



BLET Auxiliary News

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

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Summer 2022

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 and SMART-TD Spouses Protest Outside BNSF Shareholder Meeting

By Rachel Pharris, 1st National Vice-President, BLET Auxiliary

I was already on board to be in Omaha for this protest from the moment I was invited to attend, but after watching the Surface Transportation Board Hearing testimony by the “Big Orange” a new fire was ignited within me. I could not just stand by silently while BNSF stated that its new Hi-Viz attendance policy is “working well for everyone.” I have been receiving e-mails from other BNSF families for weeks now, each with their own unique story about how this new policy is not working well at all for them. We also heard the company say that they value their employees, and we heard them say that they appreciate the workers being there through the pandemic — yet we can’t get a contract agreement! Put all these things together and add in the love that I have for my auxiliary/railroad families and I was all in! I wanted to be there at the Berkshire Hathaway shareholders’ meeting in Omaha on April 28, holding my sign, showing my face, and making my voice heard.

I will admit I was somewhat nervous to make the drive solo from my home in Willard, Missouri, to Omaha. I was pretty sure that Member-at-Large Kelly Ann Pettus was also nervous to fly alone from San Antonio, leaving her baby girl for the first time. Another spouse, Erin Stephens-Marner, and her friend Sarah Jackson, had to also be nervous as they drove in from Colorado through tornados. But once we all arrived in Omaha and connected with one another, our adrenaline was pumping and our energy was high. We had so much support there from all around the country.

Saturday morning was an early start. There were protesters there as early as 4 a.m. Kelly, Erin, Sarah, and I joined the BLET members in attendance at a conference room to collect posters and informational pamphlets that would be handed



BLET Auxiliary 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris and BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce

out to stockholders passing through our area. We all walked together to the 19,000-seat CHI Health Center Omaha arena and convention center. As we approached, we could see how truly enormous this venue is... a huge building, surrounded by concrete barricades and security. There were a few other groups of protestors in attendance, but we were undoubtedly the largest and most enthusiastic group. We stayed until all the stockholders were inside, then headed back to the hotel for a warm-up, lunch, and interviews. A videographer from More Perfect Union, a progressive non-profit news media organization that specializes in video reporting about the American Labor Movement, was with us all day.

Around 11:30 a.m., we headed back over to the arena to be in place for the attendees as they left the arena for the scheduled

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From the President

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."

John Wooden

It's that wonderful time of year again when the BLET Auxiliary has the honor of announcing its 2022 scholarship winners. We are delighted to be able to continue awarding these scholarships to the children of railroaders. Whether your child chooses to go to a traditional college or a trade school, we encourage you to have them apply on the first of each year.

In addition, to our scholarships of \$1000 each, we teamed up with LECMPA years ago, and with a combined membership in both organizations, your student can apply for one of two \$2500 scholarships funded by the LECMPA... another reason why membership has its benefits. If you are fortunate enough to have a local auxiliary in your area, check in with them to see if they offer a local scholarship. On page 5 you will see the winners for Amarillo, Texas, and Flat Rock, Nebraska... another reason why having a local auxiliary in your area is beneficial.

The Auxiliary has been busy since 2022 rolled in on us. Many invitations have come in for us to attend events, interviews, and podcasts. We have attempted to attend as many as possible. In this issue, you will find stories from Rachel Pharris, our 1st Vice President, who recently attended the Missouri State Legislative Board Convention at Lake of the Ozarks. She also participated in the protest of BNSF's "Hi-Viz" attendance points program, alongside our union family and BLET National Officers, at the Berkshire Hathaway stockholders meeting, hosted by Warren Buffett in Omaha, Nebraska. At that event, the Auxiliary teamed up with "More Perfect Union," a progressive non-profit news media organization. They produced an excellent five-minute video recapping the events of that day and the impact of the new points system, as well as contract negotiations. I encourage everyone to visit our Facebook page where you can find the video. I think you will find it a great representation of the fight with the carriers that is currently ongoing.

Jessica Cole, our 2nd Vice President and National Legislative Representative, attended the California State Legislative Board Convention in San Diego. She enjoyed the opportunity to listen and learn from the great lineup of well-versed speakers, as well as the opportunity to address the delegates about the

Auxiliary. We very much appreciate the generous donation by Local Chairman Damon Allen and Division 662 in Los Angeles, as well as the Orca ice chest, donated to the Auxiliary by California State Chairman Ryan Snow and the Bank of Labor to be used as a raffle item for the Auxiliary. Raffle tickets for the ice chest were sold at the legislative meeting and it was then raffled off at the Western Regional Meeting held June 13-17 in Denver, Colorado.

As you know, this year is a National Convention year, and our national officers and delegates will be making our way to Las Vegas in October to update our bylaws, elect new officers for the coming four years, share ideas, and build our bonds of sisterhood and solidarity. In addition, the Auxiliary will celebrate its 135th year as an organization formed to help and assist the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Our existence over all these years has been a testament to the strength and determination of railroad spouses and families. We have survived despite the obstacles thrown at us, and we will continue to grow through the support of our union and the tenacity of our membership.

As the union continues to progress in its fight for a new contract, I urge you to begin reaching out to your Senators and House Representatives to ask them to voice their support for a labor-friendly PEB and, if necessary, labor-friendly legislation to bring this round of bargaining to a successful conclusion. The time to make our collective voices heard is now! A link on the home page of the Auxiliary website, www.bletauxiliary.net, can provide you with your representative's information based on your zip code. Please act now. Our future depends on a successful contract!

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Find us on the web at www.bletauxiliary.net
Also...

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

BNSF SPOUSES & FAMILIES PROTEST BNSF HY-VIZ ATTENDANCE POLICY IN OMAHA

Continued from front cover . . .

lunch break. The crowd seemed more relaxed during the lunch break, and we had many people stop and ask about our signs. They wanted to know what it is that we want from the company, what we wanted from Warren Buffet, and how things could be better for our families. That made the drive and all the effort worth it. That is what we wanted; we wanted to be seen. We want to be heard. We want to maintain a better lifestyle for our railroad workers and their families.

While the weather was less than ideal (temps in the 50s and rain), the energy was high. I felt as if we could have been out in that weather from dusk to dawn, and we were so focused that I don't think it would have bothered us. We were there to make it known to the company and its shareholders, lawmakers, and the public at large that BNSF's new Hi-Viz Attendance policy implemented in February of this year is an inhumane system that makes it impossible for workers to take any unexpected time off, as well as the fact that the crews are being thinned out and scheduling has become an issue. In a televised interview, Kelly Pettus stated, "This has definitely impacted our family, far more than I expected it to."

I encourage you all to get involved. While it's not really feasible for everyone to attend a protest, it is possible for everyone to make a call to their senator or to send a letter to their representatives. If two of the biggest railroad unions (BLET and SMART-TD) and their auxiliaries can come together for a cause, we can do anything.

I encourage you to view all pictures and videos from the trip by visiting "Informational Protest-Omaha, NE, 2022 on Facebook. I encourage you to view our video on the BLET National Auxiliary page, as well as the More Perfect Union page.

PHOTOS AT RIGHT:

Top: BLET Auxiliary National 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris and SMART-TD Auxiliary President Kathryn Seegmiller held up signs outside the convention center.

Bottom: Wearing sweatshirts displaying the words "Come Together Right Now" above a raised fist unity symbol inside a heart, BLET Auxiliary National 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris and Member-at-Large Kelly Pettus held up the BLET logo.



Twin Ports Auxiliary Hosts Informational Seminar

By Rose Surchik, President, Twin Ports Auxiliary

On May 4, 2022, Twin Ports Auxiliary No. 6388 joined forces with the law firm of Hunegs, LeNeave, & Kvas, for a Q&A session at Boomtown restaurant in Duluth Minnesota. FELA Attorneys Joe Dolan, Thomas Fuller, and Isabel Johnson gave a wonderful presentation on what do – as well as what not to do – if a railroad employee gets hurt while on duty. The attorneys distributed folders of important information to have readily available in the event of an emergency situation,

as well contact information. We had a great turnout, with 50 couples in attendance. The law firm sponsored a dinner in conjunction with their presentation.

Also included in the evening was a presentation about the importance of forming a local auxiliary and the many ways local auxiliaries provide support for their members, for railroad families in their area, and for their communities. Twin Ports Auxiliary gained three new members. As always, a huge shout-out to Joe Dolan for all he does for our BLET members and the Auxiliary!

Nebraska Auxiliary No. 622 Re-formed, Recharged, and Rejuvenated!

By Natalie Miller, President, Auxiliary No. 622, Alliance, Nebraska

When the months of what we thought was a rumored and laughable attendance policy (they couldn't **possibly** be seriously doing this, could they?!) dwindled to the anxiety-riddled weeks of dread as the bleak reality that was the impending Hi-Viz Policy set in (**they are really seriously doing this**, aren't they?!) I, like many spouses of BLET brothers and sisters, struggled with the helplessness of not knowing how or what to do to help.

Words of support and attempts at posting my complaints on social media seemed hollow and meaningless and, let's face it, a little scary, due to the gag orders and more threats of mistreatment from the company. Trying to drum up and rally support from family, friends, and community was met with sympathy, yes, but a lack of desire for anything more than that, and an abundance of excuses for the lack of actual and actionable support. So, I came into the new year feeling a little lost and more alone and isolated than ever from the "normal reality" of the world because of the extremely oppressive nature of the "railroad reality" that was our world.

Then, one afternoon in January, I saw a post made by our National BLET Auxiliary President Kathleen Bisbikis that **perfectly** explained what I had been feeling, followed by a call to action and steps we could follow to form local auxiliaries. It was then that I knew exactly what I needed to do to help – I needed to reactivate our local BLET Auxiliary that had been defunct and inactive for the past seven years. And, for the first time in the months of stressing over this inhumane policy and the helpless feeling it left me with, I felt a bit of hope that I would not be facing it alone. Later that evening, I posted the "I think it is time to re-form and bring back the BLET Local Auxiliary" post, and, with fingers crossed, waited for a response from anyone in our area who might want to join in this fight with me.

It didn't take long before those responses came to me from past members and other spouses who were interested. After a few membership drives and informational meetings, BLET Auxiliary No. 622 was reorganized under the charter established in 2012. The newly re-established charter members held their Pinning and Obligation Ceremony on Sunday, May 15, with the members accepting their pins and taking the oath of obligation, and then the swearing in of officers, all led by National President Kathleen Bisbikis via FaceTime. The celebration concluded with a party honoring the members and their families with hors d'oeuvres, refreshments, and a special BLET Auxiliary logo cake and railroad locomotive cupcakes baked and hand-decorated by our newly pinned sister, Erin Forrester.

With more than 300 active brothers and sisters in BLET Division 622, all of whom are scattered in towns and communities that span a 90-120-mile radius from our terminal hub in Alliance, Nebraska, this local president is aware that I have a **very** long way to go to build an auxiliary that better represents our local union membership. However, I can tell you with certainty, that while this group of ladies may be small, we are mighty! As I spoke with each of them at the party, they each shared great ideas on how we can reach out to grow our membership, as well as various ways we can be there to support each other in our different communities with carpooling, babysitting, housekeeping, and cooking for new moms and families with a recent loss or with special needs, etc.

The spouses in Nebraska are excited to get our charter not just up and running, but growing, thriving, and leading the charge to fight for, and on behalf of, the members of BLET Division 622 and **all** of our brothers and sisters across the national ranks. We join with you to fight for our bright future. We **are** better and stronger together. And, with fierce ladies like these, and those of you who are reading this right now, we don't **ever** have to feel like we are fighting alone.



Front row, left to right: Treasurer Katie Spahn, Vice President Jennie Burri, Secretary Ashley Weingart, and President Natalie Miller. Back row: Legislative Representative Tia Young; Andrea Aratani Graham, Rebecca Campbell Schnell, Erin Forrester and Chaplain Emily Bullock. Not pictured Brandi Keane.



Flatrock Auxiliary Scholarship Award

By Katryna Hughes, Flatrock Auxiliary No. 8

Flatrock Auxiliary No. 8, North Platte, Nebraska, is proud to announce Katelyn Bowers as the recipient of our 2022 local scholarship in the amount of \$1,000. Katelyn graduated from North Platte High School this May while holding a 4.0 average and being involved in Cheer, National Honor Society, Speech, and Debate, as well as Skills USA. She will be continuing her education at Hastings College, in Hastings, Nebraska, pursuing a double major in Psychology and Sociology, and a minor in Business Management and Coaching. She then plans to transfer to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, to obtain her degree in Law and to become a juvenile attorney.

Katelyn is the daughter of Darreld & Melissa Bowers. Darreld is a member of BLET Division 388 in North Platte, and both Darreld and Melissa are members of Flatrock Auxiliary No. 8. Their entire family plays a very active role in our local auxiliary.

Congratulations Katie! We can't wait to watch you follow your dreams and crush your goals!



Amarillo Auxiliary Scholarship Award

By Victoria Delahay, Amarillo Family Auxiliary

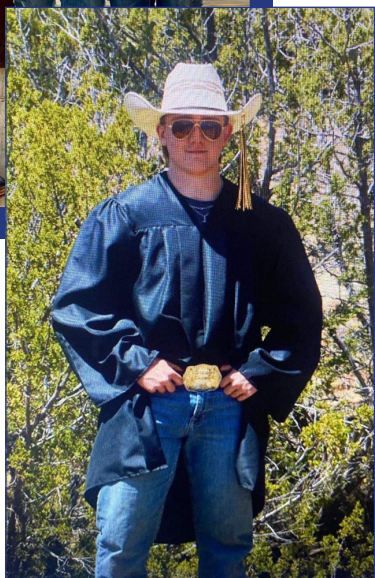
On Thursday, May 19, 2022, members and their spouses of the Yellow City Bomb Squad Auxiliary in Amarillo, Texas, came together to honor and celebrate our high school senior, Hayden Labrier. He is graduating from Bushland High School and will be attending Texas Tech in the fall, majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

Hayden is the son of Gary and Michelle Labrier. This night was also very special as we were able to award Hayden our very first auxiliary scholarship in the amount of \$500.00. When our auxiliary came together over two years ago, one of our goals was to provide a scholarship on the local level, and we did it!

Congratulations Hayden! We are all so proud of you and wish you the very best at Texas Tech.

Congratulations to all of our High School Graduates!

Have a great summer Y'all.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



By Jessica
Cole, National
Legislative
Representative

National Surface Transportation Board Holds PSR Hearings

Unhappy shippers, supply chain disruptions, goods that don't move for days or weeks, bare shelves for consumers, and disgruntled railroad employees are the direct and negative effects of Precision Scheduled Railroading. The crescendo of complaints finally won an ear with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) under Chairman Martin Oberman, who was appointed by President Biden. Oberman is attempting to address the supply chain problem that has caused shippers major frustration in sending and receiving products moved by rail. The mission of the STB is to help ensure that railroads adhere to their common carrier obligations required in the law.

For two days late in April, the Board heard from shippers, labor, and rail carriers themselves regarding the mounting inefficiency and unreliability of shipping by rail, all while these carriers continue to enjoy record profits. BLET Vice President Mark Wallace proudly and efficiently made our voice heard during the hearing. The BLET is faced with juggling many events that are happening all at once. BLET National President Dennis Pierce traveled to the Ohio State Legislative Board Meeting, the California State Legislative Board Meeting, and the HI-VIZ protest in Omaha, all within a timespan of about 48 hours, to meet with BLET members, local and state officers, and shareholders to hear their messages and spread the word that our members need a collective bargaining agreement that respects their hard work through the pandemic and before.

President Pierce mentioned in San Diego that, oddly, this issue is making allies out of rail shippers that traditionally oppose organized labor ideals. Together, shippers and labor worked to expose the growing cavalier incompetence and lack of accountability of the carriers to move shipments efficiently. Historically, labor and shippers have not always had a common cause. However, this current situation is so severe that shippers and labor are finding themselves on the same side of the table in an attempt to fix this broken system.

Additionally, the SMART-TD Union and BLET find themselves now working together more than ever on common causes such as this one.

A synopsis on the first day of testimony by Vice President Wallace is available at www.ble-t.org and in part reports as follows:

During his testimony, Vice President Wallace said that customer service is suffering, the nation's supply chain is getting worse by the day, and train crew employees are resigning at unprecedented levels due to the implementation of the so-called Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) business model and draconian attendance policies.

"There's a culture of profits over safety as railroads have become controlled by hedge fund speculators," Vice President Wallace said. "It's the business model that's impacting service."

Vice President Wallace explained how 25,000 transportation and engine service employee jobs have been eliminated in recent years due to the implementation of PSR. As a result of these furloughs, the remaining workforce has been forced to work past the point of fatigue to pick up the slack. Railroads are forcing

employees to be on call 24/7 through the implementation of draconian attendance policies. The result has been that over 1,000 train service employees have resigned in recent months, including some employees with 20 years of service — which is almost unheard of in the rail industry. Vice President Wallace also testified how railroads refuse to add employees to fill out pools and extra boards, which adds to fatigue by forcing fewer employees to work more and longer hours.

While crew shortages and mismanagement of crews are a problem with PSR, long trains may be a bigger problem, Vice President Wallace testified. He said long trains favored by the PSR operating model, which can be three miles long, cause major delays, reduce velocity, congest networks, and cause accidents. He was also critical of what he described as self-inflicted delays, in which train speeds are limited to half the allowable track speed (for example, 30 mph in a 60 mph zone) in an effort to use fewer locomotives for fuel conservation initiatives.

Regarding the continued mismanagement of the rail workforce, Vice President Wallace said train crews are often required to spend 20-30 hours at an away-from-home terminal prior to being called for a trip back home, which increases fatigue and destroys an employee's quality of life. Train lineups, which in theory tell workers when they can expect to go to work, are inaccurate and unreliable, which causes tremendous amounts of frustration and anger among the union's membership.

In a question-and-answer session with STB Chairman Martin Oberman, Vice President Wallace described ways in which the industry could improve its recovery efforts, better service its customers, and better utilize

train crews. Vice President Wallace suggested railroads would be more fluid if they eliminated throttle restrictions and reduced train lengths to no more than 8,000-8,500 feet. The long trains block the system and cause the railroads to burn through more train crews prior to getting shipments to their destination.

Additional testimony on behalf of organized labor came from: Greg Regan, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO; Jeremy Ferguson, President of the SMART Transportation Division; and SMART-TD members Matthew Brukart, Steven Groat, and Chris Bond.

In announcing the hearing, Board Chairman Oberman said: "During my time on the Board, I have raised concerns about the primacy Class I railroads have placed on lowering their operating ratios and satisfying their shareholders even at the cost of their customers. Part of that strategy has involved cutting their workforce to the bare bones in order to reduce costs. Over the last six years, the Class I's collectively have reduced its workforce by 29%—that is about 45,000 employees cut from the payrolls. In my view, all of this has directly contributed to where we are today—rail users experiencing serious deteriorations in rail service because, on too many parts of their networks, the railroads simply do not have a sufficient number of employees."

Vice President Wallace said that the Railway Labor Act (RLA) was implemented nearly 100 years ago. Part of the goal of the RLA was to limit labor strikes because they would interrupt the nation's supply chain. But, he pointed out that PSR has also had a major negative impact on interstate commerce. He suggested that change was necessary and urged the STB to work with

Congress to put together a plan to better regulate the industry and protect the nation's economy.

Vice President Wallace concluded by saying that the National Division had collected letters from BLET members throughout the United States that it would submit to STB for the record, which would further document the problems with PSR and describe how harsh railroad attendance policies have negatively impacted their personal and professional lives.

Also in attendance at the April 26 hearing to represent BLET were: National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen Bruno; and Assistant to the National President and Director of Research John Fink.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce thanked Vice President Wallace for testifying, stating, "It has been our position all along that PSR was nothing more than a Wall Street cash grab, and that shippers and workers have been left holding the bag. I thank Vice President Wallace for the excellent job he did on behalf of BLET members. I hope that this hearing will motivate the STB, along with Congress and the White House, to make meaningful improvements to our nation's railroad industry."

An update on Day 2 of the testimony is currently in the works and will surely be posted before this report even makes it to print. The BLET posts extremely timely and efficient updates on its news page, often within a day or two of when an event happens, so check back often to keep up with the latest happenings.

*Sources: www.ble-t.org
<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/columns/cash-market-moves/article/2022/05/02/stb-rail-service-hearing-exposes>*

Progressive Farmer <https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/columns/cash-market-moves/article/2022/05/02/stb-rail-service-hearing-exposes>

Train Length Legislation or Regulation

BLET National Legislative Representative Vince Verna reported at the San Diego meeting that train length legislation is being worked on in many states and from many different angles. It is sometimes more palatable to more lawmakers when presented as a rule or law against blocking an excessive number of crossings for an excessive length of time, blocking first responders during emergencies, etc.

Verna described how challenging it is to perform the required safety inspections on these very long trains (VLTs) that are blocking our towns' crossings. He also described that excessively long trains are often very difficult to get in and out of ports and therefore delay shipments of goods to warehouses, even further exhausting our nation's supply chain.

Additionally, there are well documented communication and reliability problems on very long trains. Instances of crews being told to shut faulty PTC systems off and continue without it are excessively high and climbing. Problems with all PTC subsystems, including instances where crews are instructed to disable or "cut-out" PTC are now required to be documented to FRA by railroads every quarter. This was required in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Additionally, President Pierce shared a great "you can't make this stuff up" anecdote about long trains and PSR creating a recent nightmare in Chicago when three separate long trains, all carrying stacked containers, died under hours-of-service rules on the same stretch of track. The rearmost train was more than 10,000 feet long, loaded with containers. For reasons that are not clear, management decided that the rearmost train needed to be moved first rather than having the entire lineup move on in the designated direction with new crews. The new crew on the rearmost train was ordered to back up

their 10,000-foot-long container train SEVEN miles, and of course there is no training for that!

Testimony pertinent to train length issues was also given in the recent Surface Transportation Board hearings. Particularly eloquent are the words of SMART TD Local Chairperson Steve Groat, a Union Pacific Engineer, who mentioned the slower velocity caused by inadequate track maintenance, derailments, and mechanical failures caused, in part, by long trains:

"Since the increase in train lengths, I've noticed more hard wear," he said — broken cars split in half, drawbars and knuckles being left on the ground. These train lengths increase the in-train forces that stresses the components that don't normally fail."

Travel times for trains also have increased and locomotive use has not been efficient, Groat told the board.

"This is like hooking up a 28-foot camper to a Toyota Prius and trying to drive to Colorado," he said. "At what time do you expect the engine to fail or a component of the locomotive to fail?"

*Sources: California Quadrennial Meeting 2022, BLET LR Vince Verna and President Dennis Pierce
Smart-union.org, the SMART-TD website
<https://smart-union.org/td-president-ferguson-three-member-testify-before-stb/>*

The Rail Labor Act and its Implications for Contract Negotiations

President Pierce spoke at length at the San Diego meeting regarding the stalemate in current contract negotiations for the BLET. He is convinced that the carriers are offering skimpy pay increases and requesting reduction in health benefits precisely because the union refuses to negotiate on crew size. The BLET stands by the conductors and the added measure of safety we all know they provide. BLET is steadfast

in its position to not offer the exchange of a conductor and safety for a better contract for engineers.

The Rail Labor Act provides a stringent framework for how a new contract is to be negotiated and both Labor and the Carriers are bound by this framework. While the framework sometimes gives the advantage to the Carriers, it also provides many important protections to Labor that other crafts are not privileged to have, such as terms that can't be amended later if the Carrier wishes to change them, or the expiration of a contract during negotiations.

Many rail labor disputes that may seem strike-worthy cannot go to a strike without first going through a lengthy process of arbitration, mediation, and the court system. If the employees were to strike without letting the process play out, it would be a jailable offense under Federal Law.

The intent of the Rail Labor Act was to halt railway strikes that were routinely crippling a nation dependent on timely shipment of supplies in the early 1900s. At the same time, it also sought to provide a blanket of protections to one of the most abused and misused workers in history, the American Rail Worker. Although it is far from a perfect system, it succeeds in providing our brothers and Sisters with a blanket of contract stability and protection that most other crafts do not enjoy. It would be a very risky thing for either the Carriers or Labor to try to get the Rail Labor Act changed or amended as there is so much to be lost by either side depending on the whims of whatever Congress might consider it.

Many of the Act's provisions for the handling of disputes center around the designation of whether the issue at hand is a "minor" or "major" issue, as the Act provides that minor issues are handled differently from major issues.

The designation of minor versus major is, of course, a point of

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BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Awards for School Year 2022-2023

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



NATALIE KING-SHAW

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



SAMANTHA KING-SHAW

Samantha will be pursuing her PhD in Global Gender Studies at the University of New York in Buffalo, New York. Her father, James Forrest King-Shaw, works for Union Pacific Railroad and 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, a four-year recipient of the Leona A. Louis Scholarship, will be attending the University of San Francisco as a Senior, majoring in Global Studies. 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..



RECIPIENTS OF \$1000 AUXILIARY 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.



CAMBRYANA BACKUS

Cambryana will be attending West Texas A&M University as a Sophomore. 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 continuing his studies at 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.



KATELYN BOWERS

Katelyn will be attending Hastings College, in Hastings, Nebraska, as a Freshman. Her father, Darreld Hastings works for Union Pacific Railroad and is a member of BLET Division 388 in North Platte, Nebraska. Darreld and Melissa Hastings are both members of Flatrock Auxiliary No. 8.



AYDEN DESPAIN

Ayden will be attending Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona, as a Freshman. His father, Preston DeSpain works for BNSF and is a member of BLET Division 134 in Winslow, Arizona. His mother Lynnis DeSpain is an auxiliary member-at-large.



Missouri State Legislative Board Meeting

May 15-17, Lake of the Ozarks

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

I had the honor of being invited to the Missouri State Legislative Board Quadrennial Convention at Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, by Brother Calvin Groose, our Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman. The meetings kicked off on Sunday, May 15, with a pizza mixer for all in attendance. It was a casual setting where I had the opportunity to meet some new BLET members and mingle with their spouses, as well as other guests who were in attendance. It was a great opportunity for me to tell many wives about the Auxiliary, some who were members and some who were not.

Monday morning began with presentations from a great lineup of guest speakers, beginning with BLET National President Dennis Pierce, who spoke on contract negotiations with the Class 1 Railroads. Other speakers included Shane Hubbard, Indiana State Legislative Board Chairman and Chairman of the BLET's National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen; Jake Hummel, President of the Missouri AFL-CIO; Vince Verna, BLET National Vice President and Legislative Representative, Brendan Sullivan, BLET National Director of Political Affairs, Jesse Taylor, International President of BRCF, and Cornerstone Benefits Managements Representative Pete Gilbertson.

I learned much from these presentations about the workings of the BLET National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., and the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC), as well as some of the job protection, disability, and other benefits available to BLET members to protect them and their families in the event of an unexpected loss of income.

I was also given the opportunity to make a presentation at the meeting. I shared about what has been going on with our ever-growing Auxiliary and gave an update on the events we have attended recently, including the protest in Omaha. I also encouraged the BLET members in attendance to join the Auxiliary, and have their spouses join as well.

The second portion of the meeting consisted of a closed session for the members of the Missouri State Legislative Board to discuss their business and hold elections for their board. Congratulations to Calvin Groose on being re-elected for a second term in his position as Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman.

PHOTOS AT RIGHT:

Top: BLET Auxiliary National 1st Vice President Rachel Pharris.

Middle: Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Groose, BLET Auxiliary 1st VP Rachel Pharris, and BLET National President Dennis Pierce.

Bottom: BLET National President Dennis Pierce, Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Groose, and BLET National Vice President and National Legislative Representative Vince Verna.



California State Legislative Board Meeting, April 26-28, 2022

By Jessica Cole, National 2nd Vice President and National Legislative Rep., BLET Auxiliary

I was honored to attend the 9th Quadrennial Convention of the California State Legislative Board in San Diego. It helped to reconnect the Auxiliary with the BLET after two years of mostly Zoom meetings.

Congratulations to Ryan Snow on winning re-election to a third term as California State Legislative Board Chairman. He is also to be commended on running an efficient and extremely relevant meeting while still maintaining a relaxed atmosphere. He truly made the gathering feel like a family affair and also got a lot of good business and information dissemination accomplished.

Chairman Snow's opening statements were compelling and inspiring, hitting on a number of general themes that would resonate throughout the meeting. He emphasized the importance of stomping out tribalism within our Union Family, reminding us of the old saying that "you are either on the table or at the table," and all of us should always be "at the table." Communication within the ranks is the key to understanding others' perspectives so that the Union does not become divided by hearsay and misunderstandings. Chairman Snow also emphasized the necessity of "showing up" every day to do your best on behalf of the members. He shared about an instance where he had turned in repeated violations to OSHA that were never acted upon, but in the end, he turned one more in, and it resulted in a \$24,000 fine and a violation notice.

Cornerstone Benefits Management, which handles Disability, Accident, and Life Insurance for BLET members, sponsored the event. To help open the meeting, Cornerstone's president, Andrew Haley, gave a great overview of the many services they offer.

BLET President Dennis Pierce spoke and was as charismatic and well-versed in his subjects as ever. His presentation focused largely on the Safety Transportation Board's hearing on Precision Scheduled Railroading and the myriad of supply chain issues and safety issues it creates. Additionally, President Pierce went into great detail about the current contract negotiations and the impact and implications of the Rail Labor Act, which is the framework under which all disputes between labor and the carriers must be heard.

BLET National Legislative Representative Vince Verna gave a good update on all that's going on in Washington D.C. regarding legislation that impacts rail labor. Eric Gabaldon, Director of Regulatory Affairs, and Brendon Sullivan, Director of Political Affairs, gave overviews of their duties and their progress.

The agenda included a number of other engaging speakers who were very well-versed in their particular areas. These people shared



Jessica Cole and Dennis Pierce with the mobile billboard that is part of the union's outreach campaign demanding that railroads invest in train crews and safety.

the minute details they work with and consider every day in their individual fields of expertise. Such micro-perspectives can feel like tangents to the big picture of the BLET's mission to promote safety and better working conditions, but all these tangents are relevant and help make the ultimate mission's path clearer and more effective.

I found that all of the speakers at the meeting were well prepared and shared valuable information, much of which will be included in my Legislative Update starting on Page 6 of this issue.

I spoke on behalf of the Auxiliary and the many facets of its current work, from legislative efforts, to scholarship administration, to in-person protesting in Omaha. I also mentioned the new local auxiliaries in formation and put a particular request out to try to help the new Fresno auxiliary find a few more signatures.

Chairman Snow was able to get a large deluxe drink cooler valued at approximately \$250 donated by the Bank of Labor as an item for the Auxiliary to raffle as a fundraiser. We sold \$525 in tickets just at the California meeting and the plan is that we will continue selling tickets at \$5 apiece through the Regional Meeting in Denver, where a winner will be drawn.

In addition to all of the money raised through ticket sales, Local Chairman Damon Allen and Division 662 in Los Angeles donated an additional \$200. Overall, it was a very good meeting for the Auxiliary and we are very grateful for these generous donations.

Again, thank you Chairman Snow, for inviting me to attend, for creating a most informative and constructive meeting, and for going above and beyond the call of duty by arranging the donation and the raffle for the Auxiliary.

Tidbits from National Secretary Lawana Poss

The National Convention is in Las Vegas, Nevada, this October 10-13. Delegates, I will be sending packets to you and you must have this information with you at the Convention in October!

Any resolutions (proposed changes to the Bylaws) should be sent to me on the completed form. Resolutions will be read and voted on at the National Convention. If you do not have a copy of this form, send me a text or e-mail and I will send you a copy to complete and submit for consideration at the convention.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Erin McConnell, Mary Forrester, Stephanie Daggett, Isabel Johnson, Nicholas Moder, Julia Moder, Dawn Comeau, Lynn Drangstveit, Linda Washam, Jasmine Lucansky, Rebecca Pichette, Megan Lundy, Stephanie Jones, Rebecca Martinez, Roxie Vail, Melanie Pumphery, and Michael Walker.

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE

Dues are now past due! Please make sure to send your dues to me and that all of your information in correct so that you will continue to receive your newsletter and remain eligible for Auxiliary programs. **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 at www.bletauxiliary.net.

CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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 contact me for applications! Please check to see if someone in your auxiliary may be eligible and encourage them to apply. Members-at-large are eligible also!

OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHIES

Bettye Dollar, former President of Emily Denny Auxiliary 189 in Birmingham, Alabama, passed away on March 26, 2022, at the age of 90. Bettye served as Chairperson for the Auxiliary at the Southeastern Regional Meetings for many years. She also served as International Treasurer of the Grand International Auxiliary from 1996 – 2006.

Tim Price, former Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman and a champion for the BLET Auxiliary, passed away on May 26, 2022, at the age of 53, after a battle with cancer. Tim will truly be missed by his wife, Member-at-large Tetiana Ruggles-Price, and daughter Cami Price, a multi-year recipient of the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship, as well as all of his BLET and Auxiliary Family.

Natalie Miller, the president of Auxiliary 622 in Alliance, Nebraska, lost her mother-in-law, Barbara Saum, who passed away April 29, 2022.

Paul Wingo, Jr., retired BLET Vice President, passed away on June 6, 2022, at the age of 78. He is survived by his wife Linda, two daughters, and two sons. Paul was a great supporter of the Auxiliary and Linda was a long-time member.

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

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 issues of the newsletter are available to view on our website, www.bletauxiliary.net.



Lawana Poss can be reached at 770-497-8898, or Lwpp2007@bellsouth.net

"It's not the load that weighs you down, it's how you carry it."

— C.S. Lewis

Legislative Update

Continued from Page 7

debate in and of itself between the Carriers and Labor, and often winds up in court. Precedent says that most disputes are ruled “minor” by the courts. It is often risky for Labor to take a case to court over its designation because they will almost surely lose if a similar topic has already been ruled upon. Challenging precedent in the courts can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Our national officers and legal counsel must weigh every possible option and outcome when challenging these rulings.

Remember, losing the “major” vs. “minor” question in court does not mean the case itself is lost. It simply means it must go to the National Railroad Adjustment Board for arbitration. There are several historical scenarios where labor has lost in court when seeking a “major” vs. “minor” designation but then go on to win on the underlying merits of a complaint in arbitration.

As a recent example, a court ruled that the dispute over BNSF’s onerous Hi Viz attendance policy did not meet the criteria for a “major” dispute. However, as a “minor” dispute, it will still be heard through arbitration. In the meantime, employees must continue to go to work as usual until the dispute is heard and decided. **Sources:** *President Dennis Pierce speaking at the 2022 California State Quadrennial meeting, and www.ble-t.org*

The Rail Labor Act and Contracts

BLET National President Dennis Pierce spoke in detail about the BLET contract negotiations during the California State Legislative Board’s Quadrennial Meeting.

Carriers are offering very minimal wage increases that do not keep up with inflation and the cost of living, and they are proposing a reduction in health care benefits. At the same time, they are reporting record profits, and they have

made those profits on the backs of labor that has doggedly performed incredible service as essential workers in the pandemic. President Pierce stated that he is certain the carriers are being so unreasonable because they want to force the Union’s hand to negotiate on crew size, thus putting the conductors up for elimination. President Pierce says the BLET absolutely will not put conductors’ jobs on the table as negotiable items.

Source: *BLET National President Dennis Pierce*

What happens if the current negotiations remain deadlocked?

Wikipedia, while not a gold standard source, offers an accurate synopsis of the act, explaining exactly how the Rail Labor Act will be applied and why there will be no strike until due process of the Rail Labor Act has been completed. Because it is accurate and comprehensive, I share it here:

Collective Bargaining Agreements Under the RLA:

Contracts remain in force until changed. Either party seeking to amend existing Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) must provide 30-day written notice as to desired changes (Section 6 RLA). There is no time limit by which contracts must be negotiated to avoid a work stoppage. Under Section 6 of the act either side may propose changes to an existing collective bargaining agreement, but agreements (for purposes of stability and labor peace) generally contain agreed-upon moratorium clauses that provide no change may be demanded on specified subjects for a prescribed period of time.

Once Section 6 notices proposing changes to an existing agreement have been served, the parties must maintain the status quo (no strikes or lockouts or promulgation of changes) until all procedures of the RLA have been fully exhausted.

For major disputes over wages, benefit,s and working condi-

tions, the RLA provides for a three-member National Mediation Board (NMB), appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, with the power to mediate any dispute between carriers and their employees at the request of either party or upon the board’s own motion.

There is no time limit on the mediation procedure. The NMB controls the schedule of talks and only the NMB may release the parties from mediation.

If the NMB is unable to bring about an amicable settlement of the controversy through mediation, the board is required to use its influence to induce the parties voluntarily to submit to binding arbitration. The law is specific in that arbitration is voluntary and not compulsory.

If both sides voluntarily agree to binding arbitration, an Arbitration Board of up to six members is to be established. Carriers and labor each select an equal number of arbitrators, who then select the additional member or members.

Presidential Emergency Board: *If either labor or management decline voluntary arbitration, and if in the opinion of the NMB the continuance of the controversy threatens substantially to interrupt interstate commerce in any section of the nation, the NMB is required to notify the President of the United States, who may, at his discretion, create a fact-finding Presidential Emergency Board. The parties must maintain the status quo (no strikes or lockouts) for 30 days. If the President chooses not to appoint an emergency board, strikes or lockouts may occur after the 30-day cooling-off period.*

Emergency boards are comprised of neutral members whose job is to make an investigation and submit to the President, within 30 days of its creation, a fact-finding report with non-binding recommendations for procedures or terms on which a dispute might be

settled. During this period, the parties must maintain the status quo (a second 30-day cooling-off period).

Upon submission of the PEB report, the parties are required to maintain the status quo for an additional, or third 30-day cooling-off period (they may mutually agree to extend the period of status quo). The non-binding recommendations of the PEB are expected to carry the weight of public opinion and induce a voluntary agreement among the parties.

At this point, the RLA has run its course. If no agreement has been reached, either side becomes free to act in its own economic interests -- a work stoppage (or strike) by labor, a lockout by management, or unilateral implementation of management proposals (that generally would force a work stoppage).

However, Congress frequently imposes its own settlement. Such congressional action is not part of the RLA. The constitutional authority for Congress to impose its own settlements is found in Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution’s commerce clause.” —Wikipedia

Sources: *Wikipedia, BLET President Dennis Pierce, http://www.pennfedbmwe.org/Docs/reference/RLA_Simplified.html?fbclid=IwAR16lL_YsC-ciYERJ2OICR7QsJREI9c_t1jbwCw6RowNHKYrwIN-bJBg44QA*

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**

On Mother’s Day, May 8, 2022, the BLET celebrated its 159th anniversary and continued its distinction as the oldest labor

union in the North America. The union was originally founded as the Brotherhood of the Foot-board but changed its name a year later to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Nineteen years ago, following the merger with the Teamsters, the name changed once again to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

As reported by John Bentley, "locomotive engineers suffered abominable working conditions," including a 24-hour workday. Railroad robber barons were far more interested in shareholder dividends than the workers who made those dividends possible. For instance, one bloody and violent strike was prompted by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's declaration of a stock dividend in the morning and a pay cut for workers in the afternoon.

Fortunately, strides have been made from the 1870s to ensure the health and safety of railroaders. The fight for health, safety, and wages are all reasons behind the formation of the BLET and why it exists today. We still need our union to fight the carriers' re-emerging robber baron ways, and we still need our spouses and families to continue to be a part of that fight just as they were in the 1870s. One spouse in the great uprising of 1877 was quoted as saying, "I would rather die fighting the railroad than continue to try to live on starvation wages." Even with all the strikes that occurred back in the day, and the recognition by the federal government that railroaders were essential workers, it still took 50 years to realize the passage of the Rail Labor Act in 1926.

Source: BLET Newsflash May 6, 2022; Encyclopedia.com; The Great Labor Uprising of 1877 by Becky Schneider

STB Inquiry into Class I Railroads. Prior to the recent hearings conducted by the Surface Transportation Board, input was submitted from railroad employees, their families, and whoever else

was interested in providing commentary for the record. Railway Age published one such letter from the wife of a BLET member. I won't reveal her name because I did not obtain her permission to publish it, but suffice it to say the letter was right on point. She and her husband knew the railroad life was not like everyone else's and adjustments would have to be made. Never in a million years could they have foreseen COVID or the draconian attendance policies the railroads would implement following the disastrous implementation of Precision Scheduled Railroading. She asks, "At what point is this not worth it?" and she is right as rain. She continues, "Class I railroads have created this labor shortage themselves, which negatively impacts the supply chain. This is not a new issue; this is the direct result of years of implementing PSR and trying to cut every bit of fat from their companies, and now they are cutting the muscle."

Thank you to this spouse who wrote such an informative and accurate letter, and to all who took the time to give input on the downside of working for the railroad.

2022 NASLBC Meeting

Members of the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen met this year in Santa Fe, New Mexico, March 28–30. Congratulations to Chairman Shane Hubbard (Indiana), 1st Vice Paul Pearson (Colorado), 2nd Vice Tim Laveing (Pennsylvania), S/T Chuck Schulz (Wisconsin), and to all the other officers elected by acclamation this year. The NASLBC consists of 40 participating BLET State Legislative Board Chairmen and is an integral part of the BLET in protecting and advancing the interests of BLET members, particularly as to how it pertains to the importance of political, legislative, and regulatory issues affecting their lives. These State Legislative Boards work on the state level, often addressing issues such as the fight for two-

person crews, which has now gained traction nationally, due in part to BLET State Legislative Boards and their efforts. If your state has a state legislative board, contact them, and do what you can to help at the grassroots level. Every single person's effort, whether at the local, state, or national level, helps advance our issues.

Source: BLET Newsflash April 8, 2022; NASLBC Website

AMTRAK UPDATE

STB Gulf Coast Hearing Update:

In April, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) continued its hearings concerning the restoration of Gulf Coast Passenger Service. Rail Operations Consultant Charlie Banks was brought in as an expert witness to defend the Rail Traffic Controller (RTC) Study that CSX, NS, and the Port of Alabama say proves that two new daily service trains would unreasonably impair freight operations between New Orleans and Mobile. They argue that without significant changes, any resumption of passenger services would congest their routes with traffic, sending costly delays down the country's supply chain at a time when business is already plagued by shortages and slowed shipments. Amtrak's attorney, however, picked apart many "facts" and "estimates" in the RTC study, which Mr. Banks admitted were not exactly pertinent to this case. The railroads continue their argument that if they reveal answers to the challenges that this project may pose, those answers are deemed "competition sensitive" and would compromise shippers' business secrets. Their claims forced a confidential recess of the hearing to determine if certain subjects could be discussed in public.

Jim Matthews, President, and CEO of the Rail Passengers Association testified in February that the secrecy argument was curious given that the information is "readily available to anyone with a lawn chair and the patience to count." Amtrak used a webcam to monitor a section of CSX's busy railroad to show just how little traffic would be

impaired. STB Chairman Oberman acknowledges that this particular case is precedent setting involving "potentially nearly half a billion dollars of public funds... a statute which has never been litigated before... Our obligation is not the same as a court or a jury." Addressing whether the Board's questions were "helping Amtrak's counsel ask her questions," Chairman Oberman said that "both by statute and Congressional charge, the STB's members occupy a different role than judges or jurors, and if counsel hasn't asked the right questions, it is inherent on them to do so to ensure a complete record and avoid problems that might lead to a reversal on appeal." Oberman said, "I want the facts in the record that would sustain any decision we reach." Continue to keep your fingers crossed for the future of passenger rail.

Source: Rail Passenger Association, Jim Matthews, April 8, 2022; Grist May 6, 2022

Railroad Retirement Board Update

Open In-Person: As of April 25, 2022, Railroad Retirement field offices are once again offering in-person appointments nationwide. Appointments can be made by calling 877-772-5772. Almost all business with the Board can still be done either on-line though RRB.gov or over the phone, including unemployment and sickness claims, getting estimates of retirement benefits, view of railroad service and compensation, duplicate tax forms, service and compensation statements, general benefit information, and letters verifying retirement/survivor benefit rates.

Source: RRB.org

Longevity and Railroad Retirement: Every three years, the Railroad Retirement Board conducts a study of the longevity of its annuitants as part of the assessment for sustainability of the fund. For male railroaders retiring at age 60, the expected life span is 22.7 years, up 0.2

— continued on back cover



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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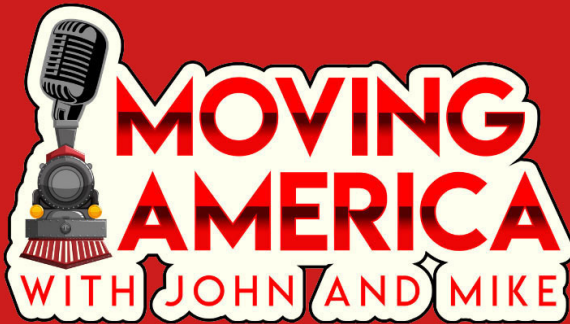
Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund

Jesse E. Taylor, International President

300 Sterling Parkway, Suite 105

Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

(717) 657-1890



National President Kathleen Bisbikis and National 1st Vice President and Outreach Coordinator Rachel Pharris were special guests on the May 18 Moving America Podcast co-hosted by locomotive engineers John Belcher (BLET Div. 73) and Mike Necessary (BLET Div. 37).

Kathleen and Rachel were invited to share their view of the BNSF HI-Viz Attendance policy from the perspective of the families that are directly affected by it. They also shared insight on the recent protest at the Berkshire Hathaway's Shareholder Meeting in Omaha, as well as information about the Auxiliary and how listeners can get involved in their area. The podcast can be viewed on YouTube at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PX4wk_AUic&feature=youtu.be

WANTED

The National Auxiliary is
searching for a
transcriptionist for the
national convention in Las
Vegas October 10th - 13th
2022.

Please contact Kathleen
Bisbikis via email at
biz4413@gmail.com if
interested





Greetings from Your Editor, Rachel Pharris

*Coming together is a beginning,
staying together is progress, and
working together is success."*

— Henry Ford

With summer here, we welcome the regional meetings. I look forward to these meetings each year as a time to come together, collaborate, and learn. If you are able to attend one or both of these meetings, I encourage you to do so. There is so much going on with the attendance policies, contract negotiations, and two-person crew issues. It is important to stay informed, and to get the information directly from the source and share ideas. There is often a lot happening behind the scenes, and attending auxiliary meetings, union meetings, and regional meetings helps get the correct information out.

The union officers and auxiliary officers, who attend and facilitate the sessions at the regional meetings are there to help. They take time away from work and their families to stay informed for their members. If you are unable to attend the regionals, keep attending your local meetings and getting information from your auxiliary and local chairman.

Sometimes a little encouragement is all others need to become involved. Encourage others to be involved by:

- Personally inviting them to meetings. For newcomers, or visitors, having someone to go with makes things more comfortable.
- Encourage interested or potential members to ask questions.
- Explain how the overall picture of the union and auxiliary makes lives better for all members.

Let's stand strong together!

Please stop by our booth at the regional meetings and say hello to the auxiliary officers and members.

Rachel Pharris
BLET Auxiliary National Vice President and
Outreach Coordinator
404 South, Willard, Missouri
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NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Save These Dates!

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

October 10-13, 2022
National Convention
at Bally's, Las Vegas, Nevada

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

Rachel Pharris, Editor
BLET Auxiliary News
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The next issue will be published in September 2022. Please have your submissions to Rachel on or before August 15, 2022.



BLET Auxiliary

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Legislative Update, Continued from Page 13

years from the last study. If retiring at 62, the age drops to 21 years, and at 65, it drops to 18.5 years. For women, the life expectancy for retiring at 60 is 25.3 years dropping to 21.3 if retiring at 65. If you wish to know more details about the longevity study, you can visit the Board's website at RRB.gov under the tab Financial and Reporting – Financial, Actuarial and Statistical – Annual).

Source: RRB.gov Publication February 2022

The Effects of Buyouts on RR Benefits: The Railroad Retirement Board issued a publication on the effects of buyouts on benefits. If your Carrier is offering a buyout and you are considering it, please contact the Board to find out the implications of taking the buyout, and how it could affect your situation in retirement. Downloading the publication will help you to understand the various issues, which get very complicated, and a live person goes a long way in further understanding.

Source: RRB.gov Publication April 2022

Volunteer Opportunities

Just in case you miss the railroad or liked the railroads of days gone by, The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad (C&TSRR) provides summer volunteer work that straddles the state line near Antonito, Colorado, and Chama, New Mexico, in the San Juan Mountains and Rio Grande National Forest. A variety of skills can be used, including mechanical, woodworking, painting, landscaping, food service, photography, record keeping, or just plain enthusiasm helping to restore and preserve the C&TSRR. To learn more, search Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad.

Source: Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Website

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