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BLET testifies for two-person crews at FRA hearing

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) testified in favor of two-person train crews at a hearing convened by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on July 15, 2016, regarding the FRA's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on train crew size.

Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman testified on behalf of the BLET. VP Tolman conveyed the BLET's long-held position that two-person crews are the safest and that new technology (such as

Positive Train Control) should be implemented as an additional level of safety in support of the existing two-person crew structure. In other words, the technology should not be used to replace crew members, which is the polar opposite position of the rail management group that testified.

Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) testified about the heroic deeds of Geoff Andersen. Working with other train crew members, Brother Andersen, a member of BLET Division 69 (Grand Forks, N.D.), put himself in danger to mitigate the disaster of the derailment

and subsequent explosions following the derailment of a BNSF oil train in Casselton, N.D., in December 2013. "The ability to mitigate such a potential catastrophe simply would not have been possible with a single person working alone on a locomotive," Vice President Tolman said.

Other witnesses of note were Barrington, Illinois, Village President (Mayor) Karen Darch and The Honorable Ron Harris, Executive Director of the Louisiana Municipal Association (LMA), which represents 303 cities, towns and villages in Louisiana.

Village President (Mayor) Darch testified about the safety and efficiency concerns of having trains block crossings that may need to be traversed by emergency personnel. Approximately 32,000 cars a day pass on one of the highways where a train crosses in her Illinois community. Harris testified this also was a potential problem in Louisiana where there are 3,000 miles of rail line. The ability to cut cars to clear crossings is virtually impossible with a single person train crew.

VP Tolman expressed BLET's growing frustration with the Association of

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"THE BLET ALSO RAISED CONCERNS REGARDING THE PROBLEMS OF FATIGUE IN THE INDUSTRY, POOR CREW LINEUPS, AND THE HUMAN FACTORS PROBLEMS THAT CAN BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LOCOMOTIVE CAB WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES."

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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

OUR ISSUES IN NOVEMBER: MEDICARE

Editor's Note: this is the last in a series of three articles on this subject.

As you know, the issue of preserving and expanding health care benefits has been the core issue in dispute during every round of collective bargaining for more than a quarter century. This also is a critical issue for all Americans, most particularly the nation's seniors, including BLET retirees and their families.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) report that per capita health care expenditures in the U.S. more than tripled between 1990 and 2014, and aggregate health care spending has gone from 12% to 17½% of Gross Domestic Product.

Demographic breakdowns are downright frightening. CMS data for 2010 show that per capita health care spending for Americans age 85+ was nearly \$35,000. In that year Medicare paid almost 55% of the total personal health care costs for Americans 65 and over. There is no question that Medicare is a core component of retirement with dignity.

Our own experience confirms the importance of Medicare. We need look no further than our own parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents, and ask the question: "How would their lives be different if they had no Medicare or greatly inferior coverage?"

And Medicare does far more than provide medical coverage for seniors; it also provides coverage for the disabled, including most railroad workers who receive a Railroad Retirement Occupational Disability annuity.

These facts mean that all BLET members have a significant interest in knowing the positions of candidates for office in November's election when it comes to Medicare's future. At this point in time we do know

the positions of the two major political parties.

The 2016 Democratic Party Platform states that Americans "over 55 should be able to opt in to Medicare." This would be a life-saver for middle-age working Americans who have never recovered from the Great Recession, especially those thrown out of work due to plant shutdowns and outsourcing of jobs overseas.

Conversely, and in stark contrast to the Democratic Platform, the 2016 Republican Platform supports raising the current eligibility age of 65 to "a more realistic age for eligibility in light of today's longer life span."

Here is how this affects you directly. The Republican proposal to raise the eligibility age would make it much more difficult for railroad workers to retire under the "60/30" provisions of the Railroad Retirement Act. The collectively bargained health care insurance coverage in BLET's National Health and Welfare Plan includes coverage that bridges those who retire at age 60 until they are eligible for Medicare at age 65. In short, your collectively bargained and cost free bridging insurance ends at age 65, no matter when you become eligible for Medicare. Absent a collectively bargained improvement to our National Health and Welfare Plan, you stand to be left out in the cold at age 65 when you need insurance most if the Republican Party gains full control of our government.

And for those who suggest that the unions just negotiate an improvement to our current National Health and Welfare Plan, one only has to look at the Carrier's current contract demands on our National Health and Welfare Plan to know how hard that will be to accomplish.

In the end, increasing the Medicare eligibility age to 67, which was again suggested by Republican House Speak-



President Pierce with Thomas Kotarac at the BLET's regional meeting in Chicago. On June 22, Kotarac was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as Chairman of the Railroad Retirement Board. Currently, Kotarac is Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programming for the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

er Ryan as recently as June of 2016, would mean that a potential retiree planning on retiring at age 60 would either need to cross his or her fingers and hope that they have no need for insurance between the age of 65 and 67, or would have to work until age 67 just to retain their current health insurance. This threat affects all BLET members, and not just those who are close to retirement age.

Perhaps even worse, the Republican Platform also proposes a "transition to a premium-support model" for Americans under age 55, which would provide "an income-adjusted contribution toward a plan of the [enrollee's] choice." This is just fancy verbiage for turning Medicare from a defined-benefit plan into a defined-contribution plan.

Last month's article on Railroad Retirement explained in detail how this type of "transition" has gutted the pension plans for most American work-

ers since the late 1970s. This plank from the Republican Platform would do to Medicare what corporate America has done to workers' pensions.

The same stark difference also is reflected in the Platforms' approaches to prescription drug coverage for seniors, which is covered by Medicare Part D. Even though Part D coverage has been available since 2006, per capita prescription expenditures by seniors continue to be only about half that for working-age Americans, when measured as a percentage of total personal health care costs.

In part, this is because the legislation creating Part D forbade Medicare from negotiating price discounts from drug manufacturers. Due to favorable treatment of the pharmaceutical industry by the federal government, drug prices in the U.S. are completely unregulated and the highest in the world. As a result, many needed prescription drugs

continue to be simply unaffordable for many seniors.

The Democratic Platform pledges to "fight to make sure that Medicare will negotiate lower prices with drug manufacturers." However, the Republican Platform opposes "mandated price cuts for drugs under Medicare" and supports limiting participants in "Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage plans ... to a single pharmacy," which makes it impossible for seniors to comparison shop for individual prescription medications.

The ultra-wealthy billionaire class that controls the Republican agenda doesn't have to worry about exorbitant medical costs in old age ... they simply write a check to cover the costs. But retired workers don't have that option. Moreover, the huge insurance and pharmaceutical industries make enormous profits under the current system and do not want to see the status quo disturbed. Their interests — and not those of working Americans — are the ones reflected in the Republican Platform. As I have said at countless meetings with our membership, "Why do Republicans have to be this way?" The bottom line is that they don't have to be this way; they choose to be this way to benefit their corporate benefactors.

Let me be clear: electing candidates with anti-worker tendencies will have a direct bearing on how successful the BLET will be in the current round of national negotiations. The best way to ensure a stable economic future for you and your family — both in the short term and for the remainder of your career and retirement — is to cast your vote in November on the basis of your economic interests.

The lifestyle you save may be your own.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

66 The best way to ensure a stable economic future for you and your family — both in the short term and for the remainder of your career and retirement — is to cast your vote in November on the basis of your economic interests. The lifestyle you save may be your own. 99

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

SKILLED WORKERS MUST BE A PRIORITY

American workers are increasingly falling behind. The continued loss of career-track employment has stunted wage growth and created uncertainty for millions in the United States.

This nation faces a skilled worker shortage. That's why the Teamsters last year stressed the need for increased vocational education as part of the "Let's Get America Working" platform we unveiled. But it seems some still need convincing.

A New York Times column recently stressed the success of such efforts. A program called Work-Advance, which offered targeted training to some 1,300 low-income workers in New York City, Tulsa, Okla. and northeast Ohio between 2011 and 2013, resulted in participants earning 14 percent more on average than a similar group of workers who received no such training.

Yet the U.S. still is investing little in such efforts nationwide, the article notes. "According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States government spends only 0.03 percent of its gross domestic product on worker training. Denmark, whose policies to bring workers into work have gained praise around the world, spends proportionately almost 18 times as much. France spends 12 times as much; Germany seven times."

Some, like the Teamsters, have invested in efforts of their own. Last fall, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded the union a five-year, \$4.6 million grant to establish apprenticeship programs in the trucking industry. The Teamsters are partnering with ABC Moving Services, ABF Freight, DiSilva Transportation and National Retail Systems to improve truck driver training.

In addition to the apprenticeship programs, grant dollars are being used to develop qualified instructors as well as to train recent high school graduates, Teamsters moving from non-driving jobs to ones that require commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) and military personnel transitioning to civilian life. The Teamsters are locating candidates by recruiting at high schools and vocational schools, community-based organizations, Teamster locals and select military bases.

There needs to be a broader national commitment. People need to let their elected officials and even their employers know this is a priority, one that can help both workers and businesses. That's how we truly make America stronger!

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT



66 This nation faces a skilled worker shortage. That's why the Teamsters last year stressed the need for increased vocational education as part of the "Let's Get America Working" platform we unveiled. But it seems some still need convincing.

99

D.B. Kenner reelected Chairman of Montana State Legislative Board

D.B. Kenner was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Montana State Legislative Board during its quadrennial meeting in Billings, Mont., June 22-23, 2016.

A BNSF locomotive engineer, Brother Kenner is a member of BLET Division 195 in Forsyth, Mont. He has held continuous membership since joining the Brotherhood on September 1, 2004. Brother Kenner served the Board as Secretary-Treasurer immediately prior to his election to the Chairman's office in 2012.

Also reelected by acclamation to their second terms were: 1st Vice Chairman Jim S. Cowan, Division 262 (Missoula, Mont.); 2nd Vice Chairman Rob C. Davison, Division 499 (Whitefish, Mont.); and Secretary-Treasurer Kris L. Melone, Division 504 (Great Falls, Mont.). Brother Tyler D. Partridge of BLET Division 298 (Glasgow, Mont.) was elected by acclamation to his first term as Alternate Secretary-Treasurer.

"Congratulations to Brother Kenner and all officers of the Montana State Legislative Board," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I thank them for their willingness to serve our Brothers and Sisters in the great state of Montana. I also wish to recognize Brother Craig



Officers, delegates and guests at the Montana State Legislative Board's quadrennial meeting in Billings, Mont., June 22-23, 2016.

Gilchrist. Thank you for your years of service as Chairman of the Montana State Legislative Board and best wishes on your upcoming retirement."

Elected by acclamation to serve as members of the Audit Committee were:

Barry E. Green, Division 180 (Glendive, Mont.); Paul A. Slater, Division 232 (Laurel, Mont.); and Jerry D. Hedalen, Division 392 (Havre, Mont.).

Brother Cory L. Runion, Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman, was a guest

speaker during the meeting. He is a member of Division 115 (Cheyenne, Wyo.) who also serves the BLET as Region 4 Chairman of the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC).

Additional guest speakers included: Amanda Frickle, Director of the Montana Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee; Ken Naylor, Chief Inspector from the Federal Railroad Administration based in Billings, Mont.; and Zachary Zagata, Operating Practices Inspector with the FRA out of Great Falls, Mont.

Members of the Board and delegates recognized and thanked Craig Gilchrist in advance of his pending retirement. Brother Gilchrist began serving the Montana State Legislative Board Chairman in 1989 and served as its for 16 years (1996-2012).

The delegates also discussed a number of issues impacting the health, safety, and working conditions of BLET members in Montana. They discussed the upcoming national elections and voted to endorse candidates running for various elected offices in the state.

The BLET's Montana State Legislative Board was founded on May 17, 1904, and represents approximately 1,200 active and retired members in eight BLET Divisions. ©©

LaPrath elected BNSF/MRL General Chairman

Brother E.G. (Jerry) LaPrath was elected by acclamation to the office of General Chairman at the Burlington Northern Santa Fe/Montana Rail Link (BNSF/MRL) General Committee of Adjustment's (GCA) 14th triennial meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, on June 20, 2016.

A member of BLET Division 392 (Havre, Mont.), Brother LaPrath hired out in 1979 as a clerk with the Burlington Northern out of Laurel, Mont. He transferred to train service and began working as a switchman/brakeman in 1980, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer out of Havre, Mont., in 1994. He has held continuous membership in BLET Division 392 since June 1, 1997.

Also elected by acclamation were: 1st Vice Chairman Matt O. Wilson, Division 104 (Spokane, Wash.); 2nd Vice Chairman Kent J. Psota, Division 623 (McCook, Neb.); 3rd Vice Chairman Matt E. Brandt, Division 727 (Sterling, Colo.); 4th Vice Chairman Steven V. Halbrook, Division 94 (Gillette, Wyo.); and Secretary-Treasurer Kevin E. Foley, Division 517 (St. Paul, Minn.).

Alternate officers elected by acclamation were: 1st Alternate Vice Chairman Steven E. Snyder, Division 104 (Spokane, Wash.); 2nd Alternate Vice Chairman Brian H. Fransen, Division 207 (Casper, Wyo.); and 3rd Alternate Vice Chairman Jess J. Nelson, Division 842 (Klamath



Officers, delegates and guests at the BNSF/MRL GCA 14th triennial meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, on June 20, 2016.

Falls, Ore.). Brother Chris H. Bartley, Division 58 (Wishram, Wash.), was elected Alternate Secretary-Treasurer.

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; National Vice President Michael D. Priester; and National Vice President R.C. (Rick) Gibbons. BLET Special Representatives David B. Ditzel and Richard A. Olson also attended.

"I offer my heartfelt congratulations and thanks to Brother LaPrath and all officers of the BNSF/MRL General Com-

mittee of Adjustment," said President Pierce, who served as General Chairman of the BNSF/MRL GCA from 2001-2008. "I must also recognize Brother Wilson for his years of service as General Chairman. It is heartwarming that the officers of this General Committee continue to work together in a spirit of solidarity for the betterment of the members they represent and for our Brotherhood as a whole."

Representing the International Brotherhood of Teamsters at the meeting were: Ken Hall, Teamsters General Secretary-Treasurer; and Sean O'Brien, Teamsters International Vice President-Eastern Region. Both officers addressed the delegates.

Additional BLET special guests included: General Chairman Bobby J. Brown, BNSF (C&S, CRI&P/FWD)

GCA; General Chairman J. Alan Holdcraft, BNSF (AT&SF) GCA; and General Chairman Jeff L. Thurman, BNSF (STL-SF) GCA.

Brother LaPrath served Division 392 as Local Chairman from 2002-2007. He was elected to serve the BNSF/MRL GCA as 3rd Vice Chairman in 2007, 2nd Vice Chairman in 2010, and 1st Vice Chairman in 2013. He was elected by acclamation each time.

In addition to the election of officers, the 44 delegates in attendance addressed various Bylaws issues and conducted business for the good of the Order.

The BNSF/MRL GCA is the largest GCA in the BLET, representing nearly 6,500 active and retired members from 44 different BLET Divisions. ©©



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OSHA FINES CSX FOR RETALIATING AGAINST RAIL UNION OFFICER

CSX Transportation Inc. violated the anti-retaliation provisions of the Federal Railroad Safety Act when it suspended an employee at its Selkirk locomotive shop after he notified management of numerous alleged safety hazards and FRSA violations, the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced on May 5.

The employee, who was acting in his capacity as a union official, provided the shop superintendent with a letter on Sept. 6, 2013, detailing the alleged violations and the union's intention to withdraw its support of the shop's safety committee because of the violations.

Management issued the employee a five-day suspension on Dec. 18, 2013, for an alleged safety infraction. The employee filed a complaint with OSHA on March 18, 2014. OSHA's investigation found merit in the complaint and has now ordered the Florida-based commercial rail carrier to pay punitive damages and attorney's fees to the worker and take additional corrective action.

"While CSX subsequently reversed the suspension, it was an adverse action that never should have happened in the first place. This worker was clearly doing his duty, alerting management to employees' safety concerns. The company's retaliation needlessly cost him time, money and distress," said Robert Kulick, OSHA's regional administrator in New York. "As part of our findings, and in an effort to stop future violations, we are ordering CSX to have its Selkirk managers submit to training about the law and the rights it provides to their employees."

Specifically, the findings order CSX to:

- Pay the employee \$27,735 in attorney's fees and \$5,000 in punitive damages.
- Expunge the employee's employment records of his suspension and his exercise of his FRSA rights.

- Not retaliate or discriminate against the employee in any manner for his FRSA-related actions.

- Have all managers at CSX's Selkirk facility receive OSHA-provided training on FRSA and the rights it provides their employees.

- Train all new hires on FRSA and employee rights.
- Immediately post in the workplace and electronically a notice to employees of their FRSA rights.

The employee and CSX each have 30 days from receipt of OSHA's findings to file objections and request a hearing before the Labor Department's Office of Administrative Law Judges.

OSHA enforces the whistleblower provisions of the FRSA and 21 other statutes protecting employees who report violations of various airline, commercial motor carrier, consumer product, environmental, financial reform, food safety, health care reform, nuclear, pipeline, worker safety, public transportation agency, railroad, maritime and securities laws.

Employers are prohibited from retaliating against employees who raise various protected concerns or provide protected information to the employer or to the government. Employees who believe that they have been retaliated against for engaging in protected conduct may file a complaint with the Secretary of Labor to request an investigation by OSHA's Whistleblower Protection Program. Detailed information on employee whistleblower rights, including fact sheets, is available at www.whistleblowers.gov.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit www.osha.gov. ©©

Pfeifer reelected Chairman of Nebraska State Legislative Board

Pat S. Pfeifer was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Nebraska State Legislative Board during its triennial meeting in Lincoln, Neb., April 3-7, 2016.

A Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Brother Pfeifer is a member of BLET Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.) who first joined the BLET on September 1, 1997. He hired out with the Union Pacific in 1990 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1994. Brother Pfeifer has been an active member of the BLET since that time, serving Division 88 as Legislative Representative, Vice Local Chairman and Local Chairman. He currently serves as Local Chairman of Division 388. Brother Pfeifer has been an active member of the Nebraska State Legislative Board for several years, having served as 1st Vice Chairman for two terms (2007-2010 and 2010-2013).

Also elected were: 1st Vice Chairman Eric S. Wood, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.); 2nd Vice Chairman Kevin C. Howell, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.); and Secretary-Treasurer Jeff T. Vogt, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.). Elected to serve as Trustees were: Eric S. Wood, Division 98 (Lincoln,



Officers and delegates of the Nebraska State Legislative Board at their triennial meeting in Lincoln, Neb., April 3-7, 2016.

Neb.); Lance D. Flohr, Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.); and John E. Sweeney, Division 183 (Omaha, Neb.). Elected as Executive Board Members were: Lance D. Flohr, Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.); and Kevin L. Potthoff, Division 623 (McCook, Neb.).

Representing the BLET National Di-

vision at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; and Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman.

"I congratulate Brother Pfeifer and all officers of the Nebraska State Legislative

Board, and thank them for their willingness to serve our Brotherhood," President Pierce said. "I am confident they are up to the challenge of educating candidates for office about the key issues of importance to our membership leading up to the national election in November."

Special guests included: Dave Geisler, Union Pacific-Eastern District General Chairman; and Steve Fender, Federal Railroad Administration Region 6 Director, who was also a guest speaker.

In addition to the elected officers listed above, additional Nebraska State Legislative Board delegates in attendance included: Joe E. Meuser, Division 88 (North Platte, Neb.); Ron B. Ross Jr., Division 621 (Wymore, Neb.); Ted J. Counter, Division 303 (Morrill, Neb.); and Tim R. Schnackenberg, Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.).

The delegates conducted business in a professional and efficient manner, making various changes to their Bylaws. Of note is a change to hold meetings on a quadrennial basis instead of triennially.

The Nebraska State Legislative Board represents approximately 1,300 locomotive engineers and trainmen from eight different BLET Divisions. @@

Leyshon elected UP-Western Region General Chairman

Brother Steve A. Leyshon was elected by acclamation as the new General Chairman of the Union Pacific-Western Region General Committee of Adjustment during the Committee's quadrennial meeting held June 20-22, 2016, in Boise, Idaho.

Brother Leyshon is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and member of Division 766 (Las Vegas, Nevada). He hired out in Las Vegas as a brakeman for the Union Pacific on October 5, 1990, earning promotion to locomotive engineer in September of 1995. He has held continuous membership in Division 766 since August 1, 1995. Brother Leyshon succeeds General Chairman Jim L. Dayton, who is retiring.

Also elected during the quadrennial session were: 1st Vice General Chairman William J. Wallace, Division 362 (La Grande, Ore.); 2nd Vice General Chairman Ray W. Letcher, Division 349 (Salt Lake City, Utah); 3rd Vice General Chairman Tim L. Smith Jr., Division 443 (Spokane, Wash.); Secretary-Treasurer Tom M. Preston, Division 236 (Portland, Ore.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Chad A. Holub, Division 766 (Las Vegas, Nevada). All were elected or reelected by acclamation.

Appointed to the Audit Committee were: Tim L. Smith Jr., Division 443 (Spokane, Wash.); Steve P. Wells, Division 766 (Las Vegas); and Jim L. Knudtson, Division 222 (Salt Lake City, Utah).

National Vice President Mike D. Twombly represented the National Division at the meeting.

"I offer my congratulations to Brother Steve Leyshon and all officers of the Union Pacific-Western Region General Committee of Adjustment," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I thank them for their dedication to our Brother-



Delegates, officers and guests at the Union Pacific-Western Region General Committee of Adjustment's quadrennial meeting in Boise, Idaho, June 20-22, 2016.

hood and I have every confidence they will do an excellent job of representing our Brothers and Sisters who work for the UP. I also thank retiring General Chairman Jim Dayton for his many years of dedicated service to our Brotherhood and I extend best wishes for a long, happy and healthy retirement. You have definitely earned it, Brother."

Special guests included: UP-Western Lines General Chairman Bill Hannah; UP-Eastern District General Chairman Dave Geisler; UP-Southern Region General Chairman Warren Dent; and retired UP-Western Region General Chairman Tim Donnigan.

The delegates honored retiring General Chairman Jim Dayton with several gifts and a heartfelt thank you for his years of devoted service to the Brotherhood.

Brother Dayton was elected General Chairman in June of 2008. A member of BLET Division 236 (Portland, Ore.), Brother Dayton hired out with the Union Pacific in April of 1976 as a bridge and building carpenter. He transferred to engine service as a fireman in April of 1977 and joined Division 236 in November of 1977.

Brother Dayton has served the Brotherhood in many capacities over the years, including Local Chairman of Division 236, General Chairman of the former Union Pacific Oregon Division (1980-1987), BLE International Vice-President (1987-1991), and Vice General Chairman-at-Large and Second Vice-Chairman of UP-WR GCA (1991-2000). Brother Dayton also served as a regional mobilization coordinator for the BLE International from 1991 to 2000, and he twice served

as Chairman of the Bylaws Committee during the BLET's Second National Convention in Reno, Nevada, in 2010, and then the Third National Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2014.

General Chairman Leyshon was elected 1st Vice General Chairman of the GCA at quadrennial meetings in 2008 and 2012. Prior to that, he served Division 766 as Secretary-Treasurer and Local Chairman. He also served on the Arrangements Committee at two BLET National Conventions and was assigned by President Pierce to represent the BLET on a Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) Working Group.

There were 19 delegates in attendance representing approximately 1,000 members from the states of Idaho, Nevada, Washington, Oregon and Utah. @@

BLET concludes Chicago regional meeting

Approximately 350 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and their families convened in Chicago for opening ceremonies of the BLET's regional meeting on July 12, 2016.

This is the first year the BLET National Division has hosted a regional meeting. Delegates to the Third National Convention in 2014 changed the BLET's regional meeting structure so that there are two annual regional meetings each year sponsored by the National Division.

After presentation of flags by the Associated Fire Fighters of Illinois Color Guard and the playing of the National Anthem, Paul Piekarski, Chairman of the BLET's Illinois State Legislative Board, delivered the invocation.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce then welcomed all members, families and guests to Chicago. President Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board who were in attendance. He thanked National Vice President Jim Louis and Special Representative Matt Kronyak for their work in managing and organizing the regional meeting, and thanked Chicago-area arrangements committee members who provided local support: Division 404 Local Chairman Gregg Vogel; Division 683 Local Chairman Sam Lampkin; Retired Division 12 Member Dino Raptis and his wife Kathy; and Retired Division 17 Member Steve Tuck and his wife Chris.



Opening ceremonies at the Drake Hotel in Chicago.

Numerous distinguished guest speakers addressed the body, including: Jim Kabbell, Teamsters International Trustee; Pat Quinn, former Governor of Illinois; Kathleen Bisbikis, BLET Auxiliary 2nd Vice President & National Legislative Representative; Joe Szabo, Executive Director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency and former Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration; Mike Ciaccio, Political Director of Teamsters Joint Council 25; and Walt Barrows, Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board.

In his address, President Pierce spoke about the pride, skill and professionalism

of BLET members and the important role they play in the success of the nation's freight and passenger rail industry.

"(O)ur union — along with the rest of rail labor — has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of our membership's workplace," President Pierce said. "Whether it be through collective bargaining agreements or through legislation and regulation, Rail Labor has been at the forefront of the movement to hold railroads accountable, and to protect railroad workers from the 'all for the bosses, nothing for the employees' mentality that has plagued the railroad industry since the

days of the Robber Barons.

"Your union has fought in the halls of Congress for things like the Railway Labor Act, the Railroad Retirement Act, the Hours of Service Act, the Boiler Inspection Act, the Power Brake Law, the Safety Appliance Act, the Federal Railroad Safety Act and the Federal Employers' Liability Act, all to protect our members from an industry that has literally made its profits on the backs of its employees."

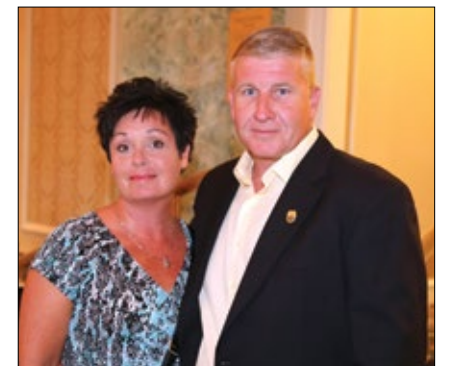
The opening ceremony also included a memorial ceremony, in which the names of all BLET members killed in the line of duty since 1989 were shown in a solemn video presentation. They were honored with a moment of silence.

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. These workshops also included an overview of the BLET's Mobilization network.

The BLET's 2016 Chicago regional meeting concluded with a banquet on the evening of July 14.

The second 2016 BLET regional meeting will be held August 22-25 at the Hyatt Regency in Long Beach, Calif. For details and to register, please visit: www.ble-t.org/regional/longbeach.

It was announced that the BLET's 2017 regional meetings will be held in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and San Antonio, Texas. ©



RRB: Dual benefit payments

The payment of a railroad retirement annuity can be affected by entitlement to social security benefits, as well as certain other government benefits. Such dual entitlement, if not reported to the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), can result in benefit overpayments which have to be repaid, sometimes with interest and penalties. The following questions and answers describe how the RRB adjusts dual benefit payments for annuitants eligible for social security benefits and/or other benefit payments.

1. How are dual benefits paid to persons entitled to both railroad retirement and social security benefits?

If a railroad retirement annuitant is also awarded a social security benefit, the Social Security Administration determines the amount of the social security benefit due, but a combined monthly dual benefit payment should, in most cases, be issued by the RRB after the railroad retirement annuity has been reduced by the amount of the social security benefit.

2. Why is a railroad retirement annuity reduced when a social security benefit is also payable?

The tier I portion of a railroad retirement annuity is based on both the railroad retirement and social security credits acquired by an employee and figured under social security formulas. It approximates what social security would pay if railroad work were covered by social security. Tier I benefits are, therefore, reduced by the amount of any actual social security benefit paid on the basis of nonrailroad employment, in order to prevent a duplication of benefits based on social security-covered earnings.

The tier I dual benefit reduction also applies to the annuity of an employee qualified for social security benefits on the earnings record of another person, such as a spouse. An annuitant is required to advise the RRB if any benefits are received directly from the Social Security Administration or if those benefits increase (other than for a cost-of-living increase).

The tier II portion of a railroad retirement annuity is based on railroad service and earnings alone, is computed under a separate formula, and is not reduced for entitlement to a social security benefit.

3. Are there any exceptions to the railroad retirement annuity reduction for social security benefits?

No. A limited number of annuitants may have an additional component in their annuity known as a vested dual benefit, which is intended to offset, in part, the dual benefit reduction. However, this component is only payable if an employee qualified for both railroad retirement and social security benefits before 1975 and met certain vesting requirements. Only two vested dual benefits were awarded in fiscal year 2015.

4. Can Federal, State, or local government pensions also result in dual benefit reductions in a railroad retirement annuity?

Tier I benefits for employees first eligible for a railroad retirement annuity and a Federal, State or local government pension after 1985 may be reduced for receipt of a public pension based, in part or in whole, on employment not covered by social security or railroad retirement after

1956. This may also apply to certain other payments not covered by railroad retirement or social security, such as from a non-profit organization or from a foreign government or a foreign employer. Usually, an employee's tier I benefit will not be reduced by more than 1/2 of his or her pension from noncovered employment. However, if the employee is under age 65 and receiving a disability annuity, the tier I benefit may be reduced by an added amount if the pension from noncovered employment is a public disability benefit.

Military service pensions, payments by the Department of Veterans Affairs, or certain benefits payable by a foreign government as a result of a totalization agreement between that government and the United States will not cause a reduction.

5. How does the public service pension apply to spouse or widow(er)s' benefits?

The tier I portion of a spouse's or widow(er)'s annuity may be reduced for receipt of any Federal, State or local government pension separately payable to

the spouse or widow(er) based on her or his own earnings. The reduction generally does not apply if the employment on which the public service pension is based was covered under the Social Security Act throughout the last 60 months of public employment. Most military service pensions and payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs will not cause a reduction. Pensions paid by a foreign government or interstate instrumentality will also not cause a reduction. For spouses and widow(er)s subject to a public service pension reduction, the tier I reduction is equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public service pension.

6. What dual benefit restrictions apply when both persons in a marriage are rail employees entitled to railroad retirement annuities?

If both the employee and spouse started railroad employment after 1974, the amount of any spouse or divorced spouse annuity is reduced by the amount of the employee annuity to which the spouse

is also entitled.

If both the employee and spouse are railroad employees and either had some railroad service before 1975, the spouse tier I amount is reduced by the amount of the railroad employee tier I to which the spouse is entitled and that initial reduction is restored in the spouse tier II amount. The spouse tier I amount cannot be reduced below zero.

If a widow or dependent widower is also a railroad employee annuitant, and either the widow(er) or the deceased employee had 120 months of railroad service before 1975, the tier I reduction may be partially restored in the survivor tier II amount.

If either the deceased employee or the widow(er) had some railroad service before 1975 but less than 120 months of service, the widow(er)'s own employee annuity and the tier II portion of the survivor annuity would be payable to the widow(er). The tier I portion of the survivor annuity would be payable only to the extent that it exceeds the tier I portion of the widow(er)'s own employee annuity. ©



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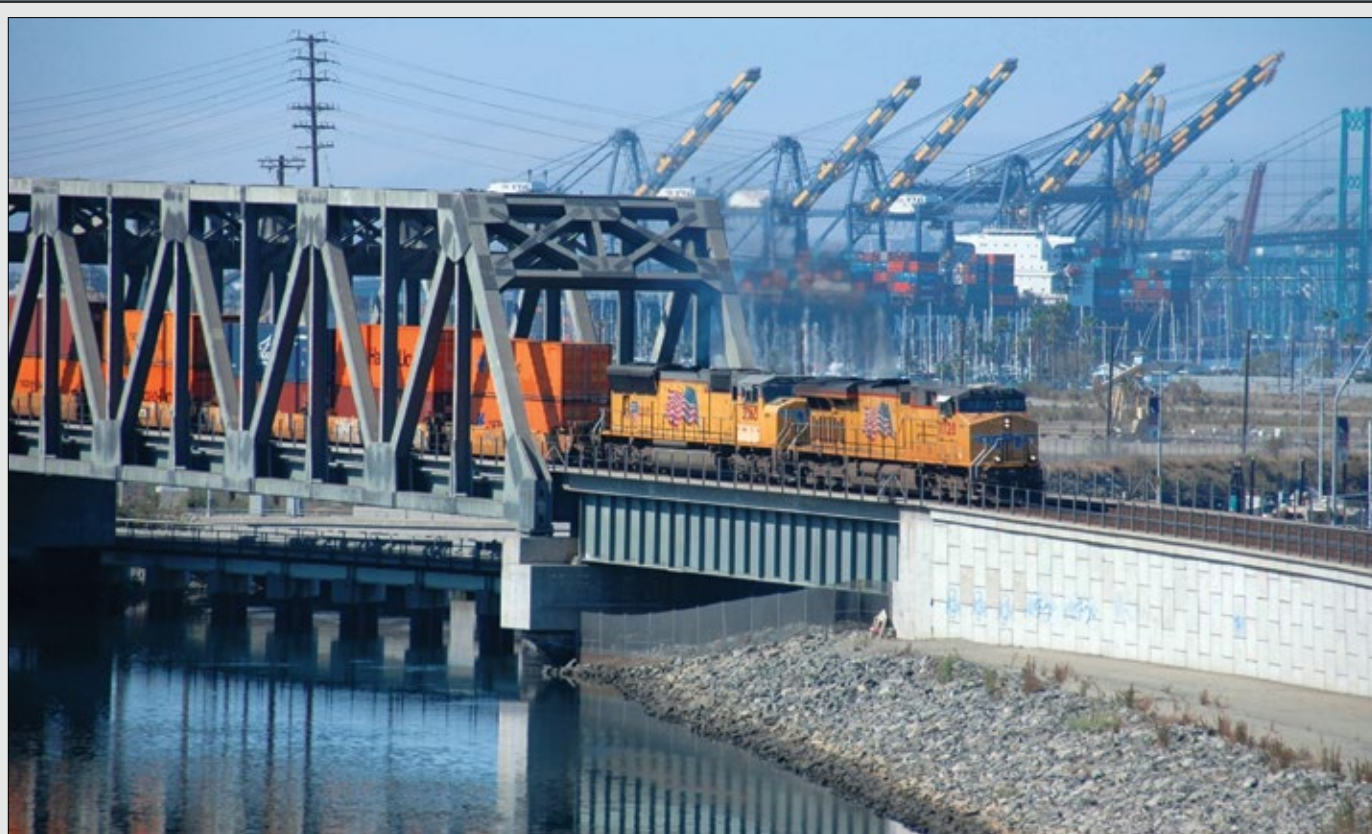
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Photo of the Month: July 2016

LONG BEACH RAILROADING: A Union Pacific-led eastbound stack train departs Terminal Island as another ship (background) undergoes the unloading process at Wilmington, Calif. *Photo courtesy:* Enrique Contreras.



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 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, 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; UP-SR GCA mtg., Fort Worth, Texas; Secretary-Treasurer class, Independence, Ohio; Western General Chairmen's Association (WGCA) mtg., Las Vegas, Nevada; NS-E GCA mtg., Roanoke, Va.; Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.; NS-S GCA mtg., Asheville, N.C.; National Bargaining mtg., Las Vegas.

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, Independence, Ohio; UP-SR GCA mtg., Fort Worth, Texas; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; NS-E GCA mtg., Roanoke, Va.; LR class, Washington, D.C.; NS-S GCA mtg., Asheville, N.C.; National Bargaining mtg., Las Vegas.

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, Independence, Ohio; Vacation; Union Track staff training, Independence, Ohio; WGCA, Las Vegas; NTSB Amtrak train 188, Washington, D.C.; NS-S GCA mtg., Asheville, N.C.; National Bargaining mtg., Las Vegas.

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.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; BLET Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.; Mtgs. with over 150 Representatives and Senators for a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C.; NS-S GCA mtg., Asheville, N.C.; Various functions for Representatives and Senators, 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; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline cases, WC, Green Bay, Wisc.; Conference call with GCs Semenak, Craddock and Balonek, Metra, Chicago; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Capone DL dockets, NRAB, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ arbitration prep., WC, Chicago; Referee Capone DL, NRAB hearing, Chicago; Memorial Day; Assist GC Balonek w/ disc. Appeal, Metra; Assist GC Reynolds w/ disc. Submission, WC, Chicago.

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.; UP-Southern Region GCA mtg., Fort Worth, Texas; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; UP-WR and Portland & Western conference, Salem, Ore.; Up-WR GCA conference at Portland, Ore.; Utah Railway Section 6 negotiations, Salt Lake City, Utah.

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 w/ GC Thurman and LCs, Irving; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Article IX, Division 391.2 and 391.3, w/ GC Holdcraft, Fort Madison.

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.; Soo Line and DM&E issues, GC Semenak; Mid South issues, GC Craddock; Springfield Terminal and D&H issues, GC Moore; Tex-Mex issues, GC Silmon; WGCA mtgs., Las Vegas; KCS issues, GC Parker; Soo Line contract issues, GC Semenak; Huron & Eastern issues, GC Ladrig; Louisville & Indiana issues, GC Hogan.

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; BLET-NS labor management mtg. w/ GCs Wallace, Dehart and Peek, Norfolk, Va.; PLB 7574 and PLB 7663, assisting GCs Wallace and Peek, Norfolk, Va.; WGCA, Las Vegas; NS-Eastern GCA mtg., GC Fanon, Roanoke, Va.; NS-Southern GCA mtg., GC Wallace, Asheville, N.C.; Memorial Day; W&LE mediation, assist GC Dehart, Independence, 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.; Chicago and Long Beach regional meeting planning; Secretary-Treasurer class, Independence, Ohio; Assist NJ Transit GC w/ contract issues, Newark, N.J.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Legislative Representative class, Washington, D.C.

Two-person Crews

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

American Railroads' (AAR's) assertion that not enough data exists regarding the safety of single-person crews. The only way to gather single-person crew data is for train crews and the public to assume the risk that is being offloaded by the railroads and onto them. AAR claims that since single person operational data does not exist, then FRA should either keep the status quo or allow single person or no person operations.

Ed Hamberger testified on behalf of the AAR. Also on AAR's panel were a representative of CSX, a Vice President from the Indiana Railroad and a former George W. Bush administration official from the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). Hamberger testified that the NPRM fails in two ways: first, it does not adhere to the Administrative Procedure Act; and, second, that the lack of data should

lead FRA to not move forward with regulation. Hamberger also claimed the issue was one best left up to collective bargaining. The idea that a lack of data exists was challenged by the public officials testifying, FRA, BLET and the other unions present.

The notion that collective bargaining alone would resolve the issue was also explained in greater detail. Both the BLET and the SMART Transportation Division expressed frustration regarding the concept that railroad workers should have to bargain away or trade safety for dollars. Safety is non-negotiable.

Underscoring a lack of knowledge of railroad operations, the AAR also made attempts to compare PTC technology with driverless cars and trucks, arguing that to mandate two-person crews would stifle the railroads' ability to innovate and would lead to uncertainty. The BLET responded that PTC technology is not designed or mandated to take the place of a second crewmember or perform the

same duties and functions.

"To compare freight trains with thousands of tons of weight that carry volatile and hazardous materials to a driverless car should embarrass the railroads," VP Tolman said. "It frustrates train crews who know better."

BLET stressed Class 1 railroad data and an analysis from Oliver Wyman points out that 531,000 — or 1 in 4 — trains experienced delays due to unplanned events in 2013 and that PTC technology would not resolve the causes of those delays.

The BLET also raised concerns regarding the problems of fatigue in the industry, poor crew lineups, and the human factors problems that can be introduced into the locomotive cab with the implementation of new technologies. The AAR did not acknowledge any of these critical safety issues during its testimony. There were no speakers other than the AAR panel who spoke in favor of single-person crews. @