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# Locomotive

## ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN NEWS



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## Teamsters Rail Conference opposes hostile takeover of NS

**T**he Teamsters Rail Conference has added its voice to the dozens of elected officials, shippers and labor unions that strongly oppose an apparent attempt at a hostile takeover of Norfolk Southern (NS) by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP).

The Rail Conference is comprised of constituent unions the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED). The group stated its opposition to the forced takeover attempt in a letter from Rail Conference President Dennis R. Pierce to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) dated January 18, 2016.

Instead of the "substantial value creation" identified by CP in its December 16, 2015 presentation to investors, the Rail Conference predicts the opposite. CP's hostile takeover of NS would trigger a round of additional Class I rail mergers, eventually reducing the industry to just two transcontinental railroads, "which is not in the best interests of our members, U.S. shippers or the public." It could lead to a "death spiral" of job cuts and deferred plant and equipment maintenance industry wide, resulting in the loss of vital service — similar to the crisis that crippled rail service in the Northwest and Midwest between the 1960s and late 1970s.

Pierce, who also is National President of the BLET, raised questions about CP's reliance upon a voting trust to move ahead



with the forced takeover outside of the STB's standard rail merger approval process. "At the very least, the Board should immediately make clear to CP that it will not tolerate any attempt to short-circuit the process set forth in the law and accompanying STB regulations."

President Pierce concluded: "CP's proposal — while it may be good for Wall Street, hedge funds and certain investors — is bad for the shippers, bad for the rail-

roads' workers, and bad for the public. I urge the Board to reject any and all attempts at this hostile takeover, and thank you in advance for your most serious consideration of our position."

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail workers employed as locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way workers across the United States as members of the BLET and BMWED. International

Brotherhood of Teamsters Vice President John Murphy serves as Director of the Rail Conference. Teamsters Vice President at Large Freddie N. Simpson is National President of the BMWED. ©©

**A PDF COPY OF THE RAIL CONFERENCE LETTER IS AVAILABLE FROM THE BLET NATIONAL DIVISION**  
**WEBSITE:** [WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/RAIL\\_CONF\\_STB\\_CP\\_NS\\_LETTER.PDF](http://WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/RAIL_CONF_STB_CP_NS_LETTER.PDF)

## Join Us This Summer!

Mark your calendars and plan to attend one or both of the BLET's regional meetings.



Photos: Choose Chicago



**Eastern** JULY 11-14, 2016 • CHICAGO

**R**egistration for the BLET's 2016 Regional Meetings will be available soon! Please watch the BLET National Division website and Facebook page for the latest information. The 2016 Eastern Regional Meeting will be July 11-14 at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, Illinois; and the 2016 Western Regional Meeting will be August 22-25 at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, California. The Drake in Chicago is a beautifully restored grand hotel, and the Hyatt Regency is in the heart of the Long Beach Harbor entertainment area. ©©



Photos: Long Beach CVB



**Western** AUGUST 22-25, 2016 • LONG BEACH



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**BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE**

# GIVING 180 PERCENT

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND IN THE YEAR AHEAD

**T**he New Year 2016 is beginning with a flurry of activity for myself, my fellow members of the BLET Advisory Board, and our National Division staff in Cleveland. The past few months — and the next few months — will fly by in a whirlwind of activity that will keep us busy, to say the least.

As I write my monthly message to you, I am working with architects and contractors on the final phases of renovation at the BLET's new National Division headquarters building in Independence, Ohio. The building we purchased in March of 2015 is a former office and warehouse for AT&T. The building itself is structurally sound, but some significant improvements were required to modernize it for your National Division officers and staff. These renovations have moved along at a quick pace, and we will begin moving into the new building in early March. Watch the BLET website and Facebook page for details regarding our ribbon cutting ceremony.

Another time consuming endeavor involves interviewing and researching moving companies. We have been in our current offices at the Standard Building in downtown Cleveland since 1989, and over the past 26 years, we have accumulated many important files, computer equipment, and other necessities that have to be moved. We are going to great lengths to find a moving company that will safely move our offices without breaking the bank.

It is with mixed emotions that we leave the beloved Standard Building. Erected by the Brotherhood in 1924, the building is an important symbol of our union's proud history. But as I have said before, what matters most is not the building, but the people inside. The building may change, but our people won't. Your National Division officers and staff will continue to offer the best representation and service available.

In terms of our National Division staff, I have asked everyone to give not just 100 percent but 180 percent over the weeks and months ahead. In addition



President Pierce at the Education & Training Department's Local Chairman workshop for the Union Pacific-Northern Region General Committee of Adjustment.



President Pierce (top left), First Vice President Lee Pruitt (middle left) and NST Steve Bruno (bottom left) inspect the progress of renovations at the BLET's new headquarters building in Independence, Ohio (above).

to the major move of our headquarters, we have to tackle many other items that demand the best that everyone has to offer. I have challenged everyone to go above and beyond the call of duty. I have challenged them to maintain the same level of day to day service required by their normal duties while also rising to meet the daunting challenges presented by our headquarters move. We have our work cut out for us, but I have every confidence we can meet these challenges if everyone gives 180 percent.

Last year, we began our Triennial Election cycle. Our staff is in the midst of recording and

inputting election results as they are packing boxes and preparing to move. I would like to thank them for their efforts. I would also like to thank our Brothers and Sisters who ran for office, voted, or otherwise participated in our Triennial Election process. To those who ran for office, rest assured that your dedication to our Brotherhood is truly appreciated. You are the rock upon which our union is built. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for taking the time from your busy work schedules and from your all too busy family life to serve our Brotherhood.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet some of our newly-elected Brothers in Iowa during the week of January 18.

The ink was not even dry on the election results as our BLET Education and Training Department took their program on the road to conduct a Local Chairman workshop for the Union Pacific-Northern Region General Committee of Adjustment (GCA). Under the dedicated leadership of General Chairman Dick Crow, the GCA has eight new Local Chairmen and eight new Vice Local Chairmen. These 16 brand new officers were among the 23 Brothers and Sisters who took part of the nearly week-long Local

Chairman workshop. It was my pleasure to attend this workshop and thank these members in person. Their enthusiasm and dedication was inspiring.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to complete our training classes, and I am proud to salute those who attended our Local Chairman class in Iowa. Our Education and Training Department will have a new and improved Training Center at our new Independence headquarters, and I encourage all of our officers — especially those just elected in the 2015 Triennial Election cycle — to make the time to attend a workshop in 2016.

In the midst of packing to move to our new headquarters, we are also hard at work planning conventions for our 2016 Regional Meeting Associations. Our Eastern Regional Meeting will take place in Chicago, Illinois, July 11-14, and our Western Regional Meeting will be held in Long Beach, California, August 22-25. Preparations are underway and registration information should be available soon. Please monitor the National Division website and Facebook page for the latest information.

These are just a few of the items on our plate at the National Division. We are heavily involved in national negotiations as a part of the Coordinated Bargaining Group (CPG). Our National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., remains focused on important legislative and regulatory issues that impact the lives and working conditions of all locomotive engineers and trainmen. And we are also gearing up for the national elections coming up in November, when we will elect a new President of the United States and over 460 members of Congress. Updates on these and other issues will be available over the weeks and months ahead.

The year 2016 is shaping up to be one of the busiest years in recent memory, but I have confidence that our Advisory Board and our National Division staff will see us through.

**DENNIS R. PIERCE**  
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

## BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

**O**fficial communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an "official communication." This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official

interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to

the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender's membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This poli-

cy is intended to allow the National President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member's unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

**ADOPTED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO ON JULY 22, 2010. ©©**





**GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** BY JAMES P. HOFFA

# TEAMSTERS TAKE FIRST STEPS IN GETTING AMERICA WORKING

**L**ast September, the Teamsters unveiled its "Let's Get America Working" (LGAW) platform that stressed the need for Congress to approve infrastructure investment and defend worker-friendly policies. And members and everyday Americans are already seeing positive results.

The biggest victory came in December when after more than a decade, Congress approved a five-year, \$305 billion long-term transportation plan that sets a path forward to pay for road, rail and mass transit upgrades. Its passage was somewhat miraculous, given that Capitol Hill is still mired in the mud and unable to come together on much of anything.

But the victories didn't end there. The Teamsters supported a \$1.1 trillion omnibus appropriations bill, signed into law just before Christmas, that ensured workers retained their rights to organize on the job and continued to receive comprehensive health insurance from their employers without being financially penalized.

However, the effort to implement LGAW isn't over yet. In 2016, the union will keep up the fight to defeat the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership and keep American jobs at home. It will also continue its efforts to defeat a proposal by the Central States Pension Plan that would dramatically cut the pensions of tens of thousands of Teamsters.

Going forward, this nation needs to invest in rebuilding its energy and water systems, as well as making sure union members retain their ability to collectively bargain so they can earn a fair wage. Workers need proper training and access to educational opportunities. And retirement should be made secure by bolstering both pension plans and Social Security.

Teamsters need to join together to make this happen. That way everyone wins.

Fraternally,

**JAMES P. HOFFA**  
TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT



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## Final workshop held at BLET Training Center in Cleveland prior to move to new headquarters

**A**bout two dozen Local Division officers completed the BLET Education and Training Department's Secretary-Treasurer Workshop in Cleveland the week of December 14, 2015.

These Brothers now have the distinction of participating in the final workshop at the BLET's Training Center in the Standard Building prior to the National Division's move to a new headquarters facility in Independence, Ohio, during the spring of 2016.

During the afternoon session on December 16, the students heard presentations from BLET National President Dennis Pierce and National Secretary-Treasurer Steve Bruno.

During the almost four day training workshop, students received training in a number of areas, including how to use the BLET National Division's web-based system for membership reporting, OLMS tax compli-

ance tips, Division Trustee reporting, and computer skills. Members also learned proper record keeping techniques, minute-taking, and methods for filing various Department of Labor and Railroad Retirement reports including Internal Revenue Service Federal tax reports such as CT-1, 941, W-2, W-3, and W-4. The workshop also focused on essential items such as 990 authorizations, bonding, check registers, banking, and other related items.

The first workshop held at the Standard Building Training Center was a General Chairman workshop that began on July 21, 2014. It is expected that the first workshop at the new Independence Training Center will be held in the Spring of 2016.

The National Division thanks these Brothers for their dedication to the Brotherhood and for their hard work in completing this complex training. @@



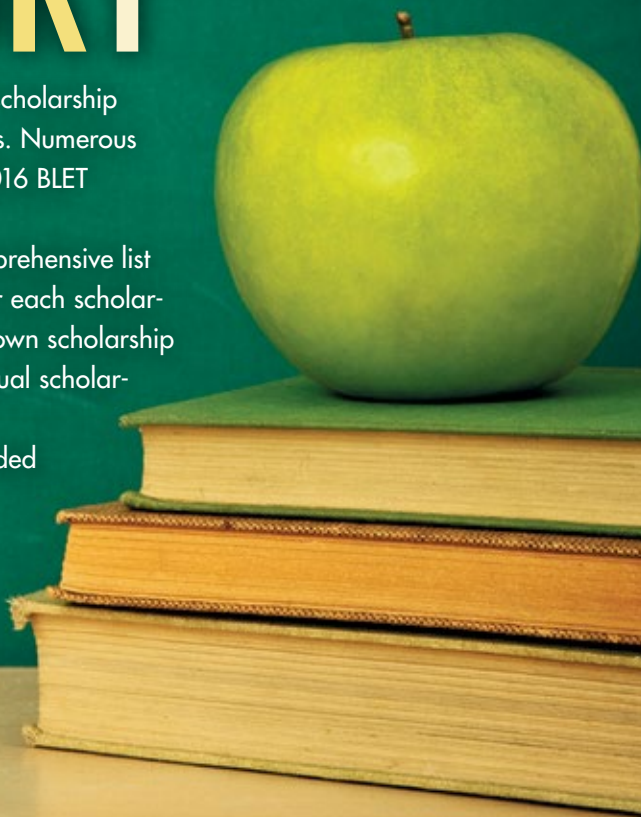


# 2016 BLET SCHOLARSHIP DIRECTORY

**E**ach year, the BLET National Division compiles a list of scholarship opportunities available to the children of BLET members. Numerous financial aid opportunities are published here in the 2016 BLET Scholarship Directory.

The scholarship opportunities vary widely. The following comprehensive list provides members and their families with contact information for each scholarship program. The BLET National Division does not maintain its own scholarship program, so interested parties are advised to contact the individual scholarship providers listed below for additional information.

Those aware of additional scholarship opportunities not included in this Directory are urged to contact the BLET Public Relations Department at: [Bentley@ble-t.org](mailto:Bentley@ble-t.org).



## BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program

The BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program provides \$1,000 scholarships to qualifying students who wish to pursue higher education. To apply for an Auxiliary Scholarship award, the applicant must be a son, daughter, stepson, or stepdaughter of a BLET Auxiliary member and a BLET member (living or deceased), with each being a member at least one year. In addition, applicants must be accepted for admission by an accredited university, college, or institute of higher learning. Children of an unmarried BLET member who has been an Associate Member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year are also eligible. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement.

**Important:** For high school seniors entering an institute of higher learning for the first time, a copy of ACT or SAT scores and a current copy of cumulative grade point average (GPA) must accompany the application. For graduate students or students returning to an institute of higher learning, a copy of last term's (or most current) GPA must accompany the application. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better is required for eligibility. Applications submitted *without* these documents *will not be considered*.

Completed applications must be received by BLET Auxiliary Secretary Lavana Poss *no later than April 1, 2016*. Applications received after that date *will not be considered*.

Applications, instructions for scholarships, and mailing address for submission may be found on the Auxiliary website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net).

**NOTE:** THE IWC-ONLY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, FORMERLY ADMINISTERED BY THE BLET AUXILIARY, IS NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE.

## California State Legislative Board

The BLET's CSLB will award a \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior attending a college/ trade/ vocational school in 2016. The applicant's parent or guardian must be a member in good standing in a BLET division represented by CSLB.

Rules, applications and deadline information are available on the Board's website, [www.cslb.ws](http://www.cslb.ws). The deadline is *May 1, 2016*.

**ALL APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MAILED TO THE CSLB HOME OFFICE ADDRESS:**  
 CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATIVE BOARD,  
 BLET/IBT, 610 AUBURN RAVINE RD.,  
 SUITE C, AUBURN, CA 95603.

## Illinois State Legislative Board

The BLET's Illinois State Legislative Board is currently accepting applications for its Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2013.

One \$1,000 and two \$500 scholarships will be awarded to applicants whose parent or guardian is a BLET member in good standing in a BLET Local Division represented by the Illinois State Legislative Board. Applicants must be 26 years of age or younger.

Brother Don Little was a locomotive engineer with Metra commuter rail in Chicago and a proud member of BLET Division 294 (Bensenville, Ill.) for 35 years. Brother Little served for more than 10 years on the Executive Committee of the Illinois State Legislative Board and always had a dream of establishing a scholarship program for the family mem-

## Teamster Scholarships

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund is now accepting applications for scholarship awards. The deadline for receipt of completed materials is March 31, 2016.

Applicants must be a son, daughter, or financially dependent grandchild of a BLET member in good standing in order to be eligible to apply. Please see the Teamsters website for full eligibility requirements and to download the application along with other supporting materials.

Scholarship applicants compete in one of the five geographic regions. One category of awards totals \$10,000 each. These four-year scholarships are disbursed at the rate of \$2,500 per year and are renewable annually. Other awards are one-time \$1,000 grants. These scholarships are disbursed to the college or university at the beginning of the recipient's freshman year.

Eligibility requirements and application procedures are the same for all awards. Recipients are selected by an impartial committee of university admissions and financial aid directors based on academic achievement, SAT/ACT scores, character, potential and financial need. The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund considers all applicants without regard to race, religion, gender, disability, or any other legally protected status.

A full list of specific eligibility requirements and scholarship applications can be found on the Teamster website: [www.teamster.org/benefits/jrh-scholarship](http://www.teamster.org/benefits/jrh-scholarship)

**IF YOU NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CONTACT:**  
 JAMES R. HOFFA MEMORIAL  
 SCHOLARSHIP FUND  
 25 LOUISIANA AVENUE, NW  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20001  
 PHONE: (202) 624-8735  
 EMAIL: [SCHOLARSHIP@TEAMSTER.ORG](mailto:SCHOLARSHIP@TEAMSTER.ORG).

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(800) 514-0010  
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Transportation workers protecting each other since 1910.



bers of fellow Brothers and Sisters who belonged to divisions chartered in Illinois. Unfortunately, Brother Little passed away before his dream was realized.

In 2013, Paul Piekarski (Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board), Timothy Dunn (former Secretary-Treasurer of the Board), and several others helped make Brother Little's dream a reality.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by May 1, 2016. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms are available for download from the BLET National Division website (PDF): [www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Illinois\\_SLB\\_Scholarship\\_2016.pdf](http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Illinois_SLB_Scholarship_2016.pdf)

FOR QUESTIONS OR ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING THE APPLICATION, CALL JOYCE A. PIEKARSKI, ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY, AT (630) 963-6099 OR EMAIL [JOYCE.PIEKARSKI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:JOYCE.PIEKARSKI@GMAIL.COM).

### Wyoming State Legislative Board

The BLET's Wyoming State Legislative Board (WYSLB) is again offering a scholarship program for the upcoming school year. First offered for the 2014 academic year, the scholarship deadline for 2016 is June 1, 2016.

Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman Cory Runion said the Board will award either two \$1,000 scholarships, or, in the event of a single applicant, one \$1,000 scholarship each year to an immediate family member of a BLET member in good standing and holding membership in a Division chartered within the state of Wyoming. The scholarships will be awarded based on the application, along with the requested documentation, by the WYSLB scholarship committee.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by June 1 of each year. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms (PDF) are available for download from the BLET National Division website, or can be requested from your Division Legislative Representative. Currently, the BLET has nine Divisions chartered in Wyoming — Division 31 (Bill); Division 207 (Casper); Divisions 44, 103 and 115 (Cheyenne); Division 94 (Gillette); Division 869 (Greybull); Division 142 (Rawlins); and Division 624 (Sheridan).

FOR QUESTIONS OF ASSISTANCE IN COMPLETING THE APPLICATION PLEASE CONTACT YOUR DIVISION LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE.

INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM AVAILABLE HERE (PDF): [WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/WYO\\_SLB\\_SCHOLARSHIP\\_APP.PDF](http://WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/WYO_SLB_SCHOLARSHIP_APP.PDF)

### BLET Division 269

BLET Division 269 (Jamaica, Long Island, N.Y.) offers two \$500 scholarships to the children of BLET members who are already enrolled in college. Participation is limited to members of Division 269 only.

WINNERS ARE PICKED AT RANDOM AT THE DIVISION'S CHRISTMAS PARTY. FOR DETAILS, WATCH YOUR DIVISION 269'S MOBILE APP OR CONTACT DIVISION PRESIDENT JOHN A. KAVANAUGH JR. AT (631) 813-2234.

### BLET Division 622

BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.) will award two \$500 scholarships in 2016. Only the children of Division 622 members are eligible to apply. Scholarship winners will

be chosen at random during a Division meeting in August.

APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JULY 31, 2016. FOR MORE SPECIFICS, PLEASE VISIT THE DIVISION 622 WEBSITE ([WWW.BLET622.COM](http://WWW.BLET622.COM)) AND CLICK ON "SCHOLARSHIP."

### BR&CF Scholarship Program

The Brotherhood's Relief and Compensation Fund (BR&CF) is pleased to provide opportunities for the sons and daughters of BR&CF members to participate in the Luther G. Smith Scholarship Program.

Children, including adopted and step-children, of BR&CF members who are in "Good and Regular Standing," are eligible. Applicants must be 27 years of age or younger. Applicants may be current high school students who have applied for admission as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools or may be attending or enrolled as full-time students in accredited post-

secondary schools.

International President J. M. Robb advises that 20 scholarships of \$1,000 each are awarded every year.

The BR&CF's 2016 scholarship program commenced on October 1, 2015, with applications due on *March 1, 2016*. The 2017 program begins October 1, 2016, with a deadline of *March 1, 2017*.

BR&CF MEMBERS WITH QUESTIONS MAY CONTACT LINDA GARBER AT (800) 233-7080. MEMBERS MAY OBTAIN AN APPLICATION FORM BY CALLING OR WRITING TO 2150 LINGLESTOWN ROAD, HARRISBURG, PA 17110 OR EMAILING [BRCF@BRCF.ORG](mailto:BRCF@BRCF.ORG).

### Union Plus Scholarships

Union Plus awarded approximately \$150,000 in scholarships to 106 students in the 2015 Union Plus Scholarship Program. Individual awards ranged from \$500 to \$4,000. The deadline is *January 31 each year*.

Rising education costs are making it difficult for many union families to af-

ford the cost of tuition. That's one reason Union Plus, which provides important consumer benefits to union members and retirees, offers a unique scholarship program. It has distributed more than \$3.7 million in scholarships to union members and their children over the past 22 years. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor.

In addition to the scholarships, Union Plus offers discounts of 15 to 60 percent on college test preparation courses from The Princeton Review. Discounts are available for classroom, online and private tutoring for the ACT, SAT, PSAT, SAT Subject Tests, AP Exams, GMAT, LSAT, GRE, DAT, OAT or MCAT. Free online practice tests are also available for GMAT, GRE, LSAT, MCAT, SAT or ACT.

VISIT [UNIONPLUS.ORG/COLLEGEPREP](http://UNIONPLUS.ORG/COLLEGEPREP) FOR DETAILS OR CALL (888) 243-7737. VISIT THE UNION PLUS WEBSITE TO LEARN MORE.

# The POWER of Education

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

For high school seniors who are children of Teamster members.

For more information, contact your local Teamsters Union office or visit [www.teamster.org](http://www.teamster.org)

Deadline: March 31, 2016

THE JAMES R. HOFFA  
MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND

## 2016-2017

ACADEMIC YEAR SCHOLARSHIPS

File Your Application TODAY!



## Norfolk Southern to combine Virginia and Pocahontas divisions

**O**n January 12, Norfolk Southern announced that it is consolidating its Virginia and Pocahontas divisions to form the new Pocahontas Division, with headquarters in Roanoke, Va., effective Feb. 1. In a related move, Norfolk Southern is changing traffic patterns and idling parts of its “West Virginia Secondary,” a 253-mile line between Columbus, Ohio, and central West Virginia that

has experienced steady declines in business in recent years. This follows the idling of a 33-mile mainline between Elmore and Princeton, W.Va., in September 2015. The new Pocahontas Division will comprise 2,581 route miles, mainly in Virginia and West Virginia, extending from the Port of Virginia to Portsmouth, Ohio, and from Bristol, Va., to Hagerstown, Md. ©©

## CSX TO CONSOLIDATE OPERATING DIVISIONS

**C**SX announced on January 18 that it is consolidating its operations administration from 10 divisions to 9 divisions and closing administrative offices at Huntington, West Virginia. Huntington Division administrative responsibilities will be reassigned to five adjoining

divisions: Atlanta, Baltimore, Florence, Great Lakes and Louisville. CSX will continue to run trains over the territory, and its yards and other facilities in the Huntington region — including the Huntington locomotive shop — will continue operations. The 121 management and

union employees who currently report to the Huntington Division offices will remain employed in the area supporting the transition over the next several months. At the conclusion of the transition period, some employees will be given an opportunity to fill positions in other areas of the network. ©©

## Railroad Retirement and unemployment insurance taxes in 2016

**T**he amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement tier I and tier II payroll taxes, as well as the tier I and tier II tax rates on employers and employees, will stay the same in 2016. In addition, unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by railroad employers will continue to include a 1.5 percent surcharge in 2016.

### TIER I AND MEDICARE TAX

The railroad retirement tier I payroll tax rate on covered rail employers and employees for 2016 remains at 7.65 percent. The railroad retirement tier I tax rate is the same as the social security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes is divided into 6.20 percent for retirement and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. The maximum amount of an employee’s earnings subject to the 6.20 percent rate stays at \$118,500 in 2016, with no maximum on

earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate. An additional Medicare payroll tax of 0.9 percent applies to an individual’s income exceeding \$200,000, or \$250,000 for a married couple filing a joint tax return. While employers will begin withholding the additional Medicare tax as soon as an individual’s wages exceed the \$200,000 threshold, the final amount owed or refunded will be calculated as part of the individual’s Federal income tax return.

### TIER II TAX

The railroad retirement tier II tax rates in 2016 will remain at 4.9 percent for employees and 13.1 percent for employers. The maximum amount of earnings subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes is still \$88,200. Since 2004, tier II tax rates are based on an average account benefits ratio reflecting railroad retirement fund levels. Depending on this ratio, the tier II tax rate for employees can be between 0 percent and 4.9 percent, while the tier II rate for employers can range between 8.2 percent and 22.1 percent.

### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Employers, but not employees, pay railroad unemployment insurance contributions, which are experience-rated by employer. The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act also provides for a surcharge in the event the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account balance falls below an indexed threshold amount. The accrual balance of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account was \$120.1 million on June 30, 2015. Since the balance is less than the indexed threshold of \$152.9 million, a 1.5 percent surcharge will be added to the basic contribution rates for 2016, but will not increase the maximum 12 percent rate. There was also a surcharge of 1.5 percent in 2015, with no surcharge for 2013 and 2014.

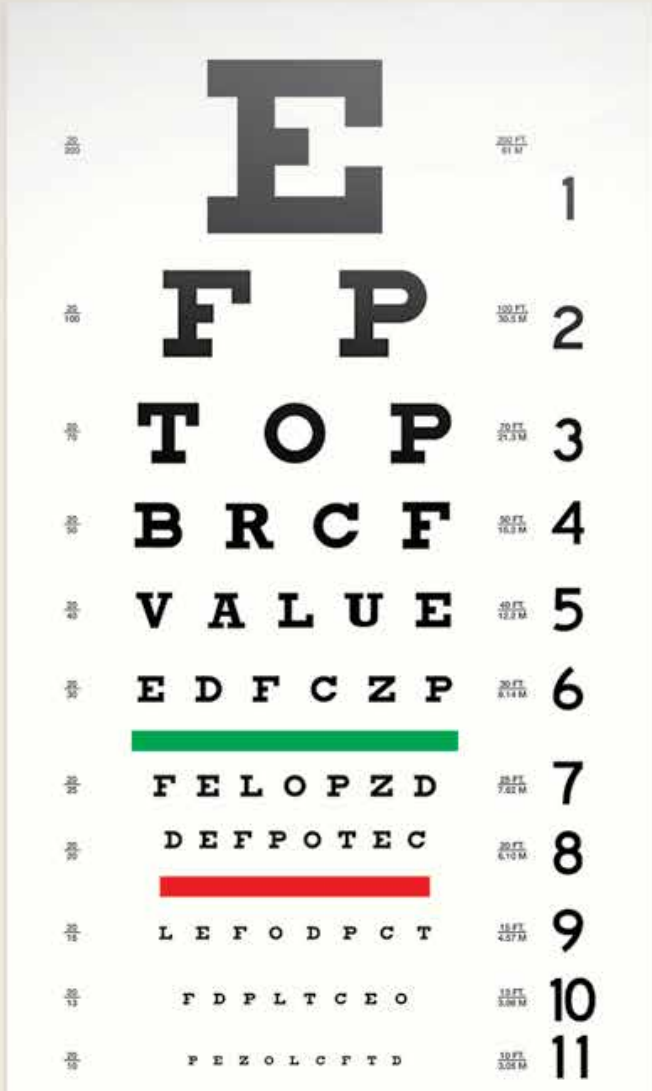
As a result, the unemployment insurance contribution rates (including the 1.5 percent surcharge) on railroad employers in 2016 will range from the minimum rate of 2.15 percent to the maximum of 12 percent on monthly compensation up to \$1,455, the same amount as 2015.

In 2016, the minimum rate of 2.15 percent will apply to 77 percent of covered employers, with 8 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New employers will pay an unemployment insurance contribution rate of 2.52 percent, which represents the average rate paid by all employers in the period 2012-2014. ©©

### IN 2016, THE BLET MARKS THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER.

Authorized by delegates attending the Fourth Quinquennial Convention in 1986, the newsletter provides all active BLET members with important news and developments every month. Here’s to another 30 years!

## FOCUS ON VALUE



Daily Benefit Level	\$100 (\$102*)	\$150	\$200 (\$201*)	\$220	\$250
BR&CF	\$38.00	\$57.00	\$76.00	\$83.60	\$95.00
LECMPA (*)	\$59.50	\$87.50	\$117.25	Not available... you will pay less per month with BR&CF for more daily benefits	
SMART - UTU	\$81.00	\$121.50	\$162.00		

The BR&CF is the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences. We are affordable. You could save up to \$1,032 each year on a \$200 benefit level. A BR&CF membership offers you the best price, value and service. To apply for membership... act today... ask a BR&CF member where you work for an application or visit our web site at [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org) or call us toll free at 800 233-7080.



## BLET, SMART-TD petition FRA for speed signs

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), in collaboration with the SMART-Transportation Division, has formally petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for a rulemaking that would mandate uniform warning signs in advance of a permanent speed restriction.

Recently, some railroads have begun removing these safety indicators, thereby creating a safety hazard for operating crews and the general public. In the joint petition, the unions asked the FRA to begin a rulemaking process that would mandate uniform warning signs to assist train crews in the safe performance of their duties.

"In the interest of safety it is necessary to warn road crews of an upcoming speed restriction, which otherwise might not be readily apparent," the joint petition reads. "Just as it is unreasonable for a motorist to know each speed restriction without a warning, the same is true for railroad crews. Unlike automobile travel, where speeds can be reduced promptly, trains are unable to comply with a speed restriction without prior knowledge."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said: "The proper placement of speed signs along our nation's railroads is a practical, cost-effective, and common sense way to make our industry safer."

SMART TD National Legislative Director John Risch said: "Not having speed signs would be like listing all the traffic speeds on your state highway maps, then taking down the signs on the highways." ©©

A COPY OF THE JANUARY 12 JOINT PETITION IS AVAILABLE FROM THE BLET WEBSITE AS A PDF: [WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/SPEED\\_SIGNS\\_BLET\\_SMART\\_TD.PDF](http://WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/SPEED_SIGNS_BLET_SMART_TD.PDF)

## SENATE CONFIRMS FEINBERG AS FRA ADMINISTRATOR

The U.S. Senate confirmed Sarah Feinberg to be the Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on October 28, 2015. President Barack Obama appointed her on May 29, 2015, to serve as the Nation's chief safety regulator for freight and passenger rail. Feinberg is the second woman to lead the agency since it was founded in 1966. Feinberg leads a staff of nearly 900 professionals in Washington, D.C. and eight regional offices across the country.

The FRA is one of 10 operating modal agencies that make up the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The FRA develops and enforces rail safety regulations and oversees research and technology development programs. The FRA is also responsible for administering federal grants to Amtrak and has oversight for the railroad's expenditures.

Prior to starting with the FRA, Feinberg worked as DOT Chief of Staff, where she provided advice and counsel to the Secretary of Transportation regarding operational and legislative initiatives across all modes of transportation. As the Chief of Staff, she helped to lead the effort on the Department and Secretary's \$302 billion surface transportation reauthorization plan.

Prior to joining USDOT, Feinberg served as the Director of Corporate and Strategic communications at Facebook. ©©

## FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT ON BLET EDUCATION & TRAINING FUND

When delegates attending the BLET's Second National Convention in Reno, Nevada, established a dedicated fund for Education and Training in October of 2010, they stipulated that an accounting of funds be published in the first issue of the BLET's newsletter each year.

Specifically, members pay \$1 per month to fund and maintain a BLET Education and Training Department. Section 7 (g) — National Division Rules of the BLET Bylaws (Pg. 27)

reads as follows: "All members in active service, including those holding official positions with the carrier and those employed exclusively by the BLET, shall pay \$1.00 per month dues to establish and maintain an education and training fund, subject to the provisions of Section 29 — National Division Rules. Funds received from such dues shall be used for education and training classes and/or workshops for officers and members of the BLET." ©©

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING FUND BALANCE REPORT FOR 2015

FUND BALANCE AT JANUARY 1, 2015				-554,602
FUNDS TRANSFERRED FROM NDR 29.(A) FUND*				\$402,608
<b>REVENUES</b>				
EDUCATION AND TRAINING FUND DUES	\$448,514			
REIMBURSED EXPENDITURES	\$166,360			
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>		\$614,874		
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>				
WAGES, TAXES, AND BENEFITS	\$397,066			
BUSINESS TRAVEL	\$158,005			
LEGAL EXPENSE	\$944			
INFORMATION SERVICES	\$12,190			
MEETING EXPENSES	\$8,398			
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>		\$576,603		
<b>NET EXPENDITURES EXCEEDING REVENUES</b>				\$38,271
<b>FUND BALANCE AT DECEMBER 31, 2015</b>				<b>\$386,277</b>

\* One time consolidation of E&T Funds per 2014 NDR Bylaws change

## Amtrak's Joe Boardman to retire

On December 9, 2015, Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman announced that he would retire in September of 2016 after nearly eight years with the railroad.

Under his leadership, Boardman helped Amtrak achieve record ridership and revenues, as well as many other improvements.

"When I look back at this time I see so many accomplishments and so many



changes we made to make America's railroad a stronger, safer and more important part of our nation's transportation system," Boardman wrote in a letter to employees announcing his retirement. "Amtrak is a remarkable story and it is so because of the people who work here — people who put

their entire life's work into this company."

According to his letter, Boardman will work closely with Amtrak's Board of Directors as they begin the search for a new CEO. "Having served on the Board prior to my time as CEO, I know that the selection of a President and CEO of Amtrak is perhaps the single most important decision that a Board can make," he wrote. ©©

Teamsters now have access to a leading brand of tax preparation software, TurboTax. Buying TurboTax through the Teamster page, you'll receive a discount, plus a portion of what you pay goes toward the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund. <http://ibt.io/turbotax>

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## Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen News Brotherhood Of Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen

1370 Ontario Street, Mezzanine  
Cleveland, OH 44113-1702

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### Photo of the Month: January 2016

**DM&E POWER:** With only 12 minutes to sunset, a pair of EMDs power Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern (DM&E) train #473 from Bensenville, Illinois, to Nahant, Iowa, on November 9, 2015. The leader is an ex MILW SD40-2 (206) and is 41 years old. The second unit is CITX 119, an SD9043MAC. BLET members ratified a new contract with the DM&E on November 30, 2015. **Photo:** courtesy Eric Boyburn.



**Are you a photographer?** The National Division's Public Relations Department, which produces the Newsletter each month, has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their

images to the "Photo of the Month" section of the Newsletter. If you'd like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email: Bentley@ble-t.org.

Please note only high resolution images can be used. Members are also encouraged to review their employer's policies regarding the use of cameras and other electronic devices while on duty.

## Advisory Board October & November 2015 Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members' activities are published monthly:

**NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE:** National Division Office, Cleveland; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; Teamsters General Executive Board mtg., Charleston, S.C.; National bargaining, Chicago and Washington, D.C.; Tennessee State Legislative Board mtg., Nashville, Tenn.; UP-CR GCA mtg., Little Rock, Ark.; Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.; Renewal mtg., Washington, D.C.; Vacation; Long Island RR Dinner Dance, Islandia, NY; National Legislative Board mtg., Cleveland; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland.

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT:** National Duties include but not limited to: Director, Passenger Dept.; Shortline Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; BNSF GCA mtg., Amarillo, TX; National bargaining, Chicago and Washington, D.C.; UP-CR GCA mtg., Little Rock, Ark.; New York Dock negotiations, Houston; LIRR retirement dinner dance, Islandia, NY; Inward facing cameras mtg. with CSX, Jacksonville, Fla.; National Legislative Board mtg., Cleveland; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland.

**NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER STEPHEN J. BRUNO:** General supervision of Accounting Dept., Record Dept., Online Services Dept., Tax Compliance Dept.; Safety Task Force; PAC and FEC reports and filings; Implementation and training for BLET membership database; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Publications Committee; Passenger Dept.; National Bargaining Committee; IBT Human Rights Commission; Secretary-Treasurer class, Cleveland; Secretary-Treasurer class, Cleveland; National bargaining, Chicago and Washington, D.C.; Union track mtgs.; LIRR dinner dance, Islandia, NY; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; National Legislative Board mtg., Cleveland.

**VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN:** Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; Coordinate content of NLO website; Weekly PAC committee and legislative mtgs.; Amtrak labor roundtable, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ Rep. Larson, Washington, D.C.; One Rail mtg., Washington, D.C.; Tennessee SLB mtg., Nashville; Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.; Lobbied on Capitol Hill with over 150 Senators and Representatives to discuss Family Medical Leave Act, H.R. 1763, and inward facing cameras, Washington, D.C.; Mtgs. w/ Teamsters and BMWED to discuss Rail Conference political strategies; National Legislative Board mtg., Cleveland; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; Various mtgs. and functions with Representatives and Senators.

**VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF:** Vice Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Arb. Adv. Forum; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR and Illinois RR; NRAB admin, Chicago; Assist GC Cundari w/ IL RR negotiations, Chicago; Division 682 monthly mtg., IHB, Chicago; PLB 7154 arrangements, IC, Chicago; Assist GC Balonek w/ claim screening, Metra, Chicago; Study dockets; Assist GC Semenek w/ NY Dock submission; Assist GC Reynolds preparing for LMRC, WC, Chicago; Vacation; GC Short & LC Burns orientation, IHB, Chicago; Assist GC Balonek & LC McCleary w/ claims review, Metra; Labor Management Cmte. Mtg. w/ GC Balonek, Metra, Chicago; Mtg. w/ GC Balonek and OmniTrax VP, IL RR, Chicago; Assist GC Balonek, mtg. w/ Metra President Orseno, Chicago; PLB 7154, IC, Chicago; Div. 520 mtg. w/ GC Reynolds, WC, Chicago; Mtg. w/ GC Cundari, LC Sipich and GC-Elect Short, IHB, Chicago; Assist GC Semenek w/ NY Dock arb. Prep.; Assist GC Reynolds w/ new LC orientation, Green Bay, Wisc.; Advisory Board mtg., Chicago; Review discipline/certification issue w/ GC Balonek, Metra.

**VICE PRESIDENT MIKE TWOMBLY:** Assigned to all Union Pacific GCAs (Eastern District, Northern Region (former C&NW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western), Central Region, Southern Region; Tacoma Belt RR, Utah RR, Longview Portland & Northern NO & Longview Switch, Portland Terminal; On duty at home office; General office duties,

telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Vacation; UP GC update and passenger extra, San Antonio to Fort Worth, TX; UP-SR and UP-WR joint conference, Fort Worth; UP-CR GCA mtg., Little Rock, Ark.; UP-SR NY Dock Section 4 negotiations, Spring, TX; UP-SR and UP-WR joint conference, Las Vegas; UP-WL and PHL conference, New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; UP-SR and UP-WR joint conference, Phoenix, Ariz.

**VICE PRESIDENT GIL GORE:** Assigned to all CSX; Grand Trunk Western; Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA special assignment; Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) issues, CSXT; General office duties, paperwork, correspondence, emails, telephone calls, etc.; CSX safety initiatives; Mediation; CAPS monthly mtg.; IDAP draft follow up; Fischbach Award and seniority concerns; PLB w/ GC Thornton; IDAP Local Chairman conference call; LMRD mtg. w/ GC Karakian; Mtg. w/ GC Hannah, re: points attendance; Western Lines roster; Executive session, PLB 7655 awards 48 and 49; CSXT-BLET mediation conference call and follow up; Operation Red Block mtg.; Mtg. on safety initiatives; DRC agenda.

**VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER:** Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Great Western; Texas Pacific; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; GCA mtg. w/ GC Bobby Brown, Amarillo, TX; Public Law Board, assisting GC Brown, Chicago; BNSF operations mtg. w/ GC Wilson, Denver; Division 32 mtg w/ GC Wilson, Chicago; Division 13 mtg. w/ GC Wilson, LaCrosse; Division 726 mtg. w/ GC Wilson, Aberdeen; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; Division 104 mtg. w/ GC Wilson, Spokane; Conference call w/ BNSF Labor Relations and Arbitrator O'Brien, re: PLB 5939 and PLB 7383, Henderson.

**VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS:** Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, SouthRail, Gateway Western, Illinois & Midland), Texas Mexican Rwy.; CP Rail System/US (Indiana Southern, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern); Springfield Terminal (St. Lawrence & Atlantic, Delaware & Hudson), Cedar River, Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Huron & Eastern issues, assist GC Ladrig; Mid South issues, Illinois & Midland issues, assist GC Craddock; CP issues and DM&E, assist GC Semenek; Springfield Terminal issues and D&H, assist GC Moore; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Ball; KCS issues, assist GC Parker; Division mtgs. w/ GC Ball, Laredo and Houston, TX; IMRR negotiations conference call, GC Craddock; L&I issues, assisting GC Hogan; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Ball; Sign Soo Line agreement and DM&E negotiations, assist GC Semenek, Chicago; Vacation; PLB 7239, assist GC Craddock; DM&E contract mtgs., Kansas City, Rock Island, Ill., Davenport, Iowa, St. Paul, Wisc., St. Louis, Mo.; LIRR retirement dinner dance, Islandia, N.Y.; Vacation; Springfield Terminal mediation, assist GC Moore; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; I&M negotiations, assist GC Craddock; Montreal & Atlantic issues, assist GC Moore.

**VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS:** Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern; New York, Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; Connecticut Southern; Western New York & Pennsylvania; Indiana & Ohio; RSAC/RSIA Fatigue Management Group; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; On duty at home office; Conference call w/ all NS General Chairmen, re: Disputes Committee issues; NS PWS mtg w/ all NS GCs, Macon, Ga.; NECR/WNYP issues, assist GC Martin; IORY negotiations, assist GC Cole, Columbus, Ohio; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland.

**VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS:** Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; Union Railroad; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Secretary-Treasurer class, Cleveland; 2016 regional mtg. planning; Union Track mtgs., Cleveland; LIRR issues, assist GC Sexton; Contract talks, assist GC Decker, NJ Transit; Local Chairman class, Cleveland; Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.; SEPTA NMB mtgs., assist GC Dixon, Philadelphia; SEPTA contract issues, assist GC Dixon; LIRR retirement dinner dance, Islandia, NY; Mobilization mtgs., Cleveland; National Legislative Board mtg., Cleveland; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland.

## AAR: Rail traffic trends downward in 2015

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) reported in early December that total rail traffic volume was down throughout the United States by 1.8 percent from 2014 levels for the first 11 months of 2015.

According to an AAR press release, total U.S. carload traffic for the first 11 months of 2015 was 13,046,761 carloads, down 5.1 percent or 699,664 carloads, while intermodal containers and trailers were 12,530,739 units, up 1.8 percent or 223,272 containers and trailers when compared to the same period in 2014. For the first 11 months of 2015, total rail traffic vol-

ume in the United States was 25,577,500 carloads and intermodal units, down 1.8 percent or 476,392 carloads and intermodal units from the same point of 2014.

For the month of November, carload traffic totaled 1,041,605 carloads, down 10.4 percent or 120,259 carloads from November 2014. U.S. railroads also originated 1,024,162 containers and trailers in November 2015, down 1 percent or 10,828 units from the same month of 2014. For November 2015, combined U.S. carload and intermodal originations were 2,065,767, down 6 percent or 131,087 carloads and intermodal units from November 2014. ©

## SIGN UP REQUIRED FOR BLET NEWS FLASH EMAIL SERVICE

The BLET National Division encourages all members to sign up for its automated News Flash email alert system. Our previous system has been upgraded and contact information from the old system could not be imported into the new system. As a result, previous subscribers will need to sign up again and confirm their email address in order to receive our emails. **Sign up at [www.ble-t.org/newsflash](http://www.ble-t.org/newsflash).**

If you have not previously subscribed, then this would be an excellent opportunity to sign up and have our News Flashes delivered automatically to your inbox. An informed membership is a strong membership, and our News Flash email alert system helps to keep you informed regarding the business of the Brotherhood. ©