beyond excited to meet my fellow officers in person. We work together almost daily and I have only met one of them in person. I am very much looking forward to collaborating and brainstorming with the rest of the national officers, as well as the local officers and members from across the nation, and the BLET officers and members as well. And I'm hoping there will be a little time to experience the city and culture of Nashville.

Recently, the number of officers in my own local auxiliary has expanded, with new members stepping up. For a while, we had been running on two to three officers covering all of the officer duties. As the new ladies stepped in, I continued to go on auto pilot doing duties I had always covered. I was reminded by a wonderful mentor to slow down and delegate more duties. At the same time, I was reading a wonderful book about turning your talents into miracles. We are all gifted in different ways.

Here are some things to consider: What are you good at? What comes easily to you? How can you use your talents as a gift to your auxiliary?

I have reached out individually to some of our members, tapping into their talents and asking if they could cover some tasks/events we have planned. They were all very receptive and seemed honored to be asked. In the world of technology, we become accustomed to blasting out mass blanket e-mails and sometimes forget the importance of one-on-one conversations.

I encourage each of you to use your talents. Imagine the possibilities if we all pull our talents together to the benefit of our auxiliaries and families. What an amazing team we could be!

"Many hands make light work" -John Heywood

Rachel Pharris can be reached at 1-417-872-9641, rachel-rae@live.com, or by snail mail at 404 South, Willard, Missouri, 65781.



DO YOU GROCERY SHOP FOR YOUR FAMILY?

Did you know a portion of every dollar you spend could be helping the BLET National Auxiliary fund its multiple programs? Grocery stores across the country are donating millions of dollars each year to nonprofit organizations just like ours!

Community Rewards makes fundraising easy by donating to organizations like ours based on the shopping you do every day. Once you link your rewards card to our organization, all you have to do is shop and swipe your Shopper's Card at checkout. Here's how to get started:

1. **Create a digital account:** A digital account is needed to participate in Community Rewards. If you already have a digital account, simply link your Shopper's Card to your account so that all transactions apply toward the organization you choose.
2. **Link your Card to an organization:** Selecting the organization that you wish to support is as simple as updating the Community Rewards selection on your digital account.
 - Sign into your digital account.
 - On the right-hand side, under your name, click on "Account," then scroll down to Community Rewards Program.
 - Enter the name or NPO number of the organization you wish to support.
 - Select the appropriate organization from the list and click "Save."

Your selected organization will also display in the Community Rewards section of your account. If you need to review or revisit your organization, you can always do so under your Account details.

Your organization earns! Any transactions moving forward using the Shopper's Card number associated with your digital account will be applied to the program, at no added cost to you.

Participating stores & NPO codes:

- **Kroger's # 71840** – Organization Name: Brother of Locomotive Engineers-Trainman National
- **Fred Meyer # MJ070** – Organization Name: Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainman Au
- **Ralphs # W1414** – Organization Name: Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainman Aux
- **Food Co # W1414** – Organization Name: Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainman Aux
- **Food 4 Less # W1414** – Organization Name: Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainman Aux
- **Frys # 52958** – Organization Name: BLET Auxiliary Organization
- **Dillons # 16595** – Organization Name: BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER & TRAINING AUX

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 September 2021. Please have your submissions to Rachel on or before August 15, 2021.



BLET Auxiliary

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