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SCENIC MOUNT HOOD

Two BNSF locomotives head out of the basalt rock cuts at North Dalles, Washington, just after sunrise. Oregon's Mount Hood is in the distance. This is along the busy BNSF Fallbridge Subdivision linking the Pacific Northwest and the upper mid-west and Chicago. The line was originally built for the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway.

Photo courtesy: Robert W. Scott

ONE YEAR LATER: AMTRAK TRAIN 188 ANALYSIS

Pierce: PTC, two-person crews will help make rail industry safer

The following is a statement from BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce regarding the National Transportation Safety Board's findings into the crash of Amtrak train 188.

On May 17, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued its findings regarding the catastrophic 2015 wreck of Amtrak train 188 in Philadelphia. Two key safety issues of importance to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) were addressed by NTSB.

First, NTSB concluded that the locomotive engineer became disoriented as to his location while managing multiple tasks

due to distraction caused by an emergency situation involving a train on an adjacent track that had become disabled after being struck by a projectile. Second, NTSB found that if a functioning Positive Train Control (PTC) system had been installed on the route traversed by train 188 the accident would have been prevented; such a system has since been installed at the location where the tragedy occurred.

Task overload and distraction have been issues of grave concern for the BLET and its members for many years. A key part of our concern is that terms like "the loss of situational awareness" attempt to place blame on the locomotive engineer, without considering that any human being can be given too many



tasks at any given time, resulting in task overload.

In an effort to bring attention to this problem, the BLET petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in February

of 2016 for an emergency order that would immediately prohibit the railroad-mandated use of certain types of non-vital fuel management locomotive technologies that require the engi-

neers to divert their attention from observing the road ahead in order to monitor these systems. Evidence from the field continues to show that the mandated use of such technologies creates unsafe distractions for locomotive engineers and poses an unnecessary risk to train crews and the public. In light of the NTSB's May 17 findings we renew our request to FRA for this emergency order.

The BLET also concurs in NTSB's finding regarding PTC. We would be remiss, however, if we did not also clearly state that Amtrak's decision-making in phasing in life-saving safety redundancy was constrained by decades of inadequate funding by Congress. Therefore, we also

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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

OUR ISSUES IN NOVEMBER

Editor's Note: this is the first of three articles on this subject.

In recent months this column has begun to address how your leadership views the key issues of concern for BLET members and their families in the upcoming elections to be held in November. As I say wherever I speak, we need to vote our issues — our pocketbook — in November. We need to support a workers' agenda, not the bosses' agenda.

But just what does that mean? What are our issues, and how can we judge the performance of the various candidates on those issues? This series of columns will focus on several issues of importance to BLET members and all railroad workers. In a time when certain politicians seek to divide us over social issues, it is imperative that we identify the workplace issues that we all agree on and, further, that we support politicians who will truly work to the benefit of working class Americans.

First, though, a brief history lesson is in order, because these benefits and protections, along with many others, were directly produced through struggles waged by generations of Brotherhood members who preceded us ... and by the votes they cast at the polls.

You may wonder why this is relevant in 2016. That's a fair question, especially if your family isn't rooted in the railroad industry nor has a strong union background.

Our nation is at a crossroads. Nearly eight years after the Great Recession of 2008 many Americans have yet to see a meaningful improvement in their economic condition. Continued depressed consumption — combined with plummeting energy prices — has led to a downturn in rail freight traffic, which has led to the furlough of thousands of operating employees. In short, the nation's economy for "Main Street" Americans, including BLET members, has been in stagnation for nearly a decade now.

In stark contrast to our plight, Corporate America and the super-rich have never had it so good. Nearly all of the new

wealth created in today's economy is skimmed off by the top 1% and corporate profits continue to be immune from the economic malaise that has infected the rest of American society.

As I explained in last month's column, this gross disparity is the result of what effectively is a takeover of government at the federal, state — and, in many cases, local — levels by Corporate America and their lobbyists. But it also is a function of a severely diminished and weakened labor movement in the U.S., and that's where history enters the picture.

No serious person could dispute that the railroad industry played a decisive role in shaping the development of our nation across the North American continent and building the U.S. into the top economic power in the world. If you're familiar with our Brotherhood's history, you know how barbaric wages and working conditions drove locomotive engineers to unite in their own defense during the mid-1800s.

Working conditions were so perilous, in fact, a primary activity of the Brotherhood during its first half century was providing life insurance for locomotive engineer members, because such insurance could not be obtained commercially due to the risks of the job. Casualty statistics from that period were staggering.

The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) first published a national report of railroad accident statistics in 1889. The ICC reported that one out of every 117 operating craft employees was killed the preceding year, and one out of 12 trainmen had been injured. In 1892, ICC Secretary Edward A. Moseley said it was "appalling ... that more of the grand army of railway men of this country were cut and bruised and maimed and mangled last year than all the Union wounded and missing on the bloody field of Gettysburg."

Even passage of the Safety Appliance Act in 1893 — which made air brakes and automatic couplers mandatory on all trains — made only a modest reduction in the number of casualties. By the turn of the 20th Century work-related accidents still were



President Pierce addresses members at a BLET Education & Training Department class for Secretary-Treasurers at National Division headquarters in Independence, Ohio, on May 5, 2016.

killing one in 300 railroad workers annually, and injuring one in 50. In 1908 alone, over 280,000 railroad workers were injured at work and another 12,000 were killed on the job ... that's over 32 fatalities per day.

The first attempt by Congress to remedy this slaughter occurred in 1906, but the railroads challenged that law and the Supreme Court ruled the original legislation unconstitutional on the basis that it was beyond the power vested in the federal government by the Commerce Clause. In 1908 Congress enacted the Federal Employers' Liability Act (FELA), which passed constitutional muster — after another industry challenge — in 1912.

However, that victory did not immediately provide the degree of relief that was expected. Railroads routinely escaped liability for their negligence by relying on numerous common law defenses. The most prevalent ones were: (1) the fellow-servant rule, which gave the railroad a free pass if the accident was caused by the injured employee's co-worker; (2) the assumption of risk defense, under which someone who voluntarily takes a dangerous job bears the responsibility for the risks of that job; and (3) the contributory negligence standard, under which any negligence by the worker in causing his or her

own injury overrides the railroad's negligence.

These deficiencies in the FELA were not corrected until a 1939 amendment was enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. As a result of the 1939 amendment, the FELA now stands as a model compensation law for workers injured on the job. The railroad is liable for any injury or death in which its "negligence played any part, even the slightest, in producing."

And — unlike state worker compensation systems — damages paid to an injured railroad worker under the FELA are not capped by some one-size-fits-all table of benefits. FELA damages are based upon the severity and permanency of an injury, and include all economic damages, plus pain and suffering.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the railroads have made numerous attempts over the past 30 years to weaken or repeal FELA. If the industry was to succeed in this effort, literally millions of dollars would be transferred from the pockets of injured and deceased railroad workers and their families to the carriers' already swollen bottom lines.

You won't read about FELA in the newspapers, or hear about it in a debate or on the evening news, but this should be a huge

issue for BLET members, particularly in a nation whose culture has degenerated into stripping well-positioned workers of their rights and benefits instead of improving conditions for all workers. As I have often said, we live in a country where those with good benefits are often criticized by those who have lesser benefits. This race to the bottom is fueled by Corporate America and its bought and paid for politicians whose ultimate goal is to strip you of any benefit that stands in the way of greater corporate profits. Beware of those who would push the agenda that if the "workers compensation" system is good enough for the rest of America, why should you have FELA? In my travels across our great country, all of the members I talk to agree that the very nature of railroad work requires that we be provided FELA benefits. To protect those benefits, we must also agree to support politicians who will support FELA.

So, when you consider who to vote for in the elections for President, Senate and House of Representatives, one of your main concerns should be what each candidate says — or what each candidate has done — regarding FELA and similar worker protection laws. A House, Senate and Presidency controlled by anti-worker Republican forces could spell doom for FELA as we know it.

Keep in mind that the President can significantly weaken FELA with the stroke of a pen. The next President also will likely appoint one or more Justices to the Supreme Court. In 2011, the Supreme Court voted 5-4 to maintain FELA's status quo — a major victory for rail workers — in a case brought by CSX that would have made it much more difficult for injured railroad workers to be compensated when they are injured on the job as a result of a railroad's negligence. Your vote for the nation's highest office has many potential ramifications — please keep these facts about FELA in mind when you vote in November.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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 poli-

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

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



GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JAMES P. HOFFA

REPORT IS ANOTHER REMINDER OF NEED TO INVEST IN U.S.

Underinvestment in infrastructure continues to be a significant problem in the U.S., a new report shows, and it will cost American households upwards of \$10 a day through 2025 to deal with the ramifications.

The new document by the American Society of Civil Engineering (ASCE) shows the nation is still not seriously addressing its needs when it comes to roads, rails, ports, energy, water and airports. And that could cause this country's gross domestic product to lose almost \$4 trillion in the next decade.

As it stands, the U.S. is facing a \$1.4 trillion shortfall in infrastructure investment over the next 10 years. Topping the list is transportation, which is short some \$1.1 billion. That's followed by electricity infrastructure at \$177 billion, followed by water systems at \$105 billion.

"America is currently spending more failing to act on our investment gap than we would to close it. Inefficient infrastructure is costing every household \$9.30 a day," ASCE wrote. "However, if every family instead invested an additional \$3

a day per household, we could close the infrastructure investment gap in 10 years."

The shortage in investment is well known. The Teamsters rolled out its own plan, "Let's Get America Working," last year in an effort to focus elected officials on the needs of this nation. And while Congress did step up and approve its first long-term transportation spending bill late last year, there is still much work to be done.

Investing in this country is a win for all. Infrastructure jobs, unlike those in other sectors, can't be outsourced. They improve living standards for all Americans, including the men and women who help to repair and maintain roads, bridges, ports, airports and mass transit systems, along with those who earn a living transporting goods and the vast majority of Americans who use our transportation networks every day.

Now is the time to build, repair and maintain America!

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA

TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT



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Investing in this country is a win for all. Infrastructure jobs, unlike those in other sectors, can't be outsourced.

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UP-SR General Chairman Warren Dent elected to third term

General Chairman J. Warren Dent Jr. was reelected by acclamation to his third term of office at the Union Pacific-Southern Region (UP-SR) General Committee of Adjustment (GCA) meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, held from May 1-3, 2016.

Brother Dent was elevated to the General Chairman's office in 2009, following the promotion of then-General Chairman Gil Gore to the BLET Advisory Board, and was re-elected General Chairman by acclamation at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in 2012. Brother Dent is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas). He first joined the Brotherhood on September 1, 1975.

Also reelected by acclamation were: 1st Vice Chairman Dana L. Marlow, Division 179 (Parsons, Kan.); 2nd Vice Chairman Daniel H. Underwood, Division 139 (Houston, Texas); 3rd Vice Chairman



Delegates, officers and guests at the quadrennial meeting of the Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjustment in Fort Worth, Texas, May 3, 2016.

James Logan Jr., Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas); 4th Vice Chairman Scott P. Alexander, Division 523 (Chickasha, Okla.); and Secretary-Treasurer Scott J. Piekarski, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas).

The following alternate officers were also elected: 1st Alternate Vice Chairman Fernando M. Paz, Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas); 2nd Al-

ternate Vice Chairman John M. Prokop, Division 475 (Smithville, Texas); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer E. Neal Cain, Division 857 (Tyler, Texas).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting was: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Vice President Mike Twombly;

and National Vice President Gil Gore.

"I offer congratulations and thanks to Brother Dent and all officers and delegates of the Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjustment," President Pierce said. "I know they will continue to do a fine job representing our proud Union Pacific Brothers and Sisters."

Additional visiting dignitar-

ies included: General Chairman Jim L. Dayton, UP-Western Region; General Chairman D. W. (Bill) Hannah, UP-Western Lines; General Chairman R. E. (Dick) Crow, UP-Northern Region; General Chairman Dave L. Geisler, UP-Eastern District; First Vice General Chairman and Acting General Chairman Kyle J. Bagby, UP-Central Region; and First Vice Chairman Brian P. Carr, UP-Western Lines.

Three retired Brothers also attended the meeting: Retired UP-SR Vice General Chairman W. D. (Dave) Phillips, Division 62 (Houston, Texas); retired UP-SR Vice General Chairman Gary L. Perrien, Division 193 (Gretna, La.); and retired BLET Special Representative Jim E. Bradford, Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas).

A total of 32 delegates representing 29 BLET Divisions were in attendance, handling all GCA business in addition to the election of officers. The UP-Southern Region GCA represents more than 1,700 members. ©

BLET marks 153rd anniversary

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) proudly marked its 153rd anniversary on May 8. The union was founded as the Brotherhood of the Footboard on May 8, 1863 in Marshall, Mich. In 1864, the union changed its name to Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), the name it retained for 140 years until merging with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters on Jan. 1, 2004, when it became the BLET.

The organization was formed in the early 1860s when locomotive engineers on the Michigan Central Railroad became discouraged with pay cuts and the dismissal of their firemen. During that time, locomotive engineers at the Michigan Central were paid at the rate of \$60 a month on the condition that they ran at least 2,500 miles each month, regardless of the time consumed.

The BLET was the first labor organiza-

tion to obtain contracts with railroads. Among the earliest was an agreement with the former New York Central in 1875. Today, the BLET has dozens of contracts with railroads large and small, and represents locomotive engineers on 98 percent of rail trackage in the United States. The BLET is the oldest labor union in North America.

The Brotherhood has always been proud to support America's soldiers and their families. Born in the midst of the Civil War, our union's membership has been comprised of veterans of every major military conflict since, up to and including the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

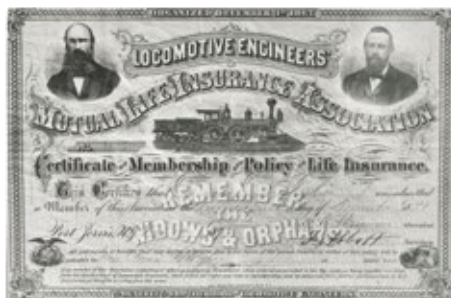
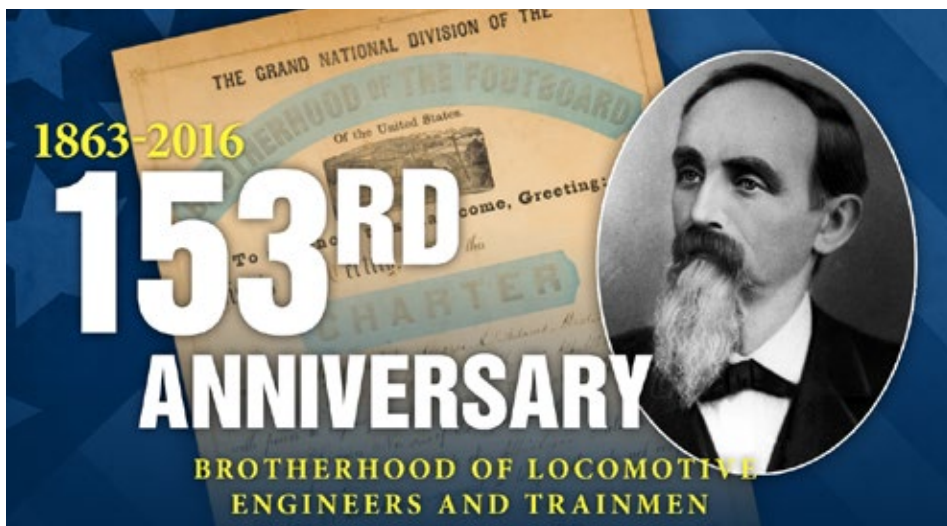
Today, the BLET is the founding member of the Teamsters Rail Conference. The union represents more than 56,000 active and retired members throughout the United States, and remains one of the largest and most influential railroad unions in the nation. @@



This Brotherhood monument at Marshall, Michigan, commemorating the founding of the BLE, was dedicated on May 23, 1943.



Members of a New York Central train crew in 1963.



This Locomotive Engineers Mutual Life Insurance Association certificate was issued to Emery O. Tyler, Division 132, in November of 1871. He worked on the former Canada Southern, which was taken over by the Michigan Central.



Home of J.C. "Yankee" Thompson at Marshall, Michigan.

Palmer reelected to fifth term as Oregon State Legislative Board Chairman

Brother Scott G. Palmer, Division 842 (Klamath Falls, Oregon) was reelected by acclamation to a fifth term as Chairman of the Oregon State Legislative Board at the Board's triennial meeting in Portland, Oregon, on May 3, 2016.

A BNSF locomotive engineer, Brother Palmer hired out with the Burlington Northern in Seattle in 1990. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1994 and joined the Brotherhood on June 1, 1994. He has held continuous membership since that time and has served the Brotherhood in various elected offices over the years. Brother Palmer is Assistant Coordinator of the BLET Safety Task Force.

Also elected by acclamation were; Vice Chairman Christopher L. Myron, Division 842 (Klamath Falls); Secretary-



Brother Scott Palmer

Treasurer Steve K. Baldwin, Division 362 (La Grande); and Vice Secretary-Treasurer John W. "Bill" Fogle, Division 476 (Eugene).

Four of Oregon's five Divisions were represented by new Legislative Representatives at the triennial meeting. Chairman Palmer said he will be working closely with them and scheduling LR train-

ing to ensure they are ready to meet their Division's needs.

"We have a great group of new Legislative Representatives from a widely diverse background and I look forward to helping them reach their potential," Palmer said. "Brother Fogle and I are the two old heads now and it will be up to us to ensure the State Board continues to operate into the future at the same level of excellence that the Board members have shown in the past."

Brother Palmer gave special thanks to recently retired, outgoing Secretary-Treasurer Rob Armstrong of Division 362. "Rob has served this Board faithfully for over 10 years for which he has earned our thanks and a long and happy retirement."

The Oregon State Legislative Board is comprised of five BLET Divisions representing approximately 400 active members. @@

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Fannon elected General Chairman of NS-Eastern Lines

Brother L.R. (Randy) Fannon was elected by acclamation to the office of General Chairman at the quadrennial meeting of the Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment, May 16-18, 2016, in Roanoke, Va.

A Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer, Brother Fannon was elected 1st Vice General Chairman at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in 2012. He was elevated to the General Chairman's office following the retirement of Kevin S. Peek on May 12, 2016. A member of Division 37 (Norton, Va.), Brother Fannon first joined the Brotherhood effective March 1, 1989. He also serves the National Division as an investigator for the Safety Task Force and as 7th Alternate National Vice President. Brother Fannon was a member of the By-laws Committee at the BLET's Third National Convention in 2014.

Also elected by acclamation were: 1st Vice General Chairman Scott R. Bunten, Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.); 2nd Vice General Chairman Michael N. Wentzel, Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.); Secretary-Treasurer Donnie L. Young, Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Charles D. Owens, Division 37 (Norton, Va.). Brother Young is beginning his fifth term of office as Secretary-Treasurer.

Three Trustees were elected by acclamation: D.H. (Denny) Graham, Local Chairman of Division 124 (Mullens, W.Va.); Josh A. Corbin, Local Chairman of Division 217 (Shenandoah, Va.); and John S. Copley, Local Chairman of Division 401 (Williamson, W.Va.).

Representing the BLET National Division



Delegates, officers and guests at the Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment quadrennial meeting in Roanoke, Va., May 18, 2016.

at the meeting was: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; and National Vice President R.C. (Rick) Gibbons.

"I congratulate and thank all officers of the Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment," President Pierce said. "I also wish to recognize and thank retiring General Chairman Kevin S. Peek. A dedicated and

hardworking General Chairman, Brother Peek served the Brotherhood with dignity and professionalism for many years. He will be truly missed and leaves some big shoes to fill, but I have every confidence that Brother Fannon will do an excellent job as the new General Chairman."

Special guests included: Mark L. Wallace, NS-Southern Lines General Chairman; Paul L. Wingo Jr., retired Nation-

al Vice President; Willard E. Knight, retired National Vice President; and R.H. (Bob) Linsey, retired NS-Northern Lines General Chairman.

A total of 17 delegates representing 12 BLET Divisions were in attendance. In addition to the election of officers, they handled GCA business in an efficient and timely manner. The GCA represents approximately 1,200 members. ©©

CSX General Chairman Gary D. Best reelected by acclamation

General Chairman Gary D. Best was reelected by acclamation to a second term of office at the quadrennial meeting of the CSX Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment held in Abbeville, S.C., April 24-26, 2016.

A CSX locomotive engineer, Brother Best was elevated to the General Chairman's office in September of 2013 following the retirement of former General Chairman Tony Smith. Brother Best has held continuous membership in BLET Division 498 (Abbeville, S.C.) since January 1, 1995.

All officers of the GCA were elected by acclamation: Vice General Chairman Christopher R. Hyde, Division 314 (Rocky Mount, N.C.); 1st Vice General Chairman Jamie L. Truesdale, Division 598 (Greenville, S.C.); 2nd Vice General Chairman Troy L. Bryant, Division 532 (Richmond, Va.); 3rd Vice General Chairman Roger W. Bickerstaff, Division 684 (Birmingham, Ala.); Secretary-Treasurer Frankie P. Milford, Division 498 (Abbeville, S.C.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Robert W. Clark, Division 779 (Manchester, Ga.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting was: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President

E. Lee Pruitt; and National Vice President Gil L. Gore.

"I am proud to offer my congratulations and thanks to Brother Gary Best and all officers of the CSX Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment," President Pierce said. "I have every confidence they will continue doing an excellent job of enforcing our contract and protecting the rights of our Brothers and Sisters at CSX."

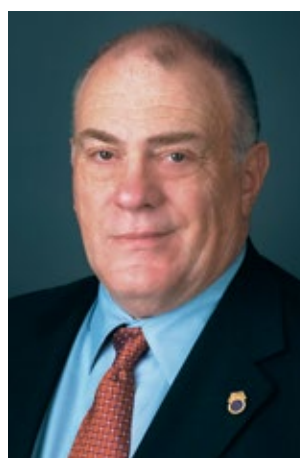
Special guests at the meeting included retired BLET National President Paul T. Sorrow and retired CSX-Eastern Lines General Chairman Tony Smith. Only four men have served as General Chairman of the CSX Eastern Lines GCA since it was founded in 1967: M.L. Geiger, 1967-1985; Paul T. Sorrow, 1985-1991; Tony Smith, 1991-2013; and Gary D. Best, 2013 to present.

In addition to the election of officers, the delegates to the quadrennial session addressed key concerns of the membership and conducted business for the good of the order.

The CSX Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment represents approximately 1,300 members from 19 different BLET Divisions. They work primarily in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. ©©



Officers, delegates and guests attending CSX-Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment's quadrennial meeting in Abbeville, S.C., April 25, 2016.



Brother **Gary Best** is just the fourth man to serve as General Chairman of the CSX-Eastern Lines (former Seaboard Coast Line) GCA since its formation in 1967. The other three are pictured above, from left: **Marvin L. Geiger** (1967-1985), **Paul T. Sorrow** (1985-1991), and **Tony Smith** (1991-2013).

Railroad Retirement age reductions

Railroad retirement benefits are subject to reduction if an employee with less than 30 years of service retires before attaining full retirement age. While employees with less than 30 years of service may still retire at age 62, the age at which full retirement benefits are payable has been gradually increasing since the year 2000, the same as for social security.

The following questions and answers explain how these early retirement age reductions are applied to railroad retirement annuities.

1. What is the full retirement age for employees with less than 30 years of service, and is it the same for employees covered under social security?

Full retirement age, the earliest age at which a person can begin receiving railroad retirement benefits without any reduction for early retirement, ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later, the same as for social security.

2. How are the changes in the maximum age reduction being phased in?

Since 2000, the age requirements for some unreduced railroad retirement benefits have been rising just like the social security requirements. For employees with less than 30 years of service and their spouses, full retirement age increases from 65 to 66, and from 66 to 67, at the rate of two months per year over two separate six-year periods. This also affects how reduced benefits are computed for early retirement.

The gradual increase in full retirement age from age 65 to age 66 affects those people who were born in the years 1938 through 1942. The full retirement age will remain age 66 for people born in the years 1943 through 1954. The gradual increase in full retirement age from age 66 to age 67 affects those who were born in the years 1955 through 1959. For people who were born in 1960 or later the full retirement age will be age 67.

3. How does this affect the early retirement age reductions applied to the annuities of those who retire before full retirement age?

The early retirement annuity reductions applied to annuities awarded before full retirement age are increasing. For employees retiring between age 62 and full



1952: Union Pacific-Chicago & NorthWestern's streamlined "City of Los Angeles" passenger train. (BLET File Photo)

retirement age with less than 30 years of service, the maximum reduction will be 30 percent by the year 2022. Prior to 2000, the maximum reduction was 20 percent.

Age reductions are applied separately to the tier I and tier II components of an annuity. The tier I reduction is 1/180 for each of the first 36 months the employee is under full retirement age when his or her annuity begins and 1/240 for each additional month (if any). This will result in a gradual increase in the reduction at age 62 to 30 percent for an employee once the age 67 retirement age is in effect.

These same reductions apply to the tier II component of the annuity. However, if an employee had any creditable railroad service before August 12, 1983, the retirement age for tier II purposes will remain 65, and the tier II benefit will not be reduced beyond 20 percent.

The chart below (left) shows how the gradual increase in full retirement age will affect employees.

4. What are some examples of how this will affect the amounts payable to employees retiring before full retirement age with less than 30 years of service?

Take the example of an employee born on February 2, 1954, who retires in 2016 at the age of 62. In terms of today's dollars and current benefit levels, not counting future increases in creditable earnings, assume this employee is eligible for monthly tier I and tier II benefits, before age reductions, of \$1,200 and \$800, respectively,

for a total monthly benefit of \$2,000.

Upon retirement at age 62, the employee's tier I benefit would be reduced by 25 percent, the maximum age reduction applicable in 2016. This would yield a tier I monthly benefit of \$900; the employee's tier II benefit would also be reduced by 25 percent, providing a tier II amount of \$600 and a total monthly rate of \$1,500. However, if the employee had any rail service before August 12, 1983, the tier II benefit would be subject to a maximum reduction of only 20 percent, providing a tier II amount of \$640, and a total monthly rate of \$1,540.

As a second example, take an employee born on June 2, 1960, and also eligible for monthly tier I and tier II benefits, before age reductions, of \$1,200 and \$800, respectively, for a total monthly benefit of \$2,000. This employee retires in 2022 at age 62 with no service before August 12, 1983. Consequently, a 30 percent reduction is applied to both the tier I and tier II benefits and the net total annuity would be \$1,400.

5. How are railroad retirement spouse benefits affected by this change?

If an employee retiring with less than 30 years of service is age 62, the employee's spouse is also eligible for an annuity the first full month the spouse is age 62. Early retirement reductions are applied to the spouse annuity if the spouse retires prior to full retirement age. Beginning in the year 2000, full retirement age for a

spouse gradually began to rise to age 67, just as for an employee, depending on the year of birth. While reduced spouse benefits are still payable at age 62, the maximum reduction will be 35 percent by the year 2022. However, if an employee had any creditable rail service prior to August 12, 1983, the increased age reduction is applied only to the tier I portion of the spouse's benefit. The maximum reduction in tier II, in this case, would only be 25 percent, as under prior law.

Take for an example the spouse of a railroader with less than 30 years of service, none of it prior to August 12, 1983, who was born on April 2, 1960, and is retiring in 2022 at age 62, with a spouse annuity, in terms of today's dollars and current benefit payments and before any reductions for age, of \$1,000 a month. With the maximum reduction of 35 percent applicable in 2022, her net monthly benefit would be \$650.

As a second example, if the same spouse had been born on April 2, 1954, and was retiring in 2016 at age 62, with the maximum age reduction of 30 percent, the net monthly benefit would be \$700.

The chart below (right) shows how this will affect the spouses of railroad employees if the employee retires with less than 30 years of service.

6. Are age reductions applied to employee disability annuities?

Employee annuities based on disability are not subject to age reductions **except** for employees with less than 10 years of service, but who have 5 years of service after 1995. Such employees may qualify for a tier I benefit before retirement age based on total disability, but only if they have a disability insured status (also called a "disability freeze") under Social Security Act rules, counting both railroad retirement and social security-covered earnings. Unlike with a 10-year employee, a tier II benefit is not payable in these disability cases until the employee attains age 62. And, the employee's tier II benefit will be reduced for early retirement in the same manner as the tier II benefit of an employee who retired at age 62 with less than 30 years of service.

7. Do these changes also affect survivor benefits?

Yes. The eligibility age for a full widow(er)'s annuity is also gradually rising from age 65 for those born before 1940

EMPLOYEE RETIRES WITH LESS THAN 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

YEAR OF BIRTH*	FULL RETIREMENT AGE**	ANNUITY REDUCTION AT AGE 62
1937 or earlier	65	20.00%
1938	65 and 2 months	20.833%
1939	65 and 4 months	21.667%
1940	65 and 6 months	22.50%
1941	65 and 8 months	23.333%
1942	65 and 10 months	24.167%
1943 through 1954	66	25.00%
1955	66 and 2 months	25.833%
1956	66 and 4 months	26.667%
1957	66 and 6 months	27.50%
1958	66 and 8 months	28.333%
1959	66 and 10 months	29.167%
1960 or later	67	30.00%

* A person attains a given age the day before his or her birthday. Consequently, someone born on January 1 is considered to have attained his or her given age on December 31 of the previous year.

**If an employee has less than 10 years of railroad service and is already entitled to an age-reduced social security benefit, the tier I reduction is based on the reduction applicable on the beginning date of the social security benefit, even if the employee is already of full retirement age on the beginning date of the railroad retirement annuity.

SPOUSE AGE REDUCTIONS

YEAR OF BIRTH*	FULL RETIREMENT AGE**	ANNUITY REDUCTION AT AGE 62
1937 or earlier	65	25.00%
1938	65 and 2 months	25.833%
1939	65 and 4 months	26.667%
1940	65 and 6 months	27.50%
1941	65 and 8 months	28.333%
1942	65 and 10 months	29.167%
1943 through 1954	66	30.00%
1955	66 and 2 months	30.833%
1956	66 and 4 months	31.667%
1957	66 and 6 months	32.50%
1958	66 and 8 months	33.333%
1959	66 and 10 months	34.167%
1960 or later	67	35.00%

* A person attains a given age the day before her or his birthday. Consequently, someone born on January 1 is considered to have attained his or her given age on December 31 of the previous year.

**If the employee has less than 10 years of railroad service and the spouse is already entitled to an age-reduced social security benefit, the age reduction in her or his tier I will be based on the age reduction applicable on the beginning date of the spouse's social security benefit, even if the spouse is already of full retirement age on the beginning date of her or his railroad retirement annuity.

to age 67 for those born in 1962 or later. A widow(er), surviving divorced spouse or remarried widow(er) whose annuity begins at full retirement age or later will generally receive an annuity unreduced for early retirement. However, if the deceased employee received an annuity that was reduced for early retirement, a reduction would be applied to the tier I amount payable to the widow(er), surviving divorced spouse or remarried widow(er). The maximum age reductions will range from 17.1 percent to 20.36 percent, depending on the widow(er)'s date of birth. (These age reductions apply to both tier I and tier II.) For a surviving divorced spouse or remarried widow(er), the maximum age reduction is 28.5 percent. For a disabled widow(er), disabled surviving divorced spouse or disabled remarried widow(er), the maximum reduction is also 28.5 percent, even if the annuity begins at age 50.

8. Does the increase in full retirement age affect the age at which a person becomes eligible for Medicare benefits?

No. Although the age requirements for some unreduced railroad retirement benefits have risen just like the social security requirements, beneficiaries are still eligible for Medicare at age 65.

9. Do these increases in full retirement age also apply to the earnings limitations and work deductions governing benefit payments to annuitants who work after retirement?

Like social security benefits, railroad retirement tier I and vested dual benefits paid to employees and spouses, and tier I, tier II, and vested dual benefits paid to survivors are subject to deductions if an annuitant's earnings exceed certain exempt amounts. These earnings limitations and work deductions apply to all age and service annuitants and spouses under full retirement age regardless of the employee's years of service. Although employees retiring at age 60 with 30 years of service have no age reduction, these earnings limitations and work deductions still apply until they reach their full retirement age. These earnings limitations also apply to survivor annuitants, with the exception of disabled widow(er)s under age 60 and disabled children.

Likewise, while special earnings restrictions apply to employees entitled to disability annuities, these disability earnings restrictions cease upon a disabled employee annuitant's attainment of full retirement age. This transition is effective no earlier than full retirement age even if the annuitant had 30 years of railroad service.

The additional deductions applied to the annuities of retired employees and spouses who work for their last pre-retirement nonrailroad employer continue to apply after the attainment of full retirement age.

10. How can individuals get more information about railroad retirement annuities and their eligibility requirements?

More information is available by calling the RRB toll-free at 1-877-772-5772, or by visiting the agency's website at www.rrb.gov. Persons can also find the address of the RRB office servicing their area by calling the toll-free number, or at www.rrb.gov. Most RRB offices are open to the public on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., except on Wednesdays (beginning June 1, 2016) when offices are open from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. RRB offices are closed on Federal holidays. @@

PTC, TWO-PERSON CREWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

renew our long-standing call for full funding for the nation's passenger railroad.

One month after the tragedy of May 12, 2015, I was called upon to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives regarding rail safety. I will reiterate what I told members of the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee: Positive Train Control will help mitigate accidents, but it should not be used to replace crew members who work inside the cab of America's locomotives. Indeed, if a second engineer as necessitated in many areas of Amtrak had been present to assist the engineer of train 188 in managing the multiple tasks confronting him, there would have been no accident.

Eight people were killed and more than 200 were injured on the fateful day of May 12, 2015. Our thoughts and prayers are still with the families and victims. Without question, the accident would not have occurred if a combination of PTC and two-person train crews were in use. BLET pledges to continue to fight for both so that the rail industry becomes a safer place for all rail workers and the traveling public. BLET also renews its request that the nation's rail carriers stop mandating the use of non-vital and unproven technologies that could diminish rail safety by creating further task overload. @@

A SYNOPSIS OF THE NTSB'S REPORT IS ON THE BLET WEBSITE: WWW.BLE-T.ORG/PR/PDF/DCA15MR010_ABSTRACT.PDF



National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and other investigators at the derailment site of Amtrak train #188 in Philadelphia, May 2015. (Photos courtesy: NTSB Flickr page)

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SMART - UTU monthly assessment	\$64.80	\$81.00	\$121.50	\$162.00		



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Photo of the Month: May 2016

ZEPHYR ZIPS ALONG: Amtrak's California Zephyr zips eastbound through Wellington, Utah, on its journey from Emeryville, California, to Chicago, Illinois. **Photo courtesy:** Chase Gunnoe



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

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

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

Advisory Board March 2016 Activity

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

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division Office, Cleveland; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; NS-N GCA mtg., Indianapolis, Ind.; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; IBT General Executive Board mtg., Chicago; JRHfMS event, Chicago; National bargaining mtg., Washington, D.C.; CN-WC GCA mtg., Green Bay, Wisc.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: Director, Passenger Dept.; Shortline Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; National duties, Cleveland, Ohio; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; New Jersey State Legislative Board mtg., Newark, N.J.; JRH scholarship dinner and Trustee Benefits mtg., Chicago; Good Friday holiday; Wisconsin Central GCA mtg., Green Bay, Wisc.

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER STEPHEN J. BRUNO: General supervision of Accounting Dept., Record Dept., Online Services Dept., Tax Compliance Dept.; Safety Task Force; PAC and FEC reports and filings; Implementation and training for BLET membership database; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Publications Committee; Passenger Dept.; National Bargaining Committee; IBT Human Rights Commission; ND office work, Cleveland; ND office work, move to Independence; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Rail Conference Policy Committee mtg., Chicago; JRH scholarship event, Chicago; National wage negotiations, Washington, D.C.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; Coordinate content of NLO website; Weekly PAC committee and legislative mtgs.; Mtg. w/ W.Va. Democratic candidate, Washington, D.C.; Advisory Board mtg., Independence; Mtg. w/ Senate Committee on Commerce, Washington, D.C.; New Jersey State Legislative Board mtg., Newark, N.J.; White House reception, Washington, D.C.; Rail Conference Policy Committee mtg., Chicago; American Ireland Fund gala, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ New York Air Brake president, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ Pennsylvania candidate for Senate, Washington, D.C.; CN-WC GCA mtg., Green Bay, Wisc.; Various mtgs. and functions with Representatives and Senators.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Vice Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Arb. Adv. Forum; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR and Illinois RR; NRAB electronic filing cmte., Chicago; Assist GC Short w/ PLB prep. and claims conference, IHB, Chicago; Division 682 mtg., IHB, Chicago; Advisory Board mtg., Independence; Assist GC Balonek w/ investigation, Metra, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ arb. Prep., Green Bay, Wisc.; First Division adoption session, NRAB, Chicago; CN-WC GCA mtg., Green Bay, Wisc.

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.; Tacoma Rail Section 6 negotiations, Tacoma, Was.; Advisory Board mtg., Independence; UP-Western Region conference, Portland, Ore.

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.; Holiday; Vacation; CAPS conference call; Inward-facing camera conference call, all CSX GCs; Meal allows and WLC roster, safety, conference call; CSX codification and wrap-up mtgs.; Jacksonville; Operation Red Block mtg., Detroit.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Great Western; Texas Pacific; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; M&NA contract negotiations, assisting GC Thurman, Fort Worth, Texas; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio.

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), Cedar River, Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; D&H contract negotiations, GC Moore, Albany, N.Y.; Illinois Midland issues and Cedar Creek RR issues, GC Craddock; Tex-Mex issues, GC Silmon, San Antonio, Texas; Springfield Terminal issues, GC Moore; KCS issues, GC Parker; Advisory Board mtg., Cleveland; DM&E, Soo Line and MidSouth issues, GC Semenek; Louisville & Indiana issues, GC Hogan; Springfield Terminal mediation, GC Moore, Raleigh, N.C.

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; NS-N GCA mtg., GC Dehart, Indianapolis, Ind.; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; NS agreement update, assisting GC Wallace, GC Peek and GC Dehart, Norfolk, Va.; W&LE mediation, GC Dehart, Washington, D.C.; IORY mediation, GC Cole, Columbus, Ohio.

VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS: Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; Union Railroad; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Union Track mtgs.; National Division duties, move to Independence, Ohio; NJ Transit issues, Washington, D.C.; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; SEPTA/NMB A13798, assist GC Dixon, Philadelphia; 2016 regional meeting planning.

Registration continues for BLET regional meetings in Chicago, Long Beach

Registration continues for the BLET's two regional meetings in 2016 — July 11-14 at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, and August 22-25 at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, California. The BLET National Division is planning meetings filled with educational opportunities and entertaining leisure time activities.

In Chicago, guests will stay at the historic Drake Hotel (140 East Walton Place, Chicago, IL 60611, (800) 553-7253). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be made through the BLET's new regional meeting website, www.bletregionals.org.

In Long Beach, guests will stay at the Hyatt Regency (200 South Pine Avenue, Long Beach, CA 90802, (562) 491-1234).

Again, BLET convention registration and hotel registration can be made at www.bletregionals.org. Use group code "BLET" if making hotel reservations by phone. Hotel reservations must be made by July 11, 2016.

Both meetings are scheduled on a Monday through Friday basis. At each meeting guests will arrive on Monday for registration and a welcome reception (July 11 in Chicago and August 22 in Long Beach). Opening ceremonies and the closed meeting will be on Tuesday (July 12 in Chicago and August 23 in Long Beach). The golf outing and an open day for families will be on Wednesday (July 13 in Chicago and August 24 in Long Beach). Workshops and a farewell banquet will be held on Thursday (July 14 in Chicago and August 25 in

Long Beach). Hotel check out and travel home will be on Friday (July 15 in Chicago and August 26 in Long Beach). The Chicago golf outing will be held at the Harborside International Golf Course, and the Long Beach outing will be at the Tustin Ranch Golf Course.

There is no cost for BLET members who wish to attend meetings and workshops only; however, there will be fees for those members who choose to attend the meals. The cost of full registration (including all meetings, workshops, the banquet and all BLET sponsored meals) is \$200 per person. The cost is \$150 to register for all of the above EXCEPT the banquet. The cost to register for the golf tournament is \$150 per person. The cost to register for the banquet only is \$75. ©©

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