Ed Rodzwicz is the new National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, effective immediately.

Former National President Don M. Hahs was removed from office on March 20 by order of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, based upon the recommendations of a hearing panel appointed under Article XIX of the IBT Constitution. Brother Hahs has appealed the decision.

On March 9, the IBT's Advisory Board voted on April 9 to endorse Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States. The Advisory Board determined that Senator Obama presented the best chance for working Americans to have a voice in the White House.

The endorsement decision comes after a meeting of the BLET's top governing body. The Advisory Board endorses Illinois Senator's bid for U.S. President

Paul Sorrow


Paul’s experience and knowledge are tremendous assets to the Brotherhood and our members,” National President Rodzwicz said.

Prior to his first election in 1991 to vice-president, Sorrow served as General Chairman on the CSX Transportation (CSXT) Eastern Lines, elected September 1985, and reelected in 1990.

He began his professional railroad career in 1965, with the Seaboard Air Line. One railroad career in 1965, with the Seaboard Air Line. One year to the day after he went firing for the railroad, he earned his promotion to locomotive engineer in 1966. He

BLET backs Obama

Advisory Board endorses Illinois Senator’s bid for U.S. President

As President, Obama would help working Americans.

The BLET’s Advisory Board voted on April 9 to endorse Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States.

The endorsement decision comes after a meeting of the BLET’s top governing body. The Advisory Board determined that Senator Obama presented the best chance for working Americans to have a voice in the White House.

We believe Senator Obama is the best candidate to fight for the rights of the 55,000 men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, BLET National President Ed Rodzwicz said.

“The next U.S. President will make several decisions and appointments that will have an impact on the rail industry. We believe Senator Obama will fight to make the right decisions when it comes to the health and safety of all rail workers.”

The BLET endorsement comes on the heels of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters’ decision to endorse Senator Obama. Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said the Teamsters endorsed Senator Obama for various reasons, including his plans to rebuild America’s transportation infrastructure.

“Senator Obama will fight to rebuild our transportation infrastructure,” Hoffa said. “He will work with us to address critical issues from our ports to our highways, rails and airports. We need a president who is committed to rebuilding America and Barack Obama will be that president.”

The decision to endorse Senator Obama was not taken lightly by BLET leadership. President Rodzwicz said that Senator Obama is only the fourth Presidential candidate the BLET has endorsed in its 145-year history. Founded on May 8, 1863, the Brotherhood’s first Presidential endorsement was Bill Clinton in 1992, followed by Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004.
M&NA shortline workers ratify new contract

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen have ratified their second collective bargaining agreement with the Missouri & Northern Arkansas Railroad, a RailAmerica regional railroad headquartered in Carthage, Mo. Approximately 71 percent of the members returned ballots with a wide majority (74 percent) in favor of the proposed settlement.

The four-year agreement was ratified on March 15 and became effective on March 30. The agreement covers approximately 71 percent of the members who work on Missouri & Northern Arkansas Railroad trains to major power plants at Independence, Mo. (plus 40 miles of trackage rights). MNA operates approximately 540 miles of line in Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. Its main line extends 384.1 miles (plus 40 miles of trackage rights) on Union Pacific Railroad lines from Kansas City, Mo., to Newport, Ark. MNA interchanges with Union Pacific at both points. MNA also interchanges with BNSF Railway at Lamar, Mo., Carthage, Aurora, Springfield, and Joplin, Mo., and with Kansas City Southern Railway at Joplin.

MNA also operates several miles of industrial trackage in the city of Springfield; this segment is disconnected from the rest of the MNA system and traffic is hauled via BNSF to and from the Aurora interchange. MNA traffic generally consists of coal, grain, frozen foods, minerals, steel, chemicals, asphalt, and forest products. MNA operates unit coal trains to major power plants at Independence, Ark., and Mustang, Ok.

Advisory Board
Continued from Page 1

agreements have contained innovative provisions such as bonuses for locomotive engineers tied to the railroad’s financial performance and scope rules that protect the craft of locomotive engineer in the face of evolving technology.

“Service to this fine Brotherhood has been a cornerstone of my livelihood for the past three decades,” said BLET General Chairman Rick Gibbons. “There were several major obstacles that we kept from advancing the plot over the past two years, such as the sale of RailAmerica to the Fortress Group and the revolving door for General Managers, but we finally did the deal as shown by the overwhelming return of ballots and the vast majority in favor of the agreement.”

Gibbons also thanked the two involved Local Chairmen, Keith Knight of BLET Division 116 and Rick Oeltjen of BLET Division 178 for their continued involvement. He also thanked GCA Vice Chairman Randy Dumey and Vice President Steve Speagle for helping define the bargaining group and for bringing additional expertise and knowledge to the bargaining table.

“I couldn’t be more proud of a group of guys in this difficult time for negotiations,” Brother Gibbons said. “It was a collective effort and we are very proud of the outcome.”

The employees on the Missouri & Northern Arkansas Railroad were first organized in 1999 and their first BLET negotiated agreement went into effect in April of 2000. The MNA is one of several BLET represented properties under the RailAmerica umbrella.

BLET gets $1.3 million award at LIRR

Court settles 7,500 outstanding claims from 1998-2004

A United States District Judge sided with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen on March 24 in a case that awards approximately $1.3 million in back payments to union members who work at the Long Island Rail Road.

The Order, entered by U.S. District Judge Dora L. Irizarry of the Eastern District of New York, enforces the 2006 decision of Public Law Board 6846, which settled approximately 7,500 outstanding claims from 1998-2004 totaling approximately $1.3 million. However, LIRR paid only a portion of the claims, arguing that certain categories of claims were not covered by the Award. The BLET then pursued the matter in District Court.

In court, LIRR argued that the PLB 6846 Award was ambiguous regarding the BLET’s claims. U.S. District Judge Irizarry found that there was no question that the union was claiming approximately $1.3 million in back payments to union members in the PLB proceeding, and that there was no ambiguity over the claims the railroad must pay.

“LIRR’s elaborate argument… merely attempts to obfuscate the simple principle that is applicable here,” Judge Irizarry’s Order read.

LIRR also argued that there was a conflict between the Award of PLB 6846 and other PLB decisions. However, the Judge ruled that LIRR was foreclosed from arguing that prior awards are contrary to those received before the original PLB.

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“LIRR’s elaborate argument… merely attempts to obfuscate the simple principle that are applicable here,” Judge Irizarry’s Order read.
The BLET is proposing portions of a proposed new rule that would increase the strength of tank cars and significantly improve rail safety. BLET National President Ed Rodzwicz said today:

"The BLET is supporting portions of the rule regarding the increased strength of tank cars. He said the BLET also supports proposed operational restrictions on older tank cars that do not meet the new standards.

The BLET has a vested interest in improving tank car safety as a means of protecting the health and safety of its membership. Two BLET members were killed in the line of duty in accidents in 2004 and 2005. In both cases, the deaths were not caused by injuries sustained in derailments — rather, the fatalities were caused by the inhalation of toxic fumes.

In 2004 — the most recent year for which data is available — out of approximately 1.7 million hazmat shipments by rail, there were 20 accidents in which a hazmat was released. In these accidents, a total of 47 hazmat cars released some amount of product, meaning that the risk of a release was less than 0.003 percent. However, releases involving certain types of hazmat, particularly those that are poisonous- or toxic-by-inhalation (PII/TII) have had disastrous consequences.

Several recent accidents led Congress to direct the FRA to study the dynamic forces on tank cars under accident conditions and initiate a rulemaking to develop and implement appropriate design standards for pressurized tank cars. In addition to completing the study, FRA held several public meetings in 2006 and 2007, at which the BLET and other stakeholders proposed ways to reduce the risks posed by PII/TII shipments.

The Proposed Rule would:

- Establish a performance standard for tankhead and shell puncture-resistance systems for cars used to transport PII/TII.
- Require expedited replacement of pre-1989 tank cars used to transport PII/TII.
- Limit speeds for PII/TII movements in dark territory to 30 mph unless (1) shipped in cars meeting the enhanced performance standard, or (2) FRA has approved a risk assessment and risk mitigation strategy establishing that operating conditions provide at least an equivalent level of safety as that provided by signaled track; and
- Limit speeds for all other PII/TII shipments to 50 mph.

A 2002 derailment in Minot, N.D., led to an anhydrous ammonia release that killed one and injured 333 others, 11 seriously. Damages and environmental clean-up and other costs have exceeded $11 million to date.

A 2004 collision in Macdona, Texas, that led to a chlorine leak claimed the lives of three — including BLET member Heath Pape, whose death was caused by inhaling toxic fumes — and seriously injured 30 others. The price tag for this accident topped $8.5 million.

The most tragic of these accidents is the 2005 collision and chlorine leak in Granvilleville, S.C., which killed BLET member Chris Seeling and eight others. Another 504 people were injured, 75 of whom were hospitalized. Brother Seeling was relatively uninjured in the crash, but was overcome by toxic fumes, which caused his death. If this accident had occurred in the middle of the day, instead of the middle of the night, the number of casualties most likely would have been significantly higher. Monetary damages and costs are well over $300 million, and vital public services were interrupted for days in the aftermath of the accident.

President Rodzwicz applauded FRA’s efforts in improving tank car safety, and said the BLET will continue to work with the FRA to do more to protect rail workers. “This Proposed Rule represents a significant step in preventing accidents such as those in Minot, Macdona, and Granvilleville,” Rodzwicz said. “We also applaud the FRA for recognizing that a stronger tank car is only one piece of the puzzle, and we will continue to work with FRA to improve safety in other areas, such as the implementation of switch point detection technology in dark territory.”

The comment period for the Proposed Rule runs until June 2, and the BLET will file a formal response, President Rodzwicz said.

The federal government is proposing new rules to strengthen rail tank cars such as this one to make them less likely to release their hazardous materials in the event of a derailment.
Open enrollment, new benefit plans for '08

In mid-March, UnitedHealthcare announced that for the upcoming open enrollment for 2008, three new benefit plans are available under GA-23111. These new benefit plans, called Plans A, B, and C, provide new options with different costs and plan designs allowing individuals to select the plan best suited for their needs.

These changes should be of particular interest to former railroad employees and their eligible dependents who are not yet eligible for Medicare. Current Enrollees in GA-23111 Plans B or C Need to Take Action

Current Plans B and C will be replaced by these new options. If you are currently enrolled in Plans B or C, you need to select a new plan or the following will occur: effective June 1, 2008:

• Current Plan B enrollees will automatically default to the new Plan A
• Current Plan C enrollees will automatically default to the new Plan C

Note: Any current enrollees in Plan B or C who do not wish to continue their participation in one of the new plans can contact the Customer Care Center at 800-842-5252 to cancel their enrollment, or simply not pay the required cost associated with the new plans.

Obtaining Additional Information on Plans A, B, and C

If you are interested in enrolling under any of the new benefit plans, please contact UnitedHealthcare at 800-842-5252. One of United Healthcare’s customer care professionals will provide you with the following:

• Additional Information and an enrollment form
• Certificate of Coverage (this document describes each benefit plan in detail)
• Answers to any other questions you may have.

A color chart specifying details of the services provided by these new plans is available below.

Plan Design of Plans A, B, and C

Some of the services provided by these new plans are outlined below. Please review the accompanying chart for more details.

• Physician office visits and certain medical services
• Discount savings program - Rx & other health and wellness purchases
• Inpatient hospital services
• Inpatient & outpatient mental health and substance abuse services
• Surgical procedures
• Outpatient rehabilitation services
• Durable medical equipment

While all of the benefits offered by each plan are the same, they differ in the following areas:

• Annual Deductible
• Annual Out-of-Pocket Maximum
• Percentage of Eligible Expenses Covered
• Monthly Cost

You pay a separate monthly cost for yourself and for your dependents. The monthly cost for your dependents is inclusive of all of your eligible dependents (spouse, children under age 19, students age 19 to 25, and incapacitated children age 19 and over).

The monthly cost for each of the new plans effective June 1, 2008 is:

• Plan A - $250
• Plan B - $325
• Plan C - $400

Register to vote!

https://electionimpact votenet.com/ teamsters/votereg/index dm

Special Enrollment Period — April and May 2008

Due to the addition of these three new plans, a special two month open enrollment period is being offered for this year only. The open enrollment period will begin April 1st and run through May 31st with the coverage you select effective June 1, 2008. After this 2008 enrollment period, the next open enrollment will be May 2010. (Note that this 2008 expanded enrollment period also applies to other Plans under GA-23111 such as Plan E and Plan F)

UnitedHealthcare GA-23111 Plans A, B and C Benefit Summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Plan A</th>
<th>Plan B</th>
<th>Plan C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly cost</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td>$325</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual deductible</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual out of pocket limit</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime maximum benefit</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inpatient hospital services*</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgical procedures (surgery, anesthesiology &amp; facility; ambulatory surgical center and outpatient surgical center)</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical services/physician’s office visits</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. 100% of eligible expenses w/out deductible for Mammography and Pap Smear.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. 100% of eligible expenses w/out deductible for Mammography and Pap Smear.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. 100% of eligible expenses w/out deductible for Mammography and Pap Smear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient mental health and substance abuse services</td>
<td>75% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for first 40 visits in Calendar Year (CY); 60% thereafter.</td>
<td>75% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for first 40 visits in Calendar Year (CY); 60% thereafter.</td>
<td>75% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for first 40 visits in Calendar Year (CY); 60% thereafter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outpatient rehabilitation (physical, occupational, speech therapy and chiropractic)</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. Limited to 30 visits per CY Exception: CY visit limit does not apply to services for a child under age 21 with a congenital or birth defect.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. Limited to 30 visits per CY Exception: CY visit limit does not apply to services for a child under age 21 with a congenital or birth defect.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible. Limited to 30 visits per CY Exception: CY visit limit does not apply to services for a child under age 21 with a congenital or birth defect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergy/asthma services</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency room services</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durable medical equipment*</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescription drugs (this benefit provides for a discount program, this is not insurance)</td>
<td>Un discouraged Rx Program - discount savings avg. 25% to 35% or higher on commonly prescribed generics/brand name Rx’s bought at a participating retail location or UHA mail order service.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home health care services*</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible up to 30 visits per CY.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible up to 30 visits per CY.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible up to 30 visits per CY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospice facility*</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled nursing facility* (SNF)</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for up to 31 days per stay in SNF.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for up to 31 days per stay in SNF.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible for up to 31 days per stay in SNF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency ambulance services</td>
<td>50% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible in the event of an emergency.</td>
<td>60% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible in the event of an emergency.</td>
<td>70% of eligible expenses after satisfying deductible in the event of an emergency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Requires prior notification — Care Coordination must be contacted to determine whether the purchase, rental of equipment (over $1,000) or services provided are medically appropriate.
**Education & Training Photo Album**

Under the direction of National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert, the BLET’s Education & Training Department recently completed a nationwide tour of hands-on training seminars for BLET members.

Based on feedback from the membership, the workshops were incredibly helpful for first-time officers and served as a beneficial refresher course for veterans. The Department’s travel schedule is as follows:

- **December 2-5, 2007:** Workshop for Secretary-Treasurers in Cleveland.
- **January 27-30, 2008:** Workshop for General Committee Secretary-Treasurers who file LM-2 reports in Madison, Wis.
- **February 24-27:** Workshop for Secretary-Treasurers in Dallas, Texas.
- **March 2-5:** Workshop for Secretary-Treasurers in Jacksonville, Fla.
- **March 9-14:** Workshop for Legislative Representatives in Washington, D.C., and
- **March 16-21:** Workshop for Local Chairmen in Chicago, III.
- **March 30-April 3:** Workshop for General Chairmen in St. Louis, Mo.

“arly March: 2008 Workshop for General Chairmen in St. Louis, Mo.

“I am extremely proud of the work done by the Education and Training Department,” National Secretary-Treasurer Walpert said. “Nearly 200 BLET members have successfully completed valuable training in just a few months, thanks to a dedicated group of hard working individuals.”

For their work in presenting and organizing the Secretary-Treasurer workshops, NST Walpert especially thanked: Ken Kroeger, Special Representative and Coordinator of the Education & Training Department; Bob Broka, Director of Records; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director of Tax Compliance; and Walt Schmidt, BLET Director of Online Services.

He also thanked Rick Radke, BLET National Vice President and Director of Arbitration, and Doug Davidson, Assistant Director of Arbitration, for their leadership roles in the workshops for General Chairmen. Ben Blissett.

He also recognized the efforts of John Tolman, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative, his staff and Teamsters personnel for their assistance in directing the training seminar for Legislative Representatives.

“I am especially proud of the work for Legislative Representatives primarily because it was the first of its kind,” Walpert said. “I hope it is the first of more to come as the workshop was well received by all in attendance.”

Walpert said the General Chairman workshop in St. Louis was significant because leaders of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division were in attendance.

In his role as Coordinator of the Education and Training Department, Ben Kenkroger scheduled and organized all workshops. He thanked his wife, Sereena Hogan, for her assistance and patience.

Walpert also thanked Phillip J. Sullivan, Executive Director of the North American Railway Foundation, for providing stipends to all BLET members who successfully completed an Education & Training workshop.

“I believe the membership of the BLET is one of the most highly educated in all of labor thanks to the North American Railway Foundation and our own Education and Training Department,” Walpert said. “I thank Phil Sullivan and NARF for their continued support.”

Due to the overwhelming success of these sessions, the Education and Training Department is currently planning more workshops for the future. NST Walpert encouraged all officers to attend and advised members to monitor the BLET website, www.blet.org, for announcements regarding dates and locations of future workshops.

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**Education & Training Photo Album**

**S-T Workshop: Jacksonville, Fla.**

**Front row, from left:** John Bove, S-T Div 269; Bill Hardberger, S-T CSX GCA; Kenneth Moore, S-T Div 621; William Walpert; NST & Director of Education & Training; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education & Training and Special Representative; and Charles Brown, S-T Div 30.

**Second row, from left:** Ryan Brown, S-T Div 170; Tom Danner Jr, S-T Div 934; John McIlhannon, S-T Div 769; Cindy Peterman, S-T Div 322; Jamie Spivey, S-T Div 766; Craig Funk, OK Alt; Steve Leg. Rep. S-T Div 578; Dave McKinney, S-T Div 26.

**Third row, from left:** Robert Olsen, S-T LIRR GCA, Div 269; Daryl Dickey, S-T Div 646; Larris Horton, S-T Div 210; Al Santorelli Jr, S-T Div 495; Lorna Stevens, S-T Div 11; and Andrew Goosling, S-T, Mich. SLB.

**Fourth row, from left:** Bruce Galloway, S-T Div 286; Charles Owen, S-T Div 37; Robin McLean, S-T Div 140; Ron Liles Jr, S-T Div 786; Jeffrey Valentine, S-T Div 158; and Gerry Hirt, S-T Div 730.

**Fifth row, from left:** Cecil Dobberly Jr, S-T Div 59; Jonathan Buck, S-T Div 208; Jason Tutley S-T Div 30; David Wyatt, S-T Div 216; Walt Schmidt, Webmaster, and Bob Broka, Records Department Director.

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**Education & Training Photo Album**

**S-T Workshop: Madison, Wis.**

**Front row, from left:** Brenda Greenman, GTW GCA ST, Div 33; Louie Fernandez ST, Div 383; Mark Whitchurch, CN-IC 1st VOC & GCA ST; Curt Houston, UP Western Lines ASG and Div. 415 ST; Chuck Fleming, UP Western Lines GCA ST Div 192; Bill Walpert, BLET National Secretary-Treasurer; Jim Nelson, BNSF/MRL GCA ST Div 644; Jim Thompson, UP Eastern Region GCA ST; Ken Kroeger, BLET Special Representative and Coordinator; BLET Education & Training Dept.; and Thomas Curran LC & ST, Div 659.

**Back row, from left:** Thomas Greenman, GTW GCA ST; James Chappelle, NJ Transit GCA ST; Kevin Keverly, Div. 81 ST and UP-Central Region GCA ST; David Welber, CSX-North Lines GCA ST; Jerry Ellmore, NS-Northern Lines GCA ST; David Estes, Amtrak GCA ST, and Mike Pancoast, BNSF Northern Lines ASG and Div 622 ST.

**Present but not pictured:** Gary Bell UP Central Region GCA ST, Michael Merson, UP Northern Region GCA ST; Dr. Elaine Renee, Office of Tax Compliance Director; Walt Schmidt, BLET Webmaster; and John Lund, Ph.D. Professor, School for Workers University of Wisconsin-Extension.

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**S-T Workshop: Dallas, Texas**

**Front row, from left:** David Boiles, S-T Division 523; Scott Piekarski, S-T Division 187; Kenton Hastings, Alt S-T Division 144; William Walpert NST & Director of Education & Training; Shane Ellis, Executive Assistant Texas SLB; Ken Kroeger Coordinator of Education & Training, and Special Representative, and Jim Bradford Special Representative.  

**Second row, from left:** Jim Evans, Secretary-Treasurer Division 327; Christopher Riley, S-T; Matt Williams, S-T Division 736; Pat Murphy, S-T Division 141; Bill Stein, S-T Division 663; Jerry Bullard, S-T Division 212; Fernando Gonzales, S-T Division 871; and James Usery, Texas SLB ST, S-T Division 834.

**Third row, from left:** Terry Willingham, S-T Division 500; Tyler Jones, S-T Division 740; Rusty Snell, S-T Division 620; and Gary Gooldy, S-T Division 392.

**Fourth row, from left:** Ty Rickman, Alt S-T Division 172; David Lively, President Division 172; Anthony Leneeur, S-T Division 201; Robby Hunt, S-T Division 703; Kenneth Hachtel, S-T Division 206; Richard Dame, Kansas SLB ST Division 587; Curtis O’Neil, S-T Division 107; and James Carlson, S-T Division 77.

**Fifth row, from left:** Tony Brown, S-T Division 857; Walt Schmidt Webmaster; Bob Broka Records Department Director; and Dr. Elaine Renee Office of Tax Compliance Director.
Our union has designated attorneys who are qualified to serve as counsel for BLET members in accordance with the Federal Employers’ Liability Act (FELA) governing workplace accidents. In the event of an injury or death before reaching any settlement with a railroad, members or surviving families should contact an attorney listed to get expert advice concerning their legal rights under the FELA.

In addition, if you or any members of your family have questions concerning medical malpractice, product liability or other types of injury cases, please don’t hesitate to contact one of these law firms for a consultation concerning your rights and remedies.

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The Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group is once again reminding rail workers in yard and switching service to remain vigilant.

If crews work safely and avoid casualty in one year, by applying SOFA operating recommendations, then they must also work safely throughout their careers. Crews must always work safely because postponing casualty does not prevent casualty, according to the report.

The original SOFA Report was released in October 1999. Prior to the release, there were 47 switching fatalities related to the report’s five operating recommendations in the 7.75-year period January 1992 through September 1999. Expressed as a rate, there were 6.07 switching fatalities per year related to operating recommendations. Slipping, tripping, stumbling, and losing balance were events associated with nearly half of the 1,380 severe injuries occurring from January 1, 1997 through December 31, 2007.

In 2008 year to date, there have been two fatalities. The first occurred on January 8 in Waukegan, Ill. A Union Pacific conductor, working a METRA commuter train, was struck by another METRA commuter train while he was stooped over the crossover switch connecting the two main tracks located just south of the passenger station. The second occurred on February 3 in Chicago. A brakeman, working between cars in his train, stepped out from between two cars and into the path of a main track Canadian National train that was passing the stopped NS train.

The SOFA Working Group makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1
Any crew member intending to foul track or equipment must notify the locomotive engineer before such action can take place. The locomotive engineer must then apply locomotive or train brakes, have the reverser centered, and confirm this action with the individual on the ground. Additionally, any crew member that intends to adjust knuckles/drawbars, or apply or remove EOT device, must ensure that the cut of cars to be coupled into is separated by no less than 50 feet. Also, the person on the ground must physically inspect the cut of cars not attached to the locomotive to ensure that they are completely stopped and, if necessary, a sufficient number of hand brakes must be applied to in-

sure the cut of cars will not move.

Recommendation 2
When two or more train crews are simultaneously performing work in the same yard or industry tracks, extra precautions must be taken:
- Same Track — Two or more crews are prohibited from switching into the same track at the same time, without establishing direct communication with all crew members involved.
- Adjacent Track — Protection must be afforded when there is the possibility of movement on adjacent track(s). Each crew will arrange positive protection for (an) adjacent track(s) through positive communications with yardmaster and/or other crew members.

Recommendation 3
At the beginning of each tour of duty, all crew members will meet and discuss all safety matters and work to be accomplished. Additional briefings will be held any time work changes are made and when necessary to protect their safety during their performance of service.

Recommendation 4
When using radio communication, locomotive engineers must not begin any shove move without a specified distance from the person controlling the move. Strict compliance with “distance to go” communication must be maintained. When controlling train or engine movements, all crew members must communicate by hand signals or radio signals. A combination of hand and radio signals is prohibited. All crew members must confirm when the mode of communication changes.

Recommendation 5
Crew members with less than one year of service must pay special attention to safety awareness, service qualifications, on-the-job training, physical plant familiarity, and overall ability to perform service safely and efficiently. Programs such as peer review, mentoring and supervisory observation must be utilized to ensure employees are able to perform service safely.

SOFAs update: Postponing casualties does not prevent them.
A message from Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa

Obama’s support for fair trade would help U.S. workers

Sen. Barack Obama is the only presidential candidate who can right the destructive wrongs of the past eight years.

Looking at Obama’s record on trade issues and issues dear to working families — such as his commitment to passing the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) — the choice was clear for the Teamsters Union.

I’ve had several candid conversations with Obama. There’s no doubt in my mind that he has a genuine concern about not only our country’s trade policies, but also about the hardworking men and women whose livelihoods and families are affected by them.

Every bit of the Democratic primary fight between Obama and Hillary Clinton, and every bit of the general election, will be an uphill battle to show people how important it is for the United States to have trade policies that take American workers into account.

Obama has long said NAFTA was oversold since its inception, and he will work with Canadian and Mexican leaders to fix it so it’s fair for American workers.

Obama understands that America needs fair trade policies that will create a level playing field with our trading partners. He understands that the corporate race to the bottom has had a devastating impact on our economy and our communities. Obama also understands that the trade policies of the Bush administration have done nothing to raise the standards of workers globally.

Labor will work closely with Obama to achieve a better balance — to keep good jobs in America and raise wages, establish benefits and improve working conditions abroad. He has consistently stood firm against agreements that would undermine our nation’s economic security.

But Obama realizes that the misadventure of trade policy of the Bush administration is not the only problem. As president, Obama will pressure the World Trade Organization to stop countries from continuing unfair government subsidies to foreign exporters and non tariffs barriers on U.S. exports.

Trade, of course, is not the only reason why we have endorsed Obama. He understands what working people are going through. He will fight for an improved health care system, retirement security and good jobs. He will join us in our commitment to rebuild our nation’s transportation infrastructure and will make appointments that make sense for people who will protect workers.

A President Obama will ensure our toys and food are safe, the Environment Protection Agency actually protects the environment and the Department of Labor enforces worker safety laws and wage and hour laws.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
General President

APRIL 2008 CALENDAR & EVENTS

APRIL 25... U.S. Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences, Mo. and N.J.

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board will conduct two free informational conferences. Registration for the programs is at 8 a.m., with each beginning promptly at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 12:30 p.m. The first is in St. Louis, Mo. (Holiday Inn South County Center, 4921 South Lindbergh Blvd.) and the second is in East Hanover, N.J. (Ramada Conference Center, 130 Route 10 West). Per Railroad Retirement Board request, elected BLEF officials only, please!

MAY 2... U.S. Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences, Mo. and Pa.

The RRB will conduct two informational conferences on May 2. The first is in Kansas City, Mo. (Embassy Suites, Kansas City Airport, 7440 Tiffany Springs Parkway) and the second is in Allentown, Pa. (Ramada Conference Center, 1 Sheridan Drive). Time of meetings is the same as April 25 listing above.

JUNE 15-19... 81st Annual Southeastern Meeting Association, Montgomery, Ala.

Chairman Jason Poppen of BLET Division 495 will host the 81st annual SMA at the Embassy Suites in Montgomery. Ala. See May 2008 issue or www.ble-t.org for registration form and cventions details.

JULY 6-10... 76th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association, Huron, Ohio

Arrangements Chairman Rodney Cuffig is planning the 2008 EUA at Sewell Creek Resort. Be sure to visit www.EUA2008.com for information, or March 2008 issue for registration form.

AUGUST 17-20... 48th International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Chairman Mike Gohlin has hosted the 2008 IWC at the Embassy Suites Hotel/San Luis Obispo.

SEPTEMBER 14-18... 73rd Southwestern Convention Meeting, St. Louis, Mo.

Chairman David Grimes and the members of Division 42 hosted the 2008 SWCM at the St. Louis Hilton at the Ballpark (The One South Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.). More details to come!

Advisory Board February Activity

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

Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, OH.

BLET NEWS

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