

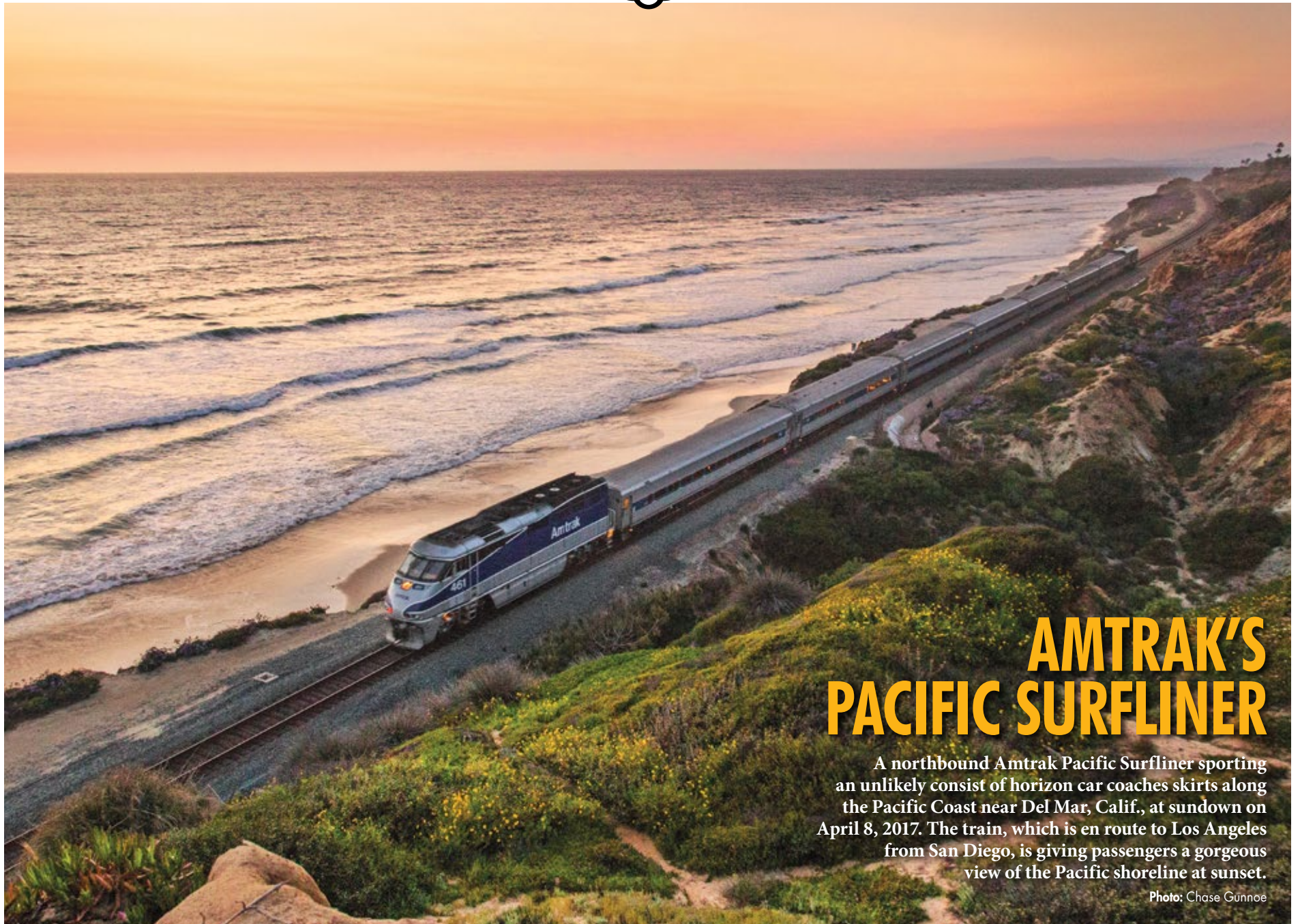


# Locomotive

## ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN NEWS

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## AMTRAK'S PACIFIC SURFLINER

A northbound Amtrak Pacific Surfliner sporting an unlikely consist of horizon car coaches skirts along the Pacific Coast near Del Mar, Calif., at sundown on April 8, 2017. The train, which is en route to Los Angeles from San Diego, is giving passengers a gorgeous view of the Pacific shoreline at sunset.

Photo: Chase Gunnoe

## BLET members ratify Amtrak contract

**B**y better than a 9-to-1 margin, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with Amtrak on April 2, 2018.

The final tally was 90.5% in favor and 9.5% against, with nearly 65% of eligible members casting a ballot.

The five-year deal protects all existing work rules and provides members with general wage increases of 18.84% compounded over the life of the contract. It runs through December 31, 2021, with full retroactive pay dating to July 1, 2015. Employee health care contributions are frozen at \$228.00 per month over the life of the deal. The new contract provides much needed improvements for employees entitled to paid time off for active duty in a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

The agreement governs more than 1,400 locomotive engineers who operate Amtrak's passenger and commuter trains over its 21,000-mile, 46-state route system.

BLET National President Dennis R.



A group of BLET members/Amtrak locomotive engineers at Union Station in Washington, D.C.

Pierce thanked BLET members for participating in the balloting and ratification process. He also thanked Amtrak General Chairman Mark Kenny and his negotiating team for their diligent work at the bargaining table.

"Coming on the heels of our National

Freight Agreement, this contract protects the work rules that our Amtrak members work under while also capping their health care contributions and providing real wage increases," President Pierce said. "I want to thank Brother Kenny and his negotiating team for bringing this round



of bargaining to a successful conclusion."

General Chairman Kenny said: "Given the stalemated status of our previous collective bargaining efforts with Amtrak prior to the settlement of the 2017 National Freight Agreement, and the exorbitant health care costs proposed by the Carrier at that time, it stands plainly evident that this agreement represents a significant improvement in both general wage increases and employee health care contributions over the life of the agreement, and without forfeiture of any existing work rules." @@



### BLET President's Message

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### Election News

B.J. Trumble reelected Michigan SLB Chairman **pg. 5**

### PTC Update

FRA provides progress report on Positive Train Control **pg. 7**

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

# "RIGHT TO WORK" IS WRONG FOR RAILROADERS

In March of this year, I attended the annual meeting of the BLET's National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen, which was held in New Orleans. This Association is a body made up of all BLET State Legislative Board Chairmen, and is recognized through BLET's Bylaws as a body that is part of BLET's National Legislative Board.

When I addressed the Association in March, I shared with them the importance of our legislative and regulatory efforts at a time where the Union movement is under severe attack. I also shared with the Association that it was my goal to attend each and every meeting of a BLET State Legislative Board Meeting this year to reinforce the importance of our efforts to protect the Union movement.

Much of what our movement has accomplished over BLET's 155 years stands in the crosshairs of pro-corporate, anti-union politicians. Unions have always stood in the way of Corporate America walking over the working class of America with impunity. Now more than ever, we must unite to tell those politicians who only answer to their corporate masters that their efforts to harm the working middle class of America will not go unchallenged.

The primary tool in their attack on Unions is their push for so called "right to work." These corporate-backed efforts



President Pierce addresses members and guests at the Ohio State Legislative Board's 16th quadrennial meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on April 23, 2018.

date as far back as 1955. In fact, as early as 1959, Eleanor Roosevelt stood up against Right to Work saying, "it does nothing for working people, but instead gives employers the right to exploit labor." Nothing has changed in the 60 years that the American labor movement has been under this attack, other than the intensity with which corporate forces are willing to remove Unions from the American landscape.

Since the Association meeting in March, I have attended State Legislative Board Meetings in Michigan, Ohio, Cali-

fornia and Missouri. My message at each meeting has been the same. If Corporate America succeeds in eliminating the Union movement, our lives as railroad employees will change dramatically. At its core, "right to work" is no more than a clever slogan intended to make you work for less, and to hogtie the organization that fights on your behalf ... your Union.

It allows those who don't want to support the Union movement to stop paying dues, but at the same time requires Unions to provide representation to those same employees

who would freeload on the Brotherhood. It's actually a simple formula: impose a financial obligation to represent freeloaders and eventually the Union collapses under financial obligations that it cannot meet.

Here is how this negatively impacts all BLET Teamsters. If and when Corporate America succeeds and your Union collapses under the weight of this unfunded representational mandate, so disappears your Union contract. No Union, No Contract! No seniority roster, no standard rates of pay, no right to due process; those are what the workplace looks like without a Union contract.

As many of you know, I did not grow up in a Union household. My first jobs as a young adult were not Union jobs. Looking back now, I am convinced that my non-Union experience is what motivates me to support the Union workplace with all of my being. That is because I know the difference; I know what it's like not to have access to adequate health care. I know what it's like to have no voice in the workplace, and I know what it's like to face termination with no recourse for speaking up against the injustice that many American workers face every day.

Today, the Union movement is in the fight of its life. Anti-Union forces with their catchy slogans like "right to work" have convinced many Union members that they would be

better off on their own. As I have shared at all the meetings that I have attended, the term "getting railroaded" isn't an exaggeration. It's what happens to railroad employees who do not have the protections of a Union contract. I have yet to meet a BLET member that wants to work at a Class 1 Railroad without a seniority roster, a seniority district, a standard rate of pay, or a contractually protected health care plan.

It's been said that you are not paranoid when they are actually shooting at you. Brothers and Sisters, there is an anti-union movement in this country that will not stop until all of the contractually protected workplace rights that we all take for granted are gone.

Perhaps the most important part of that fight is to elect politicians who support the working middle class, and more importantly, are not afraid to say the word Union. Unions are what helped build this nation's middle class by pulling countless Americans out of the poverty that Corporate America has long imposed when unchecked. We must not succumb to the catchy slogans that would take us back to those times by wiping out the Union movement. Join me in our fight to protect our way of life. Be involved in your Union, and be involved in our efforts to protect the Union movement.

**DENNIS R. PIERCE**  
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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The primary tool in their attack on Unions is their push for so called "right to work." These corporate-backed efforts date as far back as 1955. In fact, as early as 1959, Eleanor Roosevelt stood up against Right to Work saying, "it does nothing for working people, but instead gives employers the right to exploit labor."

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## SIGN UP FOR BLET NEWS FLASHES!

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website that are automatically emailed to you.

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WWW.BLE-T.ORG/NEWSFLASH.** On this page, you will find an area to enter your email address and click *subscribe* to be-

gin receiving the most current news from the BLET National Division.

It is a great way to keep informed on the most recent issues impacting your job, your contract and your Brotherhood.

## BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Official 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 policy 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

# MLK's ECONOMIC DREAMS REMAIN UNFULFILLED

**A**pril 4 marked the 50th anniversary of the tragic assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who stands forever tall as one of the greatest leaders in U.S. history.

I was in Memphis in April, where King was murdered, with my fellow Teamsters, other union members, civil rights leaders and social justice activists to remember the life of a man who was an icon not only for African-Americans, but all who faced injustice, including the working poor.

Many may not know that King was in Memphis at that time because he was advocating for striking Memphis waste workers who faced unsafe working conditions and low pay. Two months earlier, two city sanitation workers had died when the vehicle they worked on malfunctioned and killed them. The reverend made it clear in his famous "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, delivered the night before his death, that he was sure justice would come for all those disenfranchised, just not sure when.

The Memphis strikers did eventually prevail in their fight. But the struggle for sanitation workers, both in Memphis and elsewhere, continues. Half a century lat-

er, the Teamsters are standing with waste workers fighting for workplace safety, because these jobs are still the most dangerous in the nation. This union and our members are still fighting for a living wage. And we're still fighting for dignity and respect on the job.

The Teamsters have always stood at the forefront of equality, going back to contracts it negotiated more than 100 years ago. The union, when my father was its president, joined the March on Washington, provided financial support to King and the civil rights movement and participated in actions across the nation. Viola Liuzzo, wife of a Teamsters Local 247 business agent, gave her life in 1965 standing up against hate.

King knew that civil rights and labor rights were one and the same. Social justice and economic justice go hand in hand. Now is the time for elected officials to listen to the demands of working people. It's time to fulfill King's final clarion call for economic justice.

Fraternally,

**JAMES P. HOFFA**  
TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT



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Social justice and economic justice go hand in hand. Now is the time for elected officials to listen to the demands of working people. It's time to fulfill King's final clarion call for economic justice.

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## Plan ahead for BLET's Washington D.C. regional meeting

**T**he deadline for room reservations is a few months away, but BLET members and guests are encouraged to register now for the BLET's regional meeting at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C., which will be held August 13-17, 2018.

Guests at the Washington D.C. regional meeting will stay at the Capital Hilton (1001 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20036, (800) 774-1500). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET's regional meeting website, [www.bletregionals.org](http://www.bletregionals.org). If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code "BLET." Room reservations must be made by July 7, 2018.

The Capital Hilton is situated in the heart of Washington D.C. just blocks from the White House, the National Mall, and a multitude of significant national attractions. Museums include the National Air and Space Museum, International Spy Museum, National Museum of American History, and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. National monuments in the area include the Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, National World War II Memorial, and the Washington Monument.

The Washington D.C. regional meeting kicks off with registration and a wel-



come reception on Monday, August 13 for those who purchased tickets for the event. Opening ceremonies will take place the morning of Tuesday, August 14, with a closed meeting for BLET members that afternoon. A golf tournament will be held on Wednesday, August 15, at the National Golf Club in Fort Washington, Md. There is an additional cost to register for the golf tournament. Non-golfers will be on their own to explore the many enter-

tainment options that Washington, D.C. has to offer.

Workshops will be held for Local Chairmen, Secretary-Treasurers and Legislative Representatives throughout the day on Thursday, August 16. The BLET's Washington D.C. regional meeting will conclude with a banquet the evening of August 16. Attendees will travel home on August 17.

Meanwhile, registration continues for the BLET's Monterey regional meeting,

June 18-22, 2018. Guests will stay at the Hyatt Monterey Hotel & Spa (1 Old Golf Course Rd., Monterey, Calif., (831) 372-1234). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET's regional meeting website, [www.bletregionals.org](http://www.bletregionals.org). If making reservations by telephone, you must mention the group code "BLET Regional Meeting." Room reservations must be made by May 21, 2018. ©

# RRB Q&A: Comparison of benefits under Railroad Retirement and Social Security

**E**mployers and employees covered by the Railroad Retirement Act pay higher retirement taxes than those covered by the Social Security Act, so that railroad retirement benefits remain higher than social security benefits, especially for career employees who have 30 or more years of service.

The following questions and answers show the differences in railroad retirement and social security benefits payable at the close of the fiscal year ending September 30, 2017. They also show the differences in age requirements and payroll taxes under the two systems.

## 1 How do the average monthly railroad retirement and social security benefits paid to retired employees and spouses compare?

The average age annuity being paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) at the end of fiscal year 2017 to career rail employees was \$3,415 a month, and for all retired rail employees the average was \$2,730. The average age retirement benefit being paid under social security was over \$1,370 a month. Spouse benefits averaged \$1,010 a month under railroad retirement compared to \$695 under social security.

The Railroad Retirement Act also provides supplemental railroad retirement annuities of between \$23 and \$43 a month,

which are payable to employees who retire directly from the rail industry with 25 or more years of service.

## 2 Are the benefits awarded to recent retirees generally greater than the benefits payable to those who retired years ago?

Yes, because recent awards are based on higher average earnings. Age annuities awarded to career railroad employees retiring at the end of fiscal year 2017 averaged about \$4,030 a month while monthly benefits awarded to workers retiring at full retirement age under social security averaged nearly \$1,855. If spouse benefits are added, the combined benefits for the employee and spouse would total \$5,560 under railroad retirement coverage, compared to \$2,780 under social security. Adding a supplemental annuity to the railroad family's benefit increases average total benefits for current career rail retirees to over \$5,590 a month.

## 3 How much are the disability benefits currently awarded?

Disabled railroad workers retiring directly from the railroad industry at the end of fiscal year 2017 were awarded more than \$2,920 a month on the average while awards for disabled workers under social security averaged approximately \$1,295.

While both the Railroad Retirement and Social Security Acts provide benefits

to workers who are totally disabled for any regular work, the Railroad Retirement Act also provides disability benefits specifically for employees who are disabled for work in their regular railroad occupation. Employees may be eligible for such an occupational disability annuity at age 60 with 10 years of service, or at any age with 20 years of service.

## 4 Can railroaders receive benefits at earlier ages than workers under social security?

Railroad employees with 30 or more years of creditable service are eligible for regular annuities based on age and service the first full month they are age 60, and rail employees with less than 30 years of creditable service are eligible for regular annuities based on age and service the first full month they are age 62.

No early retirement reduction applies if a rail employee retires at age 60 or older with 30 years of service and his or her retirement is after 2001, or if the employee retired before 2002 at age 62 or older with 30 years of service.

Early retirement reductions are otherwise applied to annuities awarded before full retirement age, the age at which an employee can receive full benefits with no reduction for early retirement. This ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later, the same as under social security.

## 5 Can the spouse of a railroader receive a benefit at an earlier age than the spouse of a worker under social security?

If a retired railroad employee with 30 or more years of service is age 60, the employee's spouse is also eligible for an annuity the first full month the spouse is age 60.

Certain early retirement reductions are applied if the employee first became eligible for a 60/30 annuity July 1, 1984, or later, and retired at ages 60 or 61 before 2002. If the employee was awarded a disability annuity, has attained age 60 and has 30 years of service, the spouse can receive an unreduced annuity the first full month she or he is age 60, regardless of whether the employee annuity began before or after 2002, as long as the spouse's annuity beginning date is after 2001.

## 6 Does social security offer any benefits that are not available under railroad retirement?

Social security does pay certain types of benefits that are not available under railroad retirement. For example, social security provides children's benefits when an employee is disabled, retired or deceased. Under current law, the Railroad Retirement Act only provides children's benefits if the employee is deceased.

However, the Railroad Retirement Act includes a special minimum guaranty provision which ensures that railroad families will not receive less in monthly benefits than they would have if railroad earnings were covered by social security rather than railroad retirement laws. This guaranty is intended to cover situations in which one or more members of a family would otherwise be eligible for a type of social security benefit that is not provided under the Railroad Retirement Act. Therefore, if a retired rail

employee has children who would otherwise be eligible for a benefit under social security, the employee's annuity can be increased to reflect what social security would pay the family.

## 7 How much are monthly benefits for survivors under railroad retirement and social security?

Survivor benefits are generally higher if payable by the RRB rather than social security. At the end of fiscal year 2017, the average annuity being paid to all aged and disabled widow(er)s was \$1,650 a month, compared to \$1,270 under social security.

The annuities being paid at the end of fiscal year 2017 to widowed mothers/fathers averaged \$1,880 a month and children's annuities averaged \$1,080, compared to \$955 and \$840 a month for widowed mothers/fathers and children, respectively, under social security.

## 8 How do railroad retirement and social security lump-sum death benefit provisions differ?

Both the railroad retirement and social security systems provide a lump-sum death benefit. The railroad retirement lump-sum benefit is generally payable only if survivor annuities are not immediately due upon an employee's death. The social security lump-sum benefit may be payable regardless of whether monthly benefits are also due. Both railroad retirement and social security provide a lump-sum benefit of \$255. However, if a railroad employee completed 10 years of creditable railroad service before 1975, the average railroad retirement lump-sum benefit payable is \$1,000. Also, if an employee had less than 10 years of service, but had at least 5 years of such service after 1995, he or she would have to have had an insured status under social security law (counting both railroad retirement and social security credits) in order for the \$255 lump-sum benefit to be payable.

The social security lump sum is generally only payable to the widow(er) living with the employee at the time of death. Under railroad retirement, if the employee had 10 years of service before 1975, and was not survived by a living-with widow(er), the lump sum may be paid to the funeral home or the payer of the funeral expenses.

## 9 How do railroad retirement and social security payroll taxes compare?

Railroad retirement payroll taxes, like railroad retirement benefits, are calculated on a two-tier basis. Rail employees and employers pay tier I taxes at the same rate as social security taxes, 7.65 percent, consisting of 6.20 percent for retirement on earnings up to \$128,400 in 2018, and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance on all earnings. An additional 0.9 percent in Medicare taxes (2.35 percent in total) will be withheld from employees on earnings above \$200,000.

In addition, rail employees and employers both pay tier II taxes which are used to finance railroad retirement benefit payments over and above social security levels.

In 2018, the tier II tax rate on earnings up to \$95,400 is 4.9 percent for employees and 13.1 percent for employers. ©

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# Trumble elected to second term as Michigan State Legislative Board Chairman



Officers, members and guests attending the Michigan State Legislative Board's quadrennial meeting in Lansing, Mich., on March 20, 2018.

**B**J. Trumble was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Michigan State Legislative Board at the Board's Fourth Quadrennial meeting in Lansing, Mich., March 19-20, 2018.

A CN/Grand Trunk Western locomotive engineer, Brother Trumble is a member of BLET Division 33 in Battle Creek, Mich. He has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood since July 1, 1997. Brother Trumble was elected 1st Vice Chairman at the Board's Second Quadrennial meeting in 2010, and moved up to Chairman following the retirement of Gregory D. Powell, the Board's founding Chairman, on August 1, 2012. Brother Trumble was re-elected by acclamation to his first full term at the Board's Third Quadrennial meeting in March of 2014.

Also reelected by acclamation during the meeting was Andy J. Goulet of BLET Division 304 (Saginaw, Mich.), who will serve as 1st Vice Chairman and Secre-

tary-Treasurer. Brother Goulet has served the Board as Secretary-Treasurer continuously since he was first elected in 2006. He was also elected 2nd Vice Chairman in 2010 and 2014, moving up to the 1st Vice Chairman's position each time to fill vacancies on the Board.

Elected to serve as 2nd Vice Chairman was Ryan M. Morris of BLET Division 2 (Jackson, Mich.). Dave P. Morgan of BLET Division 19 (Detroit, Mich.) was elected to serve as Alternate Secretary-Treasurer. The Auditing Committee members are: Ed Donnelly, Division 542 (Detroit, Mich.); Chris King, Division 831 (Detroit, Mich.); and Matt Lashley, Division 122 (Port Huron, Mich.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting was National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; and BLET Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Robert F. Hagan.



"I am proud to congratulate Brother Trumble and all officers and members of the Michigan State Legislative Board," President Pierce said. "I thank them all for their willingness to serve our Brotherhood and have every confidence they will do an excellent job of representing our members in the proud state of Michigan."

Three fellow BLET State Legislative Board Chairmen were also in attendance:

Paul S. Piekarski, Illinois; David K. Brown, Minnesota; and Chuck M. Schulz, Wisconsin. William H. Black, Legislative and Community Affairs Director of Michigan Teamsters Joint Council 43, also was in attendance and addressed the group.

The Michigan State Legislative Board was founded on February 28, 2002. It represents more than 1,000 active and retired members from 14 different BLET Divisions. ©©

## RRB announces additional 2018 informational conferences

**T**he U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has announced additional dates for the agency's 2018 informational conferences.

Attendance at the informational conferences is limited to elected union officers only. Registration is required for the meeting.

Started in 1957 by the RRB's Office of the Labor Member, informational conferences are designed to provide rail union officers with a comprehensive overview of the provisions and financing of the railroad retirement and unemployment insurance systems. These officials, in turn, are better prepared to share accurate, reliable information with the members they represent.

Online registration is being offered for most conferences. While mail and fax registration is still available, members can go paperless and register on-

line at the RRB's Informational Conference Program website: [www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov).

Informational Conferences are open to union officials and their spouses by invitation only. Labor representatives who do not receive an invitation to a conference in their area should contact the RRB toll-free at (877) 772-5772 and request that they be added to the agency's invitation database. Registration typically begins at 8:00 a.m., with the programs beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 12:15 p.m.

### TIPS FOR ATTENDEES:

- If you plan on attending with your spouse or another guest, please indicate so when you register;
- Please let RRB know if you register for a conference and then become unable to attend; and
- Please bring your photo identification for entry into Federal buildings (no weapons allowed). ©©

### DATES AND LOCATIONS OF THE RRB'S SPRING 2018 INFORMATIONAL CONFERENCES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

#### MAY 18, 2018:

**Parma, Ohio**  
Sheet Metal Workers  
Local Union No. 33,  
12515 Corporate Dr.

#### MAY 18, 2018:

**Lakewood, Colo.**  
Holiday Inn Lakewood,  
7390 West Hampden Ave.

#### JUNE 8, 2018:

**Indianapolis, Ind.**  
LaQuinta Inn & Suites,  
5120 Victory Dr.

#### JUNE 8, 2018:

**Cheektowaga, N.Y.**  
Holiday Inn Buffalo (Airport),  
4600 Genesee St.

#### JUNE 15, 2018:

**Billings, Mont.**  
Hilton Garden Inn.,  
2465 Grant Rd.

#### JUNE 15, 2018:

**Dorchester, Mass.**  
Sheet Metal Workers Union Hall,  
1157 Adams St.

#### JUNE 22, 2018:

**Tinley Park, Ill.**  
Tinley Park Convention Center,  
18451 Convention Center Dr.

#### JUNE 22, 2018:

**Fort Worth, Texas**  
Courtyard Fort Worth  
University Drive,  
3150 Riverfront Dr.

# Federal income tax and Railroad Retirement benefits

**T**he following questions and answers describe the tax statements issued by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) each January for Federal income tax purposes. Railroad retirement beneficiaries needing information about these statements, or about tax withholding from their benefits, should contact an office of the RRB. For further Federal income tax information, railroad retirement beneficiaries should contact the nearest office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

## 1 How are the annuities paid under the Railroad Retirement Act treated under the Federal income tax laws?

A railroad retirement annuity is a single payment comprised of one or more of the following components, depending on the annuitant's age, the type of annuity being paid, and eligibility requirements: a Social Security Equivalent Benefit (SSEB) portion of tier I, a Non-Social Security Equivalent Benefit (NSSEB) portion of tier I, a tier II benefit, a vested dual benefit, and a supplemental annuity.

In most cases, part of a railroad retirement annuity is treated like a social security benefit for Federal income tax purposes, while other parts of the annuity are treated like private pensions for tax purposes. Consequently, most annuitants are sent two tax statements from the RRB each January, even though they receive only a single annuity payment each month.

## 2 Which railroad retirement benefits are treated as social security benefits for Federal income tax purposes?

The SSEB portion of tier I (the part of a railroad retirement annuity equivalent to a social security benefit based on comparable earnings) is treated for Federal income tax purposes the same way as a social security benefit. The amount of these benefits that may be subject to Federal income tax, if any, depends on the beneficiary's income. (To determine if any amount of a SSEB benefit is taxable, please refer to IRS publication 915, *Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits*.) If part of a SSEB benefit is taxable, how much is taxable depends on the total amount of a beneficiary's benefits and other income. Usually, the higher that total amount, the greater the taxable part of a beneficiary's benefit.

Generally, up to 50 percent of a beneficiary's benefits will be taxable. However, up to 85 percent of his or her benefits can be taxable if either of the following situations applies.

- The total of one-half of a beneficiary's benefits and all his or her other income is more than \$34,000 (\$44,000 if a beneficiary is married filing jointly).
- A beneficiary is married filing separately and lived with his or her spouse at any time during the year.

## 3 Which railroad retirement benefits are treated like private pensions for Federal income tax purposes?

The NSSEB portion of tier I, tier II benefits, vested dual benefits, and supplemental annuities are all treated like private pensions for Federal income tax

purposes. In some cases, primarily those in which early retirement benefits are payable to retired employees and spouses between ages 60 and 62, some occupational disability benefits, and other categories of unique RRB entitlements, the entire annuity may be treated like a private pension. This is because social security benefits based on age and service are not payable before age 62, social security disability benefit entitlement requires total disability, and the Social Security Administration does not pay some categories of beneficiaries paid by the RRB.

## 4 What information is shown on the railroad retirement tax statements sent to annuitants in January?

One statement, Form RRB-1099 for U.S. citizens or residents (or Form RRB-1042S for nonresident aliens), shows the SSEB portion of tier I or special minimum guaranty payments made during the tax year, the amount of any such benefits that an annuitant may have repaid to the RRB during the tax year, and the net amount of these payments after subtracting the repaid amount. The amount of any offset for workers' compensation and the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments are also shown. Illustrations and explanations of items found on Form RRB-1099 and Form RRB-1042S can be found in IRS Publication 915, *Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits*.

The other statement, Form RRB-1099-R (for both U.S. citizens and nonresident aliens), shows the NSSEB portion of tier I, tier II, vested dual benefit, and supplemental annuity paid to the annuitant during the tax year, and may show an employee contribution amount. The NSSEB portion of tier I along with tier II are considered contributory pension amounts and are shown as a single combined amount in the Contributory Amount Paid box (Item 4) on the statement. The vested dual benefit and supplemental annuity are considered non-contributory pension amounts and are shown as separate items on the statement. The total gross paid amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is the sum of the NSSEB portion of tier I, tier II, vested dual benefit and supplemental annuity payments. Also shown is the amount of Federal income tax withheld from these payments. The statement also shows the amount of any of these prior year benefits repaid by the annuitant to the RRB during the tax year. This amount is not subtracted from the gross amounts shown because its treatment depends on the years to which the repayment applies and its taxability in those years. To determine the year or years to which the repayment applies, annuitants should contact the RRB. Illustrations and explanations of items found on Form RRB-1099-R can be found in IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income*.

If the annuitant is taxed as a nonresident alien of the United States, Form RRB-1042S and/or Form RRB-1099-R will show the rate of tax withholding (0 percent, 15 percent or 30 percent) and country of residence for income tax purposes. Nonresident aliens may receive more than one set of original tax statement Forms RRB-1042S and/or RRB-1099-R in a tax year if there was a change in the country of

residence for income tax purposes, or a change in the rate of income tax applied to annuity payments. Nonresident aliens who resided in the United States for part of a tax year may receive a set of original U.S. citizen tax statement Forms RRB-1099 and/or RRB-1099-R and one or more sets of nonresident alien tax statement Forms RRB-1042S and/or RRB-1099-R.

The total Medicare premiums deducted from the railroad retirement annuity may also be shown on either Form RRB-1099 (Form RRB-1042S for nonresident aliens) or Form RRB-1099-R. Medicare premiums deducted from social security benefits paid by the RRB, paid by a third party, or paid through direct billing are not shown on RRB-issued tax statements.

Copy B and/or Copy 2 of Form RRB-1099-R must be submitted with the annuitant's tax return. Annuitants should retain copy C of all statements for their records, especially if they may be required to verify their income in connection with other Government programs.

## 5 What is the significance of the employee contribution amount?

For railroad retirement annuitants, the employee contribution amount is considered the amount of railroad retirement payroll taxes paid by the employee that exceeds the amount that would have been paid in social security taxes if the employee's railroad service had been covered under the Social Security Act. The employee contribution amount is referred to by the IRS as an employee's investment, or cost, in the contract. An employee contribution amount is not a payment or income received during the tax year. Only employee and survivor annuitants may have an employee contribution amount shown in Item 3 of their Form RRB-1099-R.

The contributory amount paid (NSSEB portion of tier I and/or tier II) is considered income and is reported to the IRS. The contributory amount paid is either fully taxable or partially taxable depending on whether the employee contribution amount has been used to compute a tax-free (nontaxable) portion of the contributory amount paid. If no employee contribution amount is shown on Form RRB-1099-R, then the contributory amount paid is fully taxable.

The use and recovery of the employee contribution amount is important for annuitants since it affects the amount of taxable income to be reported on income tax returns. There is a tax savings advantage in using (recovering) employee contributions since it may reduce the taxability of the contributory amount paid and in turn the amount of taxable income.

Annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income*, and Publication 939, *General Rule for Pensions and Annuities*, for more information concerning the tax treatment of the contributory amount paid (see questions 6 and 7 below) and use of the employee contribution amount.

## 6 If an employee contribution amount is shown on my Form RRB-1099-R, may I use the entire amount?

The employee contribution amount shown is attributable to the railroad retirement account number. This means

that the employee contribution amount must be shared by all eligible annuitants under that same railroad retirement account number.

If an employee contribution amount is shown on your Form RRB-1099-R and your annuity beginning date is July 2, 1986, or later, you may be able to use some or all of the employee contribution amount shown to compute the nontaxable (tax-free) amount of your contributory amount paid. Therefore, your contributory amount paid and total gross paid shown on your Form RRB-1099-R may be partially taxable.

If an employee contribution amount is not shown on your Form RRB-1099-R, you cannot use or share the employee contribution amount. Therefore, your contributory amount paid and total gross paid shown on your Form RRB-1099-R are fully taxable.

When more than one annuitant is or was entitled to a contributory amount paid under the same railroad retirement account number, any eligible annuitants may not use the entire employee contribution amount shown on their Form RRB-1099-R for themselves. They must first determine the amount of the total employee contribution amount they are individually entitled to use.

### That means determining:

- The portion of the total employee contribution amount still potentially available for use, and
- The portion of that amount that must be shared by those eligible annuitants currently receiving contributory amounts paid.

For example, a survivor family group consists of a widow and two full-time students. All three annuitants are eligible to use a portion of the employee contribution amount shown on their Forms RRB-1099-R. They must determine the portion of the employee contribution amount they may each use. Question 7 below provides general information on how to calculate this amount. For more specific information, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income*, and Publication 939, *General Rule for Pensions and Annuities*.

Any change in the total number of eligible annuitants receiving contributory amounts paid will affect the nontaxable amounts of these annuitants. This change is retroactive to the date on which the number of eligible annuitants changed. Any of these changes could potentially affect the taxable amounts reported to the IRS on prior year income tax returns. Annuitants should determine if any change would require them to file original or amended U.S. Federal income tax returns for prior tax years. For more specific information, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income*, and Publication 939, *General Rule for Pensions and Annuities*.

## 7 How are contributory and noncontributory pension amounts taxed?

Amounts shown on Form RRB-1099-R are treated like private pensions and taxed either as contributory pension amounts or as noncontributory pension amounts. The NSSEB portion of tier I and tier II (shown as the contributory amount paid on the statement) are contributory pen-

sion amounts. Contributory pension amounts may be fully taxable or partially taxable depending on the presence and use (recovery) of the employee contribution amount. Vested dual benefits and supplemental annuities are considered noncontributory pension amounts. Non-contributory pension amounts are always fully taxable and do not involve the use of the employee contribution amount.

For annuitants with annuity beginning dates before July 2, 1986, the contributory amount paid is fully taxable. These annuitants cannot use the employee contribution amount, even if the amount is shown on Form RRB-1099-R, to compute a nontaxable amount of their contributory amount paid because their employee contribution amount has been fully recovered. Since the contributory amount paid is fully taxable, the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R is fully taxable.

For annuitants with annuity beginning dates from July 2, 1986, through December 31, 1986, the contributory amount paid may be partially nontaxable for the life of the annuity. These annuitants may be able to use some or all of the employee contribution amount to compute a nontaxable contributory amount paid. Once that nontaxable amount is computed, it does not need to be recomputed and can be used for each tax year unless there is a change in the employee contribution amount, annuity beginning date, date of birth used to determine life expectancy, or the number of eligible annuitants receiving contributory amounts paid. Therefore, the contributory amount paid in Item 4 and the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R may be partially taxable.

For annuitants with annuity beginning dates effective January 1, 1987, and later, the contributory amount paid may be partially nontaxable for a specified period of time based on life expectancy as determined by IRS actuarial tables. These annuitants may use some or all of the employee contribution amount to compute the nontaxable amount of their contributory amount paid. Once that nontaxable amount is computed, it does not need to be recomputed and can be used for each tax year unless there is a change in the employee contribution amount, annuity beginning date, date of birth used to determine life expectancy, or the number of eligible annuitants receiving contributory amounts paid. Therefore, the contributory amount paid in Item 4 and the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R may be partially taxable. However, once the specified life expectancy is met, the employee contribution amount is considered fully recovered, and the contributory amount paid and total gross pension paid are both fully taxable.

The contributory amounts paid of disabled employee annuitants under minimum retirement age are fully taxable and these annuitants cannot use the employee contribution amount. Therefore, the contributory amount paid in Item 4 and the total gross pension paid in Item 7 of Form RRB-1099-R are fully taxable. (Minimum retirement age is generally the age at which individuals could retire based on age and service, which is age 60 with 30 or more years of railroad service or age 62 with less than 30 years of railroad service.) However, once the disabled employee annuitant reaches minimum retirement age, the annuitant may use the employee contribution amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R to compute the nontaxable amount of his or her contributory amount paid.

The RRB does not calculate the nontaxable amount of the contributory amount paid for annuitants. Annuitants should contact the IRS or their own tax preparer for assistance in calculating the nontaxable amount of their contributory amount paid. For more information on the tax treatment of the contributory amount paid, vested dual benefits, supplemental annuities, the employee contribution amount, and how to use the IRS actuarial tables, annuitants should refer to IRS Publication 939, *General Rule for Pensions and Annuities*, and IRS Publication 575, *Pension and Annuity Income*.

## 8 Does Form RRB-1099-R show the taxable amount of any contributory railroad retirement benefits or just the total amount of such benefits paid during the tax year?

Form RRB-1099-R shows the total amount of any contributory railroad retirement benefits (NSSEB and tier II) paid during the tax year. The RRB does not calculate the taxable amounts. It is up to the annuitant to determine the taxable and nontaxable (tax-free) amounts of the contributory amount paid using the employee contribution amount.

## 9 Can an employee contribution amount change?

Yes. The employee contribution amount shown on Form RRB-1099-R is based on the latest railroad service and earnings information available on the RRB's records. Railroad service and earnings information (and the corresponding employee contribution amount) often changes in the first year after an employee retires from railroad service. That is when the employee's final railroad service and earnings information is furnished to the RRB by his or her employer. As a result, the employee contribution amount shown on the most recent Form RRB-1099-R may have increased or decreased from a previously-issued Form RRB-1099-R.

## 10 What if a person receives social security as well as railroad retirement benefits?

Railroad retirement annuitants who also received social security benefits during the tax year receive a Form SSA-1099 (or Form SSA-1042S if they are nonresident aliens) from the Social Security Administration. They should add the net social security equivalent or special guaranty amount shown on Form RRB-1099 (or Form RRB-1042S) to the net social security income amount shown on Form SSA-1099 (or Form SSA-1042S) to get the correct total amount of these benefits. They should then enter this total on the Social Security Benefits Worksheet in the instructions for Form 1040 or 1040A to determine if part of their social security and railroad retirement social security equivalent benefits is taxable income.

Additional information on the taxability of these benefits can be found in IRS Publication 915, *Social Security and Equivalent Railroad Retirement Benefits*.

## 11 Are the residual lump sums, lump-sum death payments, or separation allowance lump-sum amounts paid by the RRB subject to Federal income tax?

No. These amounts are nontaxable and are not subject to Federal income tax. The RRB does not report these amounts on statements.

For full version of this article, please visit [www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov). ©

# FRA SAYS PTC OPERATING ON 56 PERCENT OF FREIGHT ROUTE MILES

On March 20, 2018, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a status update on freight and passenger railroads' efforts to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) by the Congressionally-mandated deadline of December 31, 2018.

FRA reported that — as of December 31, 2017 — PTC systems were in operation on approximately 56 percent of freight railroads' route miles that are required to be governed by PTC systems. The FRA said that is up from 16 percent as of December 31, 2016.

FRA said that passenger railroads have made less progress, however, with PTC systems in operation on only 24% of required route miles.

FRA further said that 15 railroads reported that they have completed installation of all hardware necessary for PTC system implementation and another 11 railroads reported that they have installed over 80% of PTC system hardware. In addition, all but three railroads report having acquired sufficient spectrum for their PTC system needs.

For more key implementation data for the fourth quarter of 2017, see the FRA website: [www.fra.dot.gov/ptc](http://www.fra.dot.gov/ptc).

Between January 2 and February 14, 2018, FRA reported that it hosted face-to-face meetings with executives from each of the 41 railroads subject to the statutory mandate. The purpose of the meetings was to evaluate each railroad's PTC status and learn what remaining steps each needs to take to have a PTC system fully implemented

by the December deadline or, at a minimum, to meet the statutory criteria necessary to qualify for an alternative schedule.

Following the meetings with railroads, FRA is now meeting with PTC suppliers to learn more about their capacity to meet the high demands for railroads' implementation of PTC systems in a timely manner.

PTC systems are designed to prevent certain train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments, incursions into established work zone limits, and trains going to the wrong tracks because a switch was left in the wrong position.

All railroads subject to the statutory PTC implementation mandate must implement FRA-certified and interoperable PTC systems by the end of 2018. Under the Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015, however, Congress permits a railroad to request FRA's approval of an "alternate schedule" with a deadline beyond December 31, 2018, but no later than December 31, 2020, for certain non-hardware, operational aspects of PTC system implementation. The congressional mandate requires FRA to approve a railroad's alternative schedule with a deadline no later than December 31, 2020, if a railroad submits a written request to FRA that demonstrates the railroad has met the statutory criteria set forth under 49 U.S.C. § 20157(a)(3)(B).

Railroads' PTC docket numbers are available at: [www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0628](http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0628). ©

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### Photo of the Month: April 2018

**NICKEL PLATE 765:** After hearing from a friend that the famed Nickel Plate steam locomotive No. 765 would be making an anniversary excursion from Glenview, Illinois to Fox Lake Illinois, Brother Peter J. Pelke II rushed to Round Lake with his camera equipment. He managed to arrive in time to capture this piece of living history. **Photo:** BLET member Peter J. Pelke II, BLET Division 96 (Chicago). More of his work is at [www.isephoto.fototime.com](http://www.isephoto.fototime.com)



**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](mailto: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 March 2018 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, Independence, Ohio; 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; National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC) annual meeting, New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Michigan State Legislative Board mtg., Lansing, Mich.

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT:** National Duties include but not limited to: Shortline Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; National duties, Independence, Ohio; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Michigan SLB mtg., Lansing, Mich.; Holiday.

**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/Union Track; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Union Track issues, testing, status updates, etc.; Triennial election planning and oversight issues; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Holiday; Union Track mtg., Rockville, Md.

**VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN:** Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Michigan SLB mtg., Lansing, Mich.; Attending American-Ireland function, Washington, D.C.; Mtgs. w/ candidates for Governor and Congress, Washington, D.C.; Various meetings with U.S. Senators working on rail issues; Numerous receptions and office visits with members of Congress and the leadership of both the GOP and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

**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, CN-Cedar River, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR, Illinois RR and Union Railroad; Discuss NMB funding issues w/ Roland Watkins, NRAB, Chicago; Office move; BNSF/MRL Notice of Intent, NRAB, Chicago; TTD conference call; NMB case coding project; Review PLB agreement; NRAB annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Prep. for NRAB adoption session, Chicago; Assist GC Semenek and Balonek at GEB Guarantee Conf., Metra, Chicago; ROAR, NRAB Labor Member's caucus, Chicago; Assist GC Craddock w/ discipline and rules issues, IC, Chicago; Assist GC Bangham w/ Section 6 prep., URR, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline issues, WC, Chicago; NRAB 1st Division adoption session and Circular Letter 88, NRAB, Chicago; Holiday.

**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.; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; UP General Chairmen Association mtg., Las Vegas.

**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.; Advisory Board conference call; Alabama State Docks negotiations; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; ConCall Conrail FDV flow; PLB remedies conference call; CSXT and GTW assistance and paperwork; Mtg. regarding DRC, assisting CSXT GCs; Holiday.

**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; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; BNSF crew management mtg. w/ BLET GCs and VGS, Topeka, Kan.

**VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS:** Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, South-Rail, 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), Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; D&H and Springfield Terminal issues, assist GC Moore; MidSouth issues, assist GC Craddock; DM&E, Soo and CP Rail issues, assist GC Semenek; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Heise; KCS issues, assist GC Spradlin; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Louisville & Indiana issues, assist GC Hogan; W&LE issues, assist GC Fannon; W&LE mediation, assist GC Fannon, St. Louis, Mo.

**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; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; PLB 7668, assist NS GC Dehart, Estero, Fla.

**VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS:** Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Union Track mtgs. and training; Education & Training issues; BLET Regional Meeting planning; BLET National Convention planning; NASLBC annual mtg., New Orleans; Advisory Board mtg., New Orleans; Mediation discussions, assist GC Basile, PATH; Contract issues, assist GC Hill, SEPTA; Regional mtg. hotel and site review, Milwaukee, Wisc.; Contract issues, assist GC Sexton, LIRR; Holiday.

# STB investigates as shippers complain of deteriorating rail service

**O**n March 16, 2018, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) requested that all Class I railroads provide their service outlook plans in the near term and for the remainder of 2018 due to increased concerns over deteriorating service.

One shipper's association accused railroads of trying to impress Wall Street investors rather than investing in their train crews and networks. In a March 10 letter to the STB, the National Grain and Feed Association complained about deteriorating rail service due to lack of locomotives and train crews.

"[T]here is a fundamental concern among rail customers that the underlying root cause of these service... issues is Class I railroads' aggressive effort to reduce their operating ratios to impress Wall

Street investors and shareholders. This, in turn, has resulted in the systemic shedding of resources by Class I carriers, including locomotives and crews, that has degraded service to unacceptable levels, and resulted in virtually non-existent surge capacity to meet rail customers' needs."

The STB asked for information about each railroad's network, including locomotive availability, employee resources, local service performance, service demand, communication strategies, and capacity constraints. The STB said it was "increasingly concerned" about the state of freight rail service in the U.S.

"In recent weeks, the Board has become increasingly concerned about the overall state of rail service based on the weekly data collected by the Board pursuant to 49 C.F.R. pt. 1250," the STB wrote. "Al-

though there are exceptions, most Class I railroads' data indicate that service is deteriorating, while system average dwell time has climbed. For those same railroads, other key metrics-such as the average number of cars in revenue service that have not moved in 48 hours or more-are trending in an unfavorable direction. The Board's Rail Customer and Public Assistance Staff will begin holding weekly calls with these carriers."

STB leadership requested that each Class I railroad carrier to provide a written response related to their respective outlooks for rail operations across their networks to address various issues related to rail service adequacy, including: locomotive availability; employee resources; local service performance; demand; communication; and capacity restraints. ©