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NATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE: Coordinated Bargaining Group Unions say contract negotiations take a “step backwards”

As part of our ongoing effort to conclude national contract negotiations, the Coordinated Bargaining Group (CBG) met with the nation's freight rail carriers (NCCC) for three days during the week of June 26th. These efforts were part of our ongoing mediation process, mandated by the Railway Labor Act when the parties have been unable to reach a voluntary agreement, and managed by the National Mediation Board.

Despite the CBG's best efforts to reach a fair agreement with the NCCC, the mediation process took a step backwards on Thursday, June 29th, when the Carriers



ers presented new, onerous bargaining positions. Their new contract demands would have the employees not only paying more per month towards their monthly insurance premiums, but would also make drastic changes in the amount the average employee pays when medical services are needed. Combined with the Carriers' outlandish demands for this dramatic cost-shifting, they suggested we agree to below-standard General Wage Increases with no retroactivity, and, for certain crafts, harmful work rules changes that would have employees doing

ing more work for less pay in many circumstances.

It is clear from the Carriers' latest contract demands that they are emboldened by the potential of management-friendly recommendations that could come from a Presidential Emergency Board appointed by President Trump, and ultimately be imposed on the employees by a Congress that already has enacted or is pushing for changes in longstanding labor laws that protect employee rights.

We of course are frustrated by the Carriers' hard-line atti-

tude. But we will not let this stand in our way. In spite of this latest turn of events, the CBG will not give up its efforts to achieve a voluntary settlement that is fair and protects our members' best interests. We therefore requested and have been granted additional mediation sessions later in July. This is not by any means the end of the road. The Railway Labor Act makes it the duty of both labor and management "to exert every reasonable effort to make agreements." We take that obligation seriously. Be assured

that we have been working very hard on your behalf and we will continue to pursue every available avenue to achieve a fair contract settlement worthy of your consideration.

The Carriers' latest offer is neither a fair settlement, nor a settlement that we expect our members would ratify. So that you all are fully aware of what has been proposed, and in an effort to bring all affected members up to speed, the Carriers' latest proposal, with a brief synopsis, can be found at: <http://bit.ly/2unCc00>

More information will be forthcoming after the mediation sessions scheduled later in July. We appreciate your continuing support. @

The Coordinated Bargaining Group is comprised of six unions: the American Train Dispatchers Association; the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (a Division of the Rail Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters); the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen; the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, and Helpers; the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers / SEIU;

and the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers.

Collectively, the CBG unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers covered by the various organizations' national agreements, and comprise over 58% of the workforce that will be impacted by the outcome of the current bargaining round.

C&O Era Cantilever

A CSX train en route to the coastal ports of Virginia eases past Milepost 3.6 on CSX's Logan Subdivision in Barboursville, W.Va., on July 4, 2016. This interlocking is one of the last remaining control points on the C&O in West Virginia still protected by a C&O-style cantilever signal. Photo: courtesy Chase Gunnoe



BLET President's Message
A challenging round
of bargaining continues **pg. 2**

Contract Ratified
Members OK new deal
with Indiana & Ohio **pg. 3**



Regional Meeting Recap
News and photo highlights from
San Antonio Regional Meeting **pg. 4-5**

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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

A CHALLENGING ROUND OF BARGAINING CONTINUES

As noted on the front page of this edition of the *Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News*, and as it goes to print, the nation's freight carriers (NCCC) have taken new bargaining positions in our long running national negotiations. On June 26th, the unions making up the Coordinated Bargaining Group (BLET, SMART TD, ATDA, BRS, NCFO, and IBB) were served new demands by the NCCC that would take away the long-standing practice of retroactive application of general wage increases, while dramatically increasing the employees' monthly contribution towards their health insurance premium payments. In addition, the Carriers have demanded drastic changes to the design of the Health and Welfare plan that would shift huge additional costs to the employees when they use the benefits. Equally concerning are the demands for work rule changes for all operating employees that would require you to do more work for less money in many cases.

The unions making up the CBG made the decision to publicly share this latest set of Carrier demands in an effort to ensure that all affected members are aware of exactly why there has been no voluntary settlement of our national contract to date. It is critical that all members are clear in this regard: no unions belonging to the CBG have agreed to these demands; they are the Carriers' demands, not ours. They are unacceptable to our bargaining teams, and we are certain that they also would be unacceptable to our rank and file voting members.

It also is important that all affected members understand why the Carriers are pushing these hard line demands now. When the Carriers and the



President Pierce with members of the Advisory Board stand for the National Anthem during opening ceremonies of the BLET regional meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on June 6, 2017.

Unions cannot reach a voluntary settlement in contract negotiations, the terms and conditions of the Railway Labor Act ultimately place our dispute in the hands of various levels of the federal government. Currently our bargaining group is in mediation managed by the National Mediation Board (NMB). If we are unable to reach a voluntary settlement, the next step in the process will be for the NMB to proffer binding arbitration as a possible way to settle the dispute. At this writing, President Trump has put forward the names of two Republican appointees to fill open positions at the National Mediation Board (see article on Page 8 of this issue). Once those nominations are confirmed by the U.S. Senate, the Republican controlled NMB will be structured to not only put forward the proffer of arbitration, it will also be structured to manage the creation of a Presidential

Emergency Board in conjunction with the White House, should the proffer of arbitration be rejected by either party to the negotiations.

It is obvious from these new demands that the Carriers have every expectation they have little to lose by taking this dispute to a Presidential Emergency Board, appointed by President Trump and managed by the soon to be Republican controlled NMB. While many of our members voted for President Trump with the belief that he would help working class Americans, this union's freight members could soon find out whether that is true. Some members have sent in comments predicting that we will get a better contract recommendation than this at a Trump PEB, while others are very concerned that those recommendations will give the Carriers everything they now demand. The Carriers are betting on the latter of those two outcomes, and

that is why the bargaining round has taken this recent turn.

Our goal and responsibility as your bargaining representatives is to measure all of these options carefully, and to find the best contract settlement available, whether that be through a voluntary settlement or by taking our dispute to a Trump PEB. As for a voluntary settlement, there is no reason for the bargaining team to agree to any contract that had no chance of ratifying. To date, the Carriers have been unwilling to agree to any terms that the members would ratify. That does not mean that we will not stay at the table in an effort to reach a voluntary settlement, but it cannot be overlooked that the Carriers are arrogantly convinced that they stand a better chance than the unions before a Trump PEB. Should that happen — and we are unable to turn those recommendations into a ratified agreement — the

Republican controlled Congress would be in a position to impose those recommendations, or something worse, on our membership.

Here are some of the questions you must ask yourself when you consider our options. Will a Congress and White House that are poised to strip health care away from over 20 million Americans care that the Carriers want you to pay more for yours? Will a Congress that has refused to raise the minimum wage for over a decade care if the Carriers are offering substandard General Wage Increases? The bottom line is this: is the current federal government, who by law is authorized to settle our dispute if we cannot, a government that will collectively side with labor or with the corporations in our dispute?

While we may not all agree on the answer to that question, the very fact that we have to ask it is why our bargaining team will stay at the table in an effort to find a voluntary contract settlement worthy of your consideration. That effort, if successful, along with our Union's democratic ratification process would place control of the ultimate outcome of our contract negotiations where it belongs: in your hands. Those who are affected should have the ultimate say, and we will continue in our efforts to provide that opportunity to the membership.

As things may begin to progress rapidly in either direction, there may be additional developments and information by the time this edition of the *News* reaches you. Please stay involved in your Union, and additional updates will be provided on our website and Facebook pages as they develop. ☺

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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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

CRAFTING A PRO-WORKER PATH TO A NEW NAFTA

The Trump administration received tens of thousands of comments in June on how to best revamp the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) so it creates a pact built for a 21st century economy. And the Teamsters want to make sure there is a pathway to prosperity for millions of U.S. workers who were left behind in the deal's original version.

That doesn't happen by opening the nation's highways to Mexican-domiciled trucks and drivers who don't meet American safety and certification standards. Motorists and the nation's health have been jeopardized because of it. NAFTA 2.0 must strip such language out of any agreement going forward.

The renegotiation of NAFTA is a historic opportunity.



The U.S. has an opportunity to lead the way in replacing this flawed agreement with one that will set new priorities that put working families first.

To start, the administration must take action to add labor rights provisions that beef up the weak and unenforceable labor side agreement included in the

original NAFTA. That new labor chapter must have a robust new labor rights chapter that prohibits child labor and forced labor and protects the freedom of association and the right to collectively bargain through an independent union. In addition, these new labor rights must be enforceable by the same or better trade sanctions that protect commercial interests.

And, there is a need to beef up the existing rules of origin when it comes to automobiles. Currently, North American-made vehicles only need to be made with 63.5 percent of its parts from this continent, allowing third-party nations to enter the supply chain with low costs parts that put Americans out of work.

Additionally, NAFTA 2.0 must protect "Buy American" federal

procurement provisions. As it stands, the trade deal undermines the program by requiring the federal government to treat foreign bidders as if they were U.S. bidders. Any update must eliminate language that undermines domestic or local preferences.

When it comes down to a new NAFTA, it's really pretty simple. The current administration can fix the deal by being transparent with the process and removing some bad provisions and inserting some good ones that benefit workers, consumers and U.S. manufacturers. The Teamsters stand ready to help with the effort.

Faternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

66 The renegotiation of NAFTA is a historic opportunity. The U.S. has an opportunity to lead the way in replacing this flawed agreement with one that will set new priorities that put working families first. 99

BLET members ratify new contract with Indiana and Ohio Railway

On June 13, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Indiana and Ohio Railway (I&O).

The five-year agreement governs rates of pay, work rules and health and welfare benefits for approximately 50 engineers, conductors, and trainees. Members will see wage increases of 28.6 percent over the life of the agreement, which runs through December 31, 2020. It was ratified with over 80% of those casting a ballot voting in favor.

The agreement provides improved vacation leave for members, giving them an additional day of vacation when reaching five, 10 and 15 year anniversaries with the company. Members will also receive 10 total paid holidays effective January 1, 2017, in addition to five Flex Days. The agreement also outlines provisions for holiday pay, jury duty pay and bereavement leave.

Members are covered by the Genesee & Wyoming's Midwest Region health and welfare plan, effective January 1, 2017. The agreement provides changes to the membership's 401k Plan, and gives members a boot voucher good for two pairs of work boots per year. The contract outlines procedures to ensure that members receive fair and impartial disciplinary hearings, and specifies a grievance and arbitration



Indiana & Ohio Railway locomotives at Washington Court House, Ohio, on August 13, 2011. Photo: Chase Gunnoe

process. Extra boards and a seniority system are also provided for in the contract.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce recognized the negotiating team of Vice President Rick Gibbons and General Chairman Christopher Cole for their dedication in securing the new contract.

"Union membership is not a spectator sport, and I am proud to salute those Indiana and Ohio members who cast votes and wish to thank them for their perse-

verance throughout the negotiating and ratification process," President Pierce said.

The BLET first organized the I&O on August 3, 2001, and a 78 percent majority of members ratified their first-ever union contract in 2003. I&O members belong to BLET Division 282 (Cincinnati, Ohio).

A subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming Inc., the I&O is a 570-mile short line railroad operating primarily in western Ohio, as well as in parts of southeastern Indiana

and southeast Michigan. The I&O serves the metropolitan areas of Cincinnati, Columbus, Springfield and Lima. The railroad handles a wide range of commodities, including metal products, chemicals, plastics, lumber, paper, grain and grain products, such as ethanol and dried distillers grains. The I&O serves several barge terminals in Cincinnati, and has customers offering transload services to handle a variety of products. ©©

BLET concludes San Antonio regional meeting

Approximately 335 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and their families convened in San Antonio the morning of June 6 for opening ceremonies of the BLET's first regional meeting of 2017.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce called the meeting to order. After presentation of flags by members of the Joint Base San Antonio Civic Honor Guard, retired Brother Terry D. Briggs delivered the invocation. Brother Briggs served as Chairman of the Texas State Legislative Board from 2001-2015.

President Pierce then welcomed all members, families and guests to San Antonio. He introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board who were in attendance, and thanked National Vice President Jim Louis, Special Representative Matt Kronyak and Special Representative Jason Wright for their work in managing and organizing the regional meeting. President Pierce also recognized and thanked the regional meeting arrangements committee members who provided local support: Warren Stevens, Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of Division 197; Luis Esparza, Trustee and Member of Division 197; L.W. (Wayne) Davis, Legislative Representative of Division 918; and Brother Briggs, a retired member of Division 530 and former Chairman of the Texas State Legislative Board.

President Pierce delivered remarks regarding the anti-union movement that exists in America and encouraged all BLET members to become involved to reverse this trend. "There's a huge storm brewing ... not only for BLET members and their Brothers and Sisters who work in the railroad industry, but for all workers and for the American Middle Class," he said.

President Pierce encouraged all members to become active and involved in their union and in politics in order to protect what the union has earned. "We face a fight like none of us have ever experienced. And it won't happen in a single, winner-take-all battle. Instead, years of attacks on labor, some hidden in seemingly harmless legislation, lie ahead. That means we need all hands on deck, and we need to educate our membership exactly how stark are the risks we face if we don't mount an historic struggle."

President Pierce then introduced guest speaker Julian Castro, San Antonio native and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development from 2014-2017. At the age of 26 he became the youngest city councilman in San Antonio history, and was elected Mayor of San Antonio in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

"I have a great deal of respect for the people in this room and for what you do," Castro said. "Through your skill, professionalism and commitment to safety, you move people and goods throughout our country. In other words, you move our economy."

"We need a new vision to thrive in the 21st Century. It's time for government to serve the people, not just the powerful. That's where you come in. You have set an example with over 154 years of leadership and advocacy. Through your active union membership, you are helping to protect the American Middle Class."



President Pierce then introduced Linda Chavez-Thompson, who was elected by acclamation to serve as Executive Vice President of the AFL-CIO in 1995, a position she held until her retirement in 2007. She was the Democratic nominee to run for the office of Lieutenant Governor of Texas in 2010.

"Your union was founded 154 years ago by a group of people who said 'enough is enough,'" Chavez-Thompson said. "Generations later, the union they established is in your hands. What are you going to do with it? You're here today because you are already union leaders. But sometimes our members forget the fight. They forget the sacrifices that have been made on their behalf by those who came before us. It is your job to pass on what you learn here today. It's your job to pass on the baton of educating and energizing others to carry on the union. Make sure they carry on the love of the union and teach them to give and to sacrifice for the union."

The next guest speaker was Jodi Wallace, Alternate National Treasurer of the BLET Auxiliary. Sister Wallace described the relationship between the BLET and the BLET Auxiliary, and how they often work hand-in-hand to fight for issues of importance to BLET members and their families. She also gave an update on the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program, announcing the names of recent winners and recognizing the parents who



were in attendance.

National Vice President Gil Gore, the next guest speaker, spoke about the benefits of belonging to a union and the BLET in particular, which includes: higher wages, health and welfare benefits, pension, seniority, due process, a voice in Washington, D.C., Railroad Retirement, and the Federal Employers' Liability Act (FELA). Like Sister Chavez-Thompson, Vice President Gore discussed the importance of mentoring young members to become leaders and encouraged all BLET members to conduct themselves with dignity and honor. He received more than one standing ovation for his moving and emotional speech.

Walt Barrows, Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board, discussed the health of the Railroad Retirement system. He said that there are many challenges facing the Railroad Retirement today, but encouraged members and their unions to

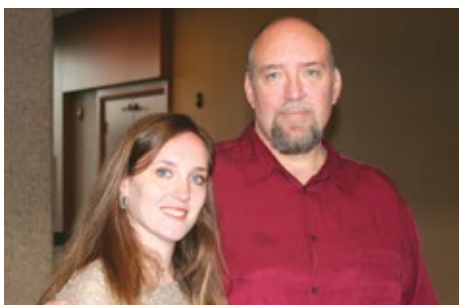
maintain constant vigilance to protect it.

"What has protected Railroad Retirement for the past 82 years is a strong labor movement," Barrows said. "Railroad Retirement is an earned benefit, not a gift. The money that railroads pay into the system is money that is earned by your labor. It isn't a gift."

The opening ceremony also included a memorial ceremony in which the names of all BLET members killed in the line of duty since 1989 were shown in a solemn video presentation. Those in attendance also observed a moment of silence in honor of retired BLE International Vice President Ed Watson, who passed away on May 31, and former BLE International Vice President Jim Shell, who passed away on June 1.

The June 6 session included a closed meeting for BLET members and an open meeting hosted by the BLET Auxiliary. Members took advantage of educational opportunities throughout the remainder of the week. Workshops featured specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers and Local Chairmen.

The 2017 San Antonio regional meeting concluded with a banquet on the evening of June 8. The BLET's second 2017 regional meeting will be held August 14-18 in Myrtle Beach, S.C. More specific information is available at: www.ble-t.org/regional/. @@



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Jeff Thurman reelected General Chairman of BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA GCA

Jeffrey L. Thurman was reelected by acclamation to his second term as General Chairman of the BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee of Adjustment (GCA) at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in St. Louis, Mo., held from May 23-25, 2017.

A BNSF locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 172 (Fort Worth, Texas), Brother Thurman was elected by acclamation to serve the GCA as 3rd Vice General Chairman in 2009, a position he was reelected to by acclamation for a second time in 2013. In June of 2013, he was elevated to the office of General Chairman when R.C. (Rick) Gibbons was elevated to serve on the BLET Advisory Board as a National Vice President.

Also elected by acclamation during the quadrennial meeting was: 1st Vice Chairman Randy J. Dumey, Division 595 (Chaffee, Mo.); Secretary-Treasurer William D. Honeycutt, Division 285 (Thayer, Mo.); 2nd Vice Chairman H.C. Rolan, Division 285 (Thayer, Mo.); 3rd Vice Chairman Kyle W. King, Division 578 (Tulsa, Okla.); 4th Vice Chairman Brett D. Jones, Division 386 (Birmingham, Ala.); 1st Alternate Vice Chairman Christopher M. Philips, Division 172 (Fort Worth, Texas); and 2nd Alternate Vice Chairman Daniel Holdcroft, Division 502 (Kansas City, Mo.). Brother William E. Brake, Division 237 (Fort Scott, Kan.), was elected Alternate Secretary-Treasurer.



Members, officers and guests at the BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee of Adjustment (GCA) quadrennial meeting in St. Louis, Mo., May 25, 2017.

Appointed to the Audit Committee were: Kyle W. King, Division 578 (Tulsa, Okla.); Bobby J. Szenasi, Division 604 (Madill, Okla.); and Daniel Holdcroft, Division 502 (Kansas City, Mo.).

Representing the BLET National Division

at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; National Vice President Michael D. Priester; and National Vice President R.C. (Rick) Gibbons.

"I am proud to congratulate Brother Thurman along with all officers of the BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee of Adjustment," President Pierce said. "I thank these Brothers for making the time to serve our Brotherhood, and I have every confidence they will continue doing an excellent job of protecting the rights of our Brothers and Sisters working for the BNSF."

Special guests from throughout the Brotherhood included: Brian Kelley, Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman; David Spradlin, Kansas City Southern General Chairman; Alan Holdcraft, BNSF (ATSF) General Chairman; Robby Cunningham, BNSF (ATSF) Vice General Chairman; Chris Mosser, BNSF (ATSF) Secretary-Treasurer; Bobby Brown, BNSF (FW&D-C&S-CRI&P) General Chairman; Joe Berlin, BNSF (FW&D-C&S-CRI&P) Vice General Chairman; Tim Williamson, BNSF (FW&D-C&S-CRI&P) Secretary-Treasurer; Jerry LaPrath, BNSF/MRL General Chairman; and Kent Psota, BNSF/MRL Vice General Chairman.

Mary Shaver of the Federal Railroad Administration (Region VI) was a guest

speaker at the quadrennial meeting.

Additionally, all Local Chairmen in attendance received BLET Years of Service pins, which were presented by National President Pierce.

Brother Thurman hired out with the Burlington Northern at Enid, Okla., on February 11, 1994. He was promoted to conductor on March 25, 1994, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on April 19, 1995. He transferred his seniority to Fort Worth, Texas, in September of 2002, and he joined the Brotherhood on September 1, 2003.

He has been an involved and active BLET member throughout his railroad career. Brother Thurman has served as Vice Local Chairman of Division 604 and as Local Chairman of Division 172. He represented his Division as a Delegate to the BLET's First National Convention in 2006, and has represented the BLET as a Delegate to the Teamsters International Convention. Also, Brother Thurman has served on the National Division Arrangements Committee at the BLET's Second National Convention in 2010 and Third National Convention in 2014.

The BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA General Committee of Adjustment represents nearly 800 locomotive engineers from 16 different divisions, including engineers and trainmen for the BNSF Railway and the Missouri & Northern Arkansas Railroad. ©

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RRB issuing statements of service (Form BA-6)

(SOURCE: RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD PRESS RELEASE, MAY 29, 2017)

Each year, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) prepares a Certificate of Service Months and Compensation (Form BA-6) for every railroad employee who had creditable railroad compensation in the previous calendar year. The RRB will mail the forms to employees during the first half of June. While every effort has been made to maintain current addresses for all active railroad employees, anyone with compensation reported in 2015 who has not received Form BA-6 by July 1, or needs a replacement, should contact the nearest RRB field office by calling the agency's toll-free number, 1-877-772-5772.

Form BA-6 provides employees with a record of their railroad retirement service and compensation, and the information shown is used to determine whether an employee qualifies for benefits and the amount of those benefits. It is important that employees review their Form BA-6 to see whether their own records of service months and creditable compensation agree with the figures shown on the form.

In checking the 2016 compensation total, employees should be aware that only annual earnings up to \$118,500 were creditable for railroad retirement purposes in that year, and that \$118,500 is the maximum amount shown on the form. To assist employees in reviewing their service credits, the form also shows service credited on a month-by-month basis for 2015, 2014, and 2013, when the creditable compensation maximum was \$118,000 for 2015, \$117,000 for 2014, and \$113,700 for 2013. The form also identifies the employer(s) reporting the employee's 2016 service and compensation.

Besides the months of service reported by employers, Form BA-6 shows the

number of any additional service months deemed by the RRB. Deemed service months may be credited under certain conditions for an employee who did not work in all 12 months of the year, but had creditable tier II earnings exceeding monthly prorations of the creditable tier II earnings maximum for the year. However, the total of reported and deemed service months may never exceed 12 in a calendar year, and no service months, reported or deemed, can be credited after retirement, severance, resignation, discharge, or death.

The form also indicates the number of months of verified military service creditable as service under the Railroad Retirement Act, if the service was previously reported to the RRB. Employees are encouraged to submit proofs of age and/or military service in advance of their actual retirement. Filing these proofs with the RRB in advance will streamline the benefit application process and prevent payment delays.

For employees who received separation or severance payments, the section of the form designated Taxable Amount shows the amounts reported by employers of any separation allowance or severance payments that were subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes. This information is shown on the form because a lump sum, approximating part or all of the tier II taxes deducted from such payments made after 1984 which did not provide additional tier II credits, may be payable by the RRB upon retirement to qualified employees or to survivors if the employee dies before retirement. The amount of an allowance included in an employee's regular compensation is shown under Compensation Amount.

Form BA-6 also shows, in the section designated Employee Contributions, the cumulative amount of tier II railroad retirement payroll taxes paid by the em-

ployee over and above tier I social security equivalent payroll taxes. While the RRB does not collect or maintain payroll tax information, the agency computes this amount from its compensation records in order to advise retired employees of their payroll tax contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

Employees should check their name, address, birth date, and sex shown at the top of the form. If the form shows the birth date as 99-9999 and the gender code is U (for unknown), it means the RRB is verifying his or her social security number with the Social Security Administration. Otherwise, if the personal identifying information is incorrect or incomplete (generally a case where the employee's surname has more than 10 letters and the form shows only the first 10 letters) or the address is not correct, the employee should contact an RRB field office. The field office can then correct the RRB's records. This is important in order to prevent identity or security-related problems that could arise if the employee wants to use certain Internet services available on the RRB's website.

Employees may view their railroad retirement service and compensation records; get annuity estimates; apply for or claim railroad unemployment benefits; claim sickness benefits; and access their railroad unemployment insurance account statements through the Benefit Online Services section of the website. An employee must set up an account to use these services and can find instructions for establishing an online account in that same section. For security purposes, first-time users must enter a Password Request Code (PRC). The agency mails a PRC to any employee who files a paper application for unemployment or sickness benefits. If an individual has not received a PRC, they can submit a

request for one using Benefit Online Services. They will then receive the PRC by mail at their home address in about 10 days. Additional information about PRC and PIN/Password is available under PIN Password (PPW) FAQ.

Employees can also request that printouts of their individual railroad retirement records of service months and compensation be mailed to them. A PIN/Password is not required to use this service, which can be accessed through the no login required service menu of Benefit Online Services.

If the employee's name was incomplete on Form BA-6, and he or she has not yet contacted an RRB field office to correct it, the employee should enter his or her first and middle initials and his or her surname **just as it appears on the Form BA-6 or a previously furnished printout of service and compensation**, along with the other requested information, in order to submit an online request.

Any other discrepancies in Form BA-6 should be reported promptly in writing to:

**Protest Unit - CESC
Railroad Retirement Board
844 North Rush Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611-1275**

The employee must include his or her social security number in the letter. Form BA-6 also explains what other documentation and information should be provided. The law limits to four years the period during which corrections to service and compensation amounts can be made.

For most employees, the address of the RRB office serving their area is provided on the form along with the RRB's nationwide toll-free number (1-877-772-5772). RRB field offices are open to the public from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, and from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Wednesday, except on Federal holidays. ☺

Arkansas governor signs BLET-backed bill to protect train crews

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson recently signed into law a BLET-backed bill that imposes harsher penalties on criminals who target railroad workers.

Act 955 is designed "to protect freight rail employees and public transit employees by enhancing the penalties of certain criminal offenses." Introduced as Arkansas House Bill 2116 on March 6, 2017, the measure passed the state House on March 27 by a 76-6 majority and passed the state Senate on March 29 by a 34-0 majority. Governor Hutchinson, a Republican, signed the bill on April 6, 2017.

Brother Terry L. Todd, Chairman of the BLET Arkansas State Legislative Board, said the legislation is designed to discourage terrorist acts against freight railroads and public transportation. It protects locomotive engineers, conductors, switchmen, brakemen, trainmen, and firemen, and also railroad managers.

Criminals are subject to enhanced sentences under this law if the victim of an offense is a railroad or public transit employee. Harsher penalties would be enforced for the following misdemeanors and felonies:

- **Class A Misdemeanor** or an unclassified Mis-

demeanor with a possible sentence greater than 90 days imprisonment, an additional period of imprisonment of not more than one year;

- **Class C felony**, Class D felony, or an unclassified felony, an additional period of imprisonment of at least six months but no more than two years; and

- **Class Y felony**, Class A felony, or Class B felony, an additional period of imprisonment of at least two years but no more than 10 years.

Brother Todd said Arkansas State Senator Eddie Joe Williams, a retired member of BLET Division 585, helped guide the bill through the Senate. He also worked with his counterparts in the SMART Transportation Division to lobby for the bill — Gerald Sale, SMART-TD Arkansas State Legislative Director and Wayne Denson, SMART-TD Arkansas State Legislative 1st Vice Chairman — and received support from the Arkansas State AFL-CIO.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked Brother Todd and all BLET members in the state of Arkansas who worked for passage of the bill. "I thank Brother Terry Todd for his diligence in lobbying to secure passage of this bill," President Pierce said. "All rail workers and the traveling public will benefit from the passage of Act 955." ☺



Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson (seated) signs Act 955 into law on April 6, 2017. The bill seeks to discourage terrorist acts by imposing harsher penalties on criminals who target railroad and public transportation workers. Standing, from left: Arkansas State Senator Eddie Joe Williams (a retired member of BLET Division 585); Terry Todd, BLET Arkansas State Legislative Chairman; Wayne Denson, SMART-TD Arkansas State Legislative 1st Vice Chairman; and Gerald Sale, SMART-TD Arkansas State Legislative Director.



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Photo of the Month: June 2017

NORFOLK & WESTERN STEAM: On May 6-7, 2017, the Virginia Museum of Transportation ran its annual steam excursion from Lynchburg to Petersburg, Va., over the Norfolk Southern. Photographed on May 7th, The Cavalier, led by restored Norfolk and Western J Class Steam Locomotive No. 611, is seen rounding the west leg of the wye at Brenco (Milepost P0.4) in Petersburg, Va.

Photo: by Locomotive Engineer Mike Marra, a member of BLET Division 14 (Washington, D.C.).



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 May 2017 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; BLET Western General Chairmen Association (WGCA) mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; IBT GEB mtg., Las Vegas; IBT Unity Conference, Las Vegas; Amtrak GCA mtg., San Diego, Calif.; Coordinated Bargaining Group (CBG) national negotiations/mediation, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, Mo.; BNSF-SLSF GCA mtg., Kansas City, Mo..

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: Short-line 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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; CSX-NL GCA mtg., Pittsburgh, Pa.; CBG mtgs., Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, Mo.; Holiday; BNSF (former SLSF)/MNA GCA mtg., Kansas City, Mo.

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; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; LR Class, Washington, D.C.; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; CSX-NL GCA mtg., Pittsburgh, Pa.; CBG national negotiations, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, Mo.; ST Class, Independence, Ohio.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Teamsters Unity Conference, Las Vegas; Amtrak GCA quadrennial mtg., San Diego; Presentation to BMWED, Washington, D.C.; Oklahoma State Legislative Board mtg., Tulsa, Okla.; BNSF-SLSF GCA quadrennial mtg., Kansas City, Mo.; RSAC mtg., Washington, D.C.; Several 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, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR and Illinois RR; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Assist UP-WR w/ pilot claim MOU language, Chicago Arb. Prep., PLB 7154, CNIC, Chicago; PLB 7154, CN/IC, Chicago; CN/IC claims conference, Chicago; Assist GC Craddock w/ delayed return to work issues, CN/IC, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline appeals, CN/WC, Chicago; Vacation; Assist GC Short w/ claims matters, IHB, Chicago; Assist GC Semenek w/ Article 6 dispute position letter, CP/Soo, Chicago; Electronic filing committee issues, NRAB, Chicago; National Academy of Arbitrators, NRAB, Chicago; Holiday; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline appeals.

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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; UP-WR Article IX, IDR mtg., Omaha, Neb.; UP-WR 2nd Quarter UPRR/LC update, Portland, Ore.; UP-SR GCA conference at Fort Worth, Texas; UP-SR GCA retirement dinner for GC Warren Dent; UP-SR Conference; UP-WR/PW Section 6 negotiations, Salem, 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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Harrison letter w/ CSX GCs; CSX-NL GCA mtg., Pittsburgh, Pa.; Trip rate dispute conference call; UP-SR GCA retirement dinner for GC Warren Dent; CSX medical quarterly update, New Orleans; GTW negotiations, Atlanta.

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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Panhandle Northern contract proposal, assist GC Holdcraft, Borger, Texas; Arbitration prep. w/ GC Brown, Amarillo, Texas; GCA prep. w/ GC Thurman, Fort Worth, Texas; Vacation; BNSF-SLSF/MNA GCA mtg., Kansas City, Mo.

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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; KCS issues, assist GC Spradlin; Tex/Mex issues and mtgs., assist GC Hiese, Houston, Texas; D&H and Springfield Terminal issues, assist GC Moore; CP, Soo Line, DM&E issues, assist GC Semenek; Mid South issues, assist GC Craddock; KCS issues, mtg. and PLB, assist GC Spradlin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; UP-SR retirement dinner for GC Warren Dent, Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas; Illinois Midland contract negotiations, assist GC Craddock; Consult on CSXT proposed agreement, assist CSXT general chairmen, Atlanta, Ga.

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; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; PLB 7574, assist GC Wallace, Norfolk, Va.; BNSF-SLSF/MNA GCA mtg., GC Thurman, Kansas City, Mo.; Memorial Day holiday.

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. and training; Education & Training issues; BLET Regional Meeting planning; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; SEPTA issues, assist GC Dixon; Amtrak GCA mtg., GC Mark Kenny, San Diego; Div. 382 and 421 union mtg., Tonawanda, N.Y.; ST class, Independence, Ohio; Assist GC Sexton w/ contract issues; Assist GC Kenny w/ contract issues.

Trump nominates two Republicans to NMB

In June, President Donald Trump nominated Republicans Gerald W. (Trey) Fauth III and Kyle Forston to positions on the three-member National Mediation Board (NMB). Democrat Linda Puchala, a NMB member since mid-2009, is expected to be renominated to a third term, but there has been no formal announcement.

If confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Fauth would serve a three-year term expiring July 1, 2020. Mr. Fauth has more than 39 years of professional experience in the private sector and Federal Government, working on economic, regulatory, public policy, and legislative

issues related to transportation. He has been involved in negotiating, mediating, arbitrating, facilitating, supporting via expert testimony, or deciding the resolution of hundreds of transportation problems and disputes during his career. Mr. Fauth has worked at the U.S. Surface Transportation Board, where he served for more than three years as Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to a Board Member.

Fortson would serve the remainder of a three-year term expiring July 1, 2019. Ms. Fortson is currently the labor policy director at the U.S. Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Commit-

tee, having served in that position since 2010. Ms. Fortson previously served as labor counsel at the same committee from 2004 to 2010. Before that, she was a policy analyst and counsel at the Senate Republican Committee from 2003 to 2004. She graduated with a B.A. in History from the University of Colorado in 1996, and with a J.D. from George Washington University in 1999.

Established by the 1934 amendments to the Railway Labor Act of 1926, the NMB is an independent U.S. government agency that facilitates labor-management relations within the nation's

railroad and airline industries. Pursuant to the RLA, NMB programs provide dispute-resolution processes to meet its statutory objectives: avoiding interruption to commerce or to the operation of any carrier; forbidding any limitation upon freedom of association among employees; providing for the prompt and orderly settlement of all disputes concerning rates of pay, rules, or working conditions; and providing for the prompt and orderly settlement of all disputes growing out of grievances related to the implementation and management of collective bargaining agreements. @@