Retirement legislation rolls in Congress

H.R. 1140 has 280 co-sponsors, S. 697 has 40; Bush statements loom

Rail labor lobbyists made great strides in securing support for the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001 in both the House and Senate during March, but negative statements from the White House threaten to derail timely passage of the legislative proposal.

H.R. 1140 was introduced on March 21 and replaced H.R. 190, which was introduced by Congressman Bud Shuster (R-PA), who is one of the leaders of the Blue Ribbon Railroad Safety Summit. The legislation’s chances for passage if it were re-introduced.

H.R. 1140 quickly gained momentum and received 72 co-sponsors in less than 24 hours. As members of the House left Capitol Hill for the Easter recess in early April, H.R. 1140 had 280 co-sponsors (see list on Page 9).

The bipartisan leadership of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee re-introduced H.R. 1140, including Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK), ranking member James Oberstar (D-MN), Jack Quinn (R-NY), chairman of the Subcommittee on Railroads, and ranking member Bob Clement (D-TN).

Representative Quinn emphasized the importance of H.R. 1140.

“This legislation is critical to the hundreds of thousands of retired rail employees and their families across the country,” said Quinn. “Coming from a railroad family, I have seen first-hand the amount of hard work and long hours that goes into working on a railroad.”

Action on the Railroad Retirement Improvement Act moved to the Senate on April 4. A companion bill to H.R. 1140 — S. 697 — was introduced by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Max Baucus (D-MT), who are the authors of S. 697. Including Senators Hatch and Baucus, S. 697 had 34 original co-sponsors. As Senators went to their home districts for the Easter recess, S. 697 had 41 Senate co-sponsors.

The BLE and GIA members are encouraged to view the list of co-sponsors on Page 9 of this issue. If their Congressperson’s name is not on the list, then BLE and GIA members should act. The Senator or Representative should be contacted at his/her home office during the Easter recess (see page 9 for details) and encouraged to support the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001.

Unfortunately, statements made by President George W. Bush in his budget proposal, “A Blueprint for New Beginnings,” give the distinct impression that the White House may stand opposed to the Railroad Retirement package.

“The railroad retirement system’s pension program is not fully funded like other private industry pension plans; indeed, there is a $39.7 billion unfunded liability,” Bush states in his budget proposal. “Any examination of the program should set as first priorities ending taxpayer subsidies to the program and ensuring the industry funds its workers’ pensions.”

Regardless of the dubious validity of those statements, it’s clear that supporters of H.R. 1140 and S. 697 will face an uphill battle.

In a strongly worded letter to the House Budget Committee, however, members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee defended the Railroad Retirement legislation and questioned the accuracy of Bush statements.

In a major victory for organized labor and workers’ rights, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company has settled a lawsuit filed by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees in February to stop the coercive genetic testing of its employees by BNSF. The settlement agreement filed by the parties, issued a temporary restraining order and BNSF agreed to halt its coercive genetic testing program which BNSF said it had begun in March 2000. “This order should be a real relief for those who believe individuals still have some rights of privacy in the United States,” said lead counsel Harry Zanville, at that time.

In the April 6 settlement agreement, BNSF agreed to terminate all genetic testing of employees represented by BMWE and BLE. The railroad also agreed to destroy all blood samples and records of testing previously done (when authorized by the affected individuals), confirming the status of the destruction to the BMWE and BLE, and agreed not to discipline any employee for failure to comply with requests for medical information in connection with previously conducted tests.

BMWE, BLE derail BNSF genetic testing

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BMWE, BLE, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers announced on April 8.

The BMWE filed suit on February 9 against BNSF and Athena Diagnostics in Sioux City, Iowa (Western Division of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Iowa) and was soon joined by the BLE, seeking to remedy the illegal, compulsory regime of genetic testing of injured employees” by the BNSF.

On February 12 Judge Mark C. Bennett, by consent of the parties, issued a temporary restraining order and BNSF agreed to halt its coercive genetic testing program which BNSF said it had begun in March 2000. “This order should be a real relief for those who believe individuals still have some rights of privacy in the United States,” said lead counsel Harry Zanville, at that time.

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Ble NEWS

Ble divisions announce ID convention delegates

Here is the list of official international delegates to the Seventh Quin- quennial Convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, as re- ported by Ble divisions at press time.

The convention is scheduled for September 24-28 at the Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami, Fla.

Information packets are going out to all delegates around May 1, and delegates also will have their own area on the website shortly.

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All Ble divisions are listed below in numerical order, followed by the name of the delegate's name.

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In another misguided and biased report, the Amtrak Reform Council on March 29 proposed dividing Amtrak into separate companies — one responsible for train operations, a second government-owned corporation to oversee tracks and stations, and a third consolidated government oversight agency.

The main flaw with the proposal, however, is that it is like trying to paint in Great Britain — where it failed miserably.

Legislators in Great Britain privatized the country’s passenger rail system in the mid-1990s, and in doing so, created one company that runs trains and a second company that maintains track and infrastructure — much like the Amtrak Reform Council suggested for the future of Amtrak.

The National Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), Sir Alastair Morton, the chairman of Britain’s Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), Sir Alastair Morton, the nation’s rail network is a mess, with passenger trains subject to long delays. The British passenger rail industry has suffered four major fatal accidents in three and a half years, and has been accused of putting profit before safety.

“At the center of the (British) railway industry’s problems is the division of track from trains which sets up an adversarial relationship between (the track maintenance company) and the train operating company,” according to a recent report in The Economist magazine. “Not only does it mean that the two sides do not work naturally together on day-to-day matters of maintenance, or on longer-term issues of investment. It also involves many man-hours as each side monitors the other’s performance, checking on whether the complex performance schedules have been met.”

The solution, according to British railway officials, is to reunite the two companies. Members of the Amtrak Reform Council, ironically, suggest doing just the opposite to Amtrak.

“From their globe-trotting journeys, we would hope that Amtrak leaders understand that other countries, particularly England, are reeling from the dire consequences of privatization including the degradation of safety and service. Instead, the ARC majority would steer America down that road as well,” said BILE International President Edward Dubroski.

In assessing the passenger train corporation’s future, the ARC made four basic recommendations in its second annual report, issued on March 20.

• Provide a “stable and adequate source of federal funding” for Amtrak capital projects and the new Northeast Corridor authority. This could take the form of appropriations, bonds or an additional 1 cent-on-gallon tax on gasoline that states would match for passenger service.

• Divid Amtrak, minus the Northeast Corridor, into a government entity and a train operating company. The government entity would provide policy guidance, program administration and oversight and would insulate the operating company from political pressures. The operating company, which could be Amtrak or some other company, would run passenger, mail and express service, operating only trains that the federal or state governments subsidize.

• Consolidate all federal oversight and program responsibilities, now scattered throughout the government at the General Accounting Office, the Office of Management and Budget, the Transportation Department and elsewhere, into one agency.

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BLES President Dubroski, in his role as Chairman of the TTC’s Rail Labor Division, AFL-CIO, issued a statement strongly criticizing the ARC proposal.

“The ARC had a chance to make a clear, bold show of support for Amtrak, but instead offered up a complicated series of recommendations that further underscore the ARC’s anti-Amtrak bias,” he said.

The ARC could have issued a rallying cry for making our national passenger rail service a long-term success but instead missed another opportunity to convince the American people that it performs a worthy function. After reviewing the ARC’s latest report, we deeply regret that American taxpayer dollars were wasted on the work of this misguided panel and vow to continue our effort to zero out federal funding for this unnecessary oversight panel.

“The ARC has rolled out a murky series of options and rationales for its ideological agenda, when it should have called on Congress and the President to act,” Dubroski said.

“One investment measure that has wide bipartisan support in the High Speed Rail Investment Act. We had hoped that the ARC would have realized the innovation behind this legislation and believe the Council missed an opportunity by failing to join in support of this bill.”

In 1999, the ARC board members took an expensive trip to London for one of its meetings. However, it failed to report what it learned in those meetings in any of its proposals.

“For all the global jet-setting ARC members did at taxpayers’ expense, you would think they would have noticed that no nation in the world allows its intercity passenger rail service to wither on the vine,” Dubroski continued. “Every nation subsidizes passenger rail to ensure it can deliver first class transportation services.

Clearly, Amtrak and its 20,000 employees are at a crossroads. Long-term and sustainable financing, not ideologically driven proposals to break up Amtrak, will ensure a strong and viable national passenger rail system. The ARC should heed that call or cease to exist.”
Union members question railroad’s commitment to safety following fatal Amtrak derailment on BNSF tracks in Iowa

BNSF challenged on safety

NJ Transit faces $297,000 in FRA fines

Railroad accused of massive accident, injury cover-up

Unmaintained tracks cause derailments to increase by 18%

The number of train derailments — like the recent Amtrak accident in Iowa — that killed one person and injured 96 others — have increased by nearly 20 percent over the past four years.

The rise in derailments was expected, according to Federal Railroad Administration spokesman Mike Purviance. "We also have learned, as a result of the safety initiatives they are taking on the railroads, that there may be systematic non-reporting of occupational injuries by a number of major U.S. railroads. We urge the FRA to do everything possible to uncover under-reporting of injuries and impose appropriate penalties against violators," he said.

BNSF is the railroad most frequently pinpointed by FRA investigators. The FRA late last month assessed NJ Transit with $297,000 in fines for alleged mishandling of safety records. The fines resulted from a two-page statement issued a year ago by the New Jersey transit authority, which failed to notify FRA investigators of "significant non-compliance," according to the FRA. The order stated, "NJ Transit's practice of not recording injuries in an accident report accepts the results of the report issued by the Federal Railroad Administration and we will fully comply with their recommendations regarding our record-keeping procedures," said the statement. "In fact, NJ Transit has already implemented changes to improve our administrative systems.

"Safety has always been and will continue to be the number one priority at NJ Transit," the statement continued.

"BLS officers and members, who cooperated with FRA investigators, said the audit’s findings exposed NJ Transit’s practice of not reporting injuries in order to protect its safety statistics and win national awards. "The guys with the sharpened pencils win those awards," said Bob Vallochi, BLS General Chair. "They’re all bogus."

NJ Transit said it will refile the late report. However, NJ Transit spokesman Mike Purviance said the FRA had only "attempted to file a two-page statement on the report."

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On New Year’s Eve, part of a coal train derailed near Red Oak, Iowa, ap- parently because an overeager coal car derailed and crashed into the road bed, he said.

On March 3, a switching accident on the Burlington Northern in Willmar, Minn., claimed the life of a switchman, UTU member Terry Weyh.

NJ Transit failed to alert the Federal Railroad Admin- stration to dozens of acci- dents and injuries involving its train employees and pas- sengers in 2000, violations that could result in fines as high as $257,000.

On March 8, the FRA auditors determined there were 91 violations for keeping and filing safety records. The violations included:

• Seven cases of not re- porting accidents or incidents; and
• One case of not report- ing an accident.

The auditors determined that NJ Transit was more than just lax in its record-keeping, finding that 20 of the 91 violations were for deliberately not reporting injuries or incidents. On March 5, the FRA presented NJ Transit with its findings of "significant non- compliance" with regulations for keeping and filing safety records. The violations included:

• Three violations for willfully not reporting off-duty employee injuries; and
• Three cases of willfully not reporting injuries in an incident record.

The auditors were "frustrated by the amount of work they have to do to get these (rail) corridors through- some of the core section people who are up, rail passengers and injured 96 others — Union members question railroad’s commitment to safety following fatal Amtrak derailment on BNSF tracks in Iowa

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Slight rate increases effective June 1
United Healthcare announces new coverage costs for GA-23111 policyholders

At recent meetings with the Railway Labor Organizations constituting the Policyholder under GA-23111, a detailed study of the premiums and benefit payments under the various Plans was made. It was agreed that the following pays increases were made for coverage effective June 1, 2001 (payment for June coverage is due May 20th).

Plains A & B—There will be no changes in the monthly payment rates.

Plan C — The monthly payment for:
  • employees or dependents increases from $285 to $295.
  • each student child remains at $50.
  • each incapacitated child increases from $130 to $140.

Plan D — The monthly payment rate for coverage will increase from $130 to $140.

Plan E — The monthly payment rate will increase from $103 to $120.

Plan F — The monthly payment rate will increase from $132 to $150.

Plan G — The monthly payment rate will increase from $103 to $130.

Plan H — The monthly payment rate for coverage will increase from $180 to $200.

All plans under GA-23111 along with GA-23111 will be paid out under Plan D payment rates.

Q. Why is there a deductible on my prescription drug purchases from the pharmacy?
A. In spite of the advantages of using the mail order pharmacy benefit, many members continue to purchase drugs at the local pharmacy. We expect the prescription drug benefits to continue to increase 20% next year, which is the major factor impacting the Plan D payment rates.

Q. Can I change from Plan D to Plan F or from Plan F to Plan D?
A. You cannot change plans until an open enrollment period is currently planned for December 2002, with changes effective on January 1, 2003.

Q. Will GA-23111 benefits change?
A. At this time no benefit changes are planned. However, if costs continue to rise, changes in plan benefits may be needed to help control the cost of the plans.

(End’s Note: To contact United Healthcare, write: Railroad Accounts, 450 Columbus Blvd., P.O. Box 156453, Hartford, CT 06153-0453.)
May 25 deadline approaches for SMA 2001

SMA Chairman W.J. “Bubba” Spriggs invites everyone to Georgia for some good old fashioned southern hospitality at the 74th annual BLE-GIA Southeastern Meeting Association.

Division 779 and BLE members throughout the state of Georgia are hosting the event, to be held in Pine Mountain, Ga., at beautiful Callaway Gardens.

Members planning to attend the convention have until May 25 to make hotel reservations and take advantage of discounted room rates.

The form on Page 6 of this issue has been provided for your convenience in making hotel reservations. Please mail completed hotel registration forms to Callaway Gardens.

Registration for the 74th annual SMA begins on June 24. The formal banquet is the evening of June 28, so it is recommended that guests check out of their rooms the morning of June 29.

Members who have not already done so are encouraged to pre-register for the SMA by using the form provided below. Please mail completed SMA pre-registration forms to Brother Spriggs at the address provided on the form.

There’s something for the whole family at Callaway Gardens, including fishing and boating, golfing at three PGA caliber courses, an amusement park, the Florida State University Flying Circus, bicycle trails, and a Gun Club that includes skeet, trap and sporting clays.

Members with questions can contact Brother Spriggs by calling (706) 989-0064, or writing: P.O. Box 8511, Columbus, GA 31908.

Members can also e-mail him at: wjspriggs@aol.com.

Once again, the hotel reservation deadline is May 25, and members should use the pre-registration form provided on Page 6 of this issue.

Members with questions can contact Callaway Gardens at: (800) CALLAWAY, or online at: www.callawaygardens.com.

A tentative schedule of events is published below for your convenience.

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**2001 SMA Tentative Schedule (Subject to Change)**

**Sunday, June 24**

Registration (location TBA) Hospitality suite open

**Monday, June 25**

Opening Day

7:00-8:30: Breakfast (registered guests must show identification)

9:00-11:45: Opening meeting

Noon-2:30: Lunch/legal fair


**Tuesday, June 26**

7:00-8:30: Breakfast, briefing on daily events

9:00-9:30: Prepare for golf tournament (pre-registration)

10:00-5:00: Golf tournament (Callaway Gardens course)

10:00-5:00: Fishing, skeet, tour Callaway Gardens, and various other activities

5:00: Open evening

**Wednesday, June 27**

Open Day

7:00-8:30: Breakfast, briefing on daily events

9:00-9:30: Prepare for golf tournament (pre-registration)

10:00-5:00: Golf tournament (Callaway Gardens course)

10:00-5:00: Fishing, skeet, tour Callaway Gardens, and various other activities

5:00: Open evening

**Thursday, June 28**

Workshops

7:00-8:30: Breakfast, briefing on daily events

9:00-noon: Local chairmen’s workshop

9:00-10:00: Merrill Lynch (401k presentation)

9:00-noon: Secretary-Treasurer workshop

Noon-1:00: Lunch

1:00-2:30: Workshop for all delegations to International Convention

2:45-5:00: SMA business meeting (bylaws, election of officers, selection of 2003 site, etc.)

6:30-midnight: Banquet, dinner, dancing, live entertainment

**Friday, June 29**

Check out by noon

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**74th Annual SMA Pre-Registration Form**

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers

74th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association

June 24, 2001-June 29, 2001


Name: ___________________________ Address: ___________________________

City: ___________________________ State: ___________________________ Zip: ___________________________

Telephone: ___________________________

BLE Division: ___________________________ Title: ___________________________

SMA Chairman

W.J. Spriggs Jr.

P.O. Box 8511

Columbus, GA 31908

**Name:** ___________________________

**Address:** ___________________________

**City:** ___________________________ **State:** ___________________________ **Zip:** ___________________________

**Telephone:** ___________________________

**BLE Division:** ___________________________ **Title:** ___________________________

**SMA Chairman**

W.J. Spriggs Jr.

P.O. Box 8511

Columbus, GA 31908

Number of Children Attending: ___________________________

**Desire Childcare? Yes No**

Interested Activities (Please indicate by checking):

- Golf
- Sightseeing
- Shopping
- Baseball Game (Braves/Red Stix, pending schedule)
- Fishing
- Bike Riding
- Canoeing
- Paddle Boats
- Steam Train Ride
- Wild Animal Park
- Roosevelt Little White House
- Skeet/Trap Shooting
- Callaway Gardens Tour
- Atlanta Zoo
- Underground Atlanta
- Robin Lake (man-made beach)
- Tennis
- Other

Lodging Preference

Callaway Inn *Cottage* *Villa*

Convention Rate $96.00 per night apply to rooms at Callaway Inn

**Inquire for rate.**

Fees

Activity Fee: $50.00 per person attending BLE/GIA SMA.

SMA Dues $20.00 per BLE Member — not included in activity fee.

Any questions concerning the 2001 BLE/GIA SMA convention can be directed to W.J. Spriggs Jr. (Chairman) by calling (706) 989-3607 (home)

or (706) 989-0064 (BLE office) or e-mail: <WJSPRIGGS@aol.com>.

Mail this pre-registration form and activity fees to:

W.J. Spriggs Jr.

SMA Chairman

P.O. Box 8511

Columbus, GA 31908

(Make checks payable to W.J. Spriggs Jr.-Chairman SMA 2001)
Bush’s budget statements threaten H.R. 1140

The Conservatives

H.R. 1140

Continued from Page 1

Bush’s statements: “The Committee is disappointed by the statement concerning the Railroad Retirement system in the FY 2002 President’s Budget. This statement implies that the Railroad Retirement system is receiving massive federal subsidies and is not capable of meeting its future pension obligations. This is not true. According to the most recent actuarial valuation, the railroad retirement system will not experience any cash flow problems for the next 75 years under the most likely economic assumptions. Railroads and their employees pay a very heavy pay-roll tax burden to fund the system, which, as a result, is financially sound. These healthy reserves have produced significant reserves for the system — over six years worth of full benefit payments. This healthy reserve is one of the bases for, and would be protected by, the railroad retirement reform legislation approved 391-25 by the House last fall and which the Committee considers in the near future.” If President Bush’s apparent threats come to fruition, it will mark the second year in a row the Railroad Retirement legislation has been killed by partisan politics.

Last year in the 106th Congress, H.R. 4484 passed the House by a 391-25 majority and had the support of 83 Senators. However, it was killed in committee by three ultra-conservative Senators — Pete Domenici (R-NM), Phil Gramm (R-TX) and Don Nickles (R-OK) — who wanted to have completely killed the railroad retirement system.

As a result of this legislative failure, experts say, the benefits received by railroad workers will be reduced by about $200 million in funds immediately if the MBTA did not honor its 13(c) obligations. Amtrak's contract to operate MBTA service has been renewed.

Transportation unions remain strong

Unions, struggling in many industries where they’re flying high on the nation’s airlines and railroads.

Airline and railroad workers are governed by the Railway Labor Act of 1926, which gives their unions an unusual amount of power — although it’s also more difficult for them to strike.

The RLA makes striking difficult because it requires extensive negotiations and allows the president and Congress to intervene.

But the RLA, combined with circumstances unique to transportation, has helped create much of the unions’ strength. Among the reasons:

• Unlike unions in the private sector, there is no procedure for an employer to decertify a railroad or airline once they’ve been recognized, they are there to stay.

• In other industries, unions have lost clout as companies move overseas, but airlines and railroads can’t do that.

• Many airline and railroa...
As of April 10, there were 290 co-sponsors of H.R. 1140. They are listed here alphabetically by state, then by district.

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New legislation in the state of North Dakota will provide railroad workers with some of the strongest protection in the nation when it comes to train crew transportation. In an April 12, Governor John Hoven signed Senate Bill 2009 into law, which requires railroad crew transportation providers to carry $1 million in underinsurance/uninsured motorist insurance. Hoven said, “The North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman Mike Museha reports that in the summer of 1998, BLE and UTU members joined forces, taking on the huge task of improving the safety and insurance standards of railroad crew transportation companies in North Dakota.”

In the 1999 legislative session, a law was passed that mandated the North Dakota Public Pension Board to set standards for contract vans. Prior to that legislation, only vehicles carrying 15 or more passengers, who were subject to smaller contract vans could drive unlimited hours, and vans were subject to no greater scrutiny than a private vehicle. The standards set by the highway patrol (15 pages) were some of the strongest in social security legislation which also has no effect on a railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) annuity. Since the payment of a railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) annuity can be affected by the Railroad Retirement Board for spouse and widow(er) annuitants entitled to public service pensions, the following questions and answers describe how payments are adjusted by the Railroad Retirement Board for spouse and widow(er) annuities:

1. What is considered a public service pension? A public service pension is any periodic benefit, as well as lump-sum payments made in lieu of periodic pension payments, based on an individual’s own employment with a Federal, state, or local government unit. Some examples are pensions paid to teachers, police officers, and civil service personnel on the basis of age or disability. Full salary benefits paid to a retired or resigned judge under the Federal judiciary retirement system are also considered public service pensions.

Railroad Retirement Act spouse and widow(er) annuities (including divorcee spouse, surviving divorced spouse and remarried widow(er) annuities) are subject to dual benefit reductions when social security benefits or dual railroad retirement annuities are also payable; and, such railroad retirement benefits may be subject to reduction when certain public service pension payments are also due a spouse or widow(er). Since the payment of a railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) annuity can be affected by the Railroad Retirement Board, can result in benefit overpayments which have to be repaid, sometimes with interest and penalties. The following questions and answers describe how payments are adjusted by the Railroad Retirement Board for spouse and widow(er) annuitants entitled to public service pensions.

2. What is the background of the public service reduction in spouse and widow(er) annuities and how does it affect such payments? The public service pension reduction in railroad retirement spouse and widow(er) benefits was effected by 1977 social security legislation which also applied to the tier I portion of railroad retirement spouse and widow(er) annuities. Since a social security spouse or widow(er) benefit is reduced, a railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) is also entitled to a social security benefit based on her or his own earnings, it was considered redundant that a social security spouse or widow(er) benefit also be reduced for a public service pension based on the spouse’s or widow(er)’s own non-social security earnings. The tier I portion of a railroad retirement annuity is based on railroad retirement and any nonrailroad social security credits received by an employee, is computed under social security formulas, and approximates what social security would pay if railroad work were also covered by that system. Tier I benefits are therefore reduced in the same manner as social security benefits when certain other benefits are also payable.

3. How is the public service pension reduction applied to railroad retirement spouse or widow(er)’s annuities? For spouse and widow(er)s subject to the public service pension reduction, the tier I reduction is, under current law, equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public service pension. The amount of the public service pension is the current gross amount, before any deductions for income in withholding, Medicare premiums, health insurance or other benefits.

4. Does the public service pension reduction apply to all railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) annuities? The public service pension reduction does not apply to a spouse or widow(er) who filed for and became entitled to her or his railroad retirement annuity before December 1977, or to a spouse or widow(er) whose public pension is not based on her or his own earnings.

5. Are there any other provisions that would exempt railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) annuitants from the public pension offsets? Railroad retirement spouse and widow(er) annuitants may also be exempt from the public pension reduction if both of two requirements are met. The first requirement is that they began to receive or were eligible to receive their Federal, State or local government pension before December 1982. This means they must have met the age and service requirements for their pensions before December 1982, even though they did not apply for their pensions before then. The second is that they meet all requirements for railroad retirement spouse or widow(er) benefits in effect under social security law in January 1977. At that time, for example, a divorced woman’s marriage must have lasted at least 20 years, rather than 10 years as required today. Also, a husband or widow must have received at least one-half support from his wife.

Even if spouses and widow(er)s do not meet these criteria, they still may be exempt from the reduction beginning with railroad retirement benefits payable December 1982 if they received or were eligible to receive their Federal, State, or local government pensions before July 1, 1983, and were receiving at least one-half support from their spouses at the time their spouses retired or died. This provision applies to men and women.

6. Where can more specific information on how these pension offsets affect railroad retirement benefits be obtained? Individuals who may be affected should contact the nearest field office of the Railroad Retirement Board for information as to how their public service pensions could affect their railroad retirement benefits. For the phone number or address of the nearest Board field office, BLE members should look in the telephone directory under “United States Government,” or check with their local union official, rail employer, post office, or Federal Information Center. Members can also find the address and phone number of the Board office serving their area by calling the automated toll-free RRB Help-Line at (800) 908-0772 or by checking the Board’s Web site at www.rrb.gov.

Most Board field offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
2001 Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers
61st Annual IWC Golf Registration Form

Please list any players that you would like to play with or other players that you are registering. No steel spiked shoes.

Name: ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

Address (street, city, state, zip): ___________________________

Phone: ___________________________

E-mail Address: ___________________________

BLE Division: ___________________________

Railroad: ___________________________

Spouse (if attending): ___________________________

Golf registration: Number of Players: Total Cost:

$85.00 X = ___________________________

Please make checks payable to IWC 2001 and mail to:

Skip Colyer
507 Cortez Ct.
Fort Collins, CO 80525-2507

Please make a separate check for golf fees.

Total = ___________________________

Deduct 10% if postmarked before April 30, 2001

Total Due = ___________________________

Please make checks payable to IWC 2001 and mail to:

Skip Colyer
507 Cortez Ct.
Fort Collins, CO 80525-2507

2001 Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers
61st Annual International Western Convention
Registration Form

Name: ___________________________ ___________________________ ___________________________

Address (street, city, state, zip): ___________________________

Phone: ___________________________

E-mail Address: ___________________________

BLE Division: ___________________________

Railroad: ___________________________

Spouse (if attending): ___________________________

How Many = Total Cost

General Registration $50.00 X = ___________________________

Casino Bus ($10 in coupons): $10.00 X = ___________________________

Ocean Journey (adults) $18.00 X = ___________________________

Ocean Journey (kids 12 and under) $6.00 X = ___________________________

GIA Mint / Botanical Gardens $10.00 X = ___________________________

Colorado RR Museum / BBQ $35.00 X = ___________________________

Banquet $35.00 X = ___________________________

Total = ___________________________

Please make checks payable to IWC 2001 and mail to:

Skip Colyer
507 Cortez Ct.
Fort Collins, CO 80525-2507

May 6 deadline looms for IWC hotel discount

Skip Colyer, Chairman for the 61st annual International Western Convention in Denver, Colo., advises that members have until May 6 to take advantage of specially arranged discount room rates for this year’s convention. After the deadline, room rates will increase.

Brother Colyer encourages everyone to come to Denver for the “Mill High” convention from May 30 to June 2. A room rate of $105 per night has been secured at the Hyatt-Regency Tech Center (7800 East Tufts Ave., Denver, CO 80237), good for three days before and after the convention.

Hotel reservations can be made by calling (800) 233-1234 or (303) 779-1234.

Reduced airline fares via United Airlines are available through Travel Organizers by calling (800) 292-2754.

Convention highlights include a golf tournament, tour of the Denver Mint, the Ocean Journey, Denver Botanical gardens, and a barbecue at the Colorado Railroad museum.

Those who register by April 30 will receive a 10% discount on all convention fees (except the golf tournament). Members can use the forms provided here for easy golf and convention registration; however, members must call the Hyatt-Regency Tech Center to make hotel reservations.

A tentative itinerary, which is subject to change, is provided below:

Tentative Agenda 61st annual IWC Denver, Colo.

Tuesday, May 29, 2001
10:00-6:00: Early Bird Registration

Wednesday, May 30, 2001
8:00-6:00: Registration
6:30-2:30: Golf Tournament
10:00-2:00: Tour of Ocean Journey
3:00-7:00: Reception by the pool

Thursday, May 31, 2001
7:00-9:00: Continental breakfast
9:00-10:30: Dr. Nelson Powell (sleep deprivation)
9:00-12:00: S/T, L/C workshops
10:30-11:00: Coffee break
11:00-12:00: FRA speaker
12:00-2:00: Lunch provided by FELA
12:00-1:30: GIA luncheon (speaker Jolie Root on nutrition)
2:00-4:00: Railroad Retirement speaker / United Healthcare
2:00-4:00: S/T, L/C, L/R workshops
5:00-7:00: Bus to Denver Mint and Botanical Gardens

Friday, June 1, 2001
7:00-9:00: Continental breakfast
9:00-10:30: Dr. Nelson Powell (sleep deprivation)
9:00-12:00: S/T, L/C workshops
10:30-11:00: Coffee break
11:00-12:00: FRA speaker
12:00-2:00: Lunch provided by FELA
12:00-1:30: GIA luncheon (speaker Jolie Root on nutrition)
2:00-4:00: Railroad Retirement speaker / United Healthcare
1:30-4:00: S/T, L/C, L/R workshops
1:30-4:00: Bus to Denver Mint and Botanical Gardens
5:00-10:00: Bus to Colorado Railroad Museum (Bus B-Q)

Saturday, June 2, 2001
7:00-9:00: Continental breakfast
9:00-10:00: FELA delegates meeting
9:00-12:00: S/T workshop
12:00-1:30: Lunch (on your own)
1:30-4:00: Workshops
6:00-7:00: Cocktail hour
7:00-9:00: Banquet
Unions tackle BNSF derail tests

Genetic Testing

BMWE, BNSF derail genetic tests

Advisory Board March Activity


SAFETY TASK FORCE HOTLINE
(800) 306-5414

The necessity for national legislation limiting the use of genetic screening in employment decisions, agreed to “com- mence written and oral expression of this position to key officials of Congress and the Executive Branch” within 30 days of execution of the agreement. The significance of this provision of the settlement agreement is readily apparent as Congress is being asked to en- act a comprehensive, national prohibition against genetic testing. BNSF was the railroad Senator Edward Kennedy was talking about when he said, “genetic testing is a real and frightening problem, and it is happening right now; by one of the largest rail- roads in the country” as he reintroduced the Genetic Nondiscrimination in Health Insurance Employment Act the

Genetic Testing

BMWE member Gary Avary and his wife Janice, the Nebraska nurse certified with making the genetic testing discovery, was shown in a “60 Minutes” segment on April 10.

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