



PUBLISHED BY THE BLET, A DIVISION OF THE RAIL CONFERENCE, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS SHOCKED AT LAX SAFETY IN TEX-MEX JOB GIVEAWAY

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is continuing its fight to preserve members' jobs and to protect public safety at the Texas Mexican Railway (Tex Mex) border crossing in Laredo, Texas.

On July 9, Tex Mex unilaterally replaced U.S. citizen crewmembers with Mexican train crews between Laredo Yard and the International Bridge, more than 9 miles away. BLET declared the action constituted a major dispute under the Railway Labor Act and had threatened to strike, but a Federal judge issued a preliminary injunction on July 6 that prohibited a BLET job action over the issue.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce then asked President Donald J. Trump to personally intervene to help protect American jobs, but the Union has yet to hear from the Administration.

In mid-July, a delegation of BLET representatives visited 150 Congressional offices in Washington, D.C., to apprise

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them of the situation. President Pierce advised that many Members of Congress were shocked and surprised to learn that the train crews from Mexico would be operating trains on U.S. soil under relaxed federal railroad safety standards.

"Members of Congress expressed grave concern that the Federal Railroad Administration would allow the railroad to apply a lower safety standard to Mexican train crews than to U.S. train crews," President Pierce said. "Our members are held to the highest standard while crews coming in from Mexico are essentially given a break in terms of certification, testing, and operating experience."

During the federal court hearing on July 3, the railroad submitted an internal memorandum from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), which appears to give the railroad preliminary permission to proceed with its job

replacement plan. According to the document, the rail safety agency told the railroad it needed to make no changes to its conductor certification program to certify Mexican conductors to replace U.S. crews.

Additionally, a review of the railroad's revised Part 240 Locomotive Engineer Certification Program disclosed several glaring deficiencies in the requirements for foreign national locomotive engineers as compared to the requirement in place for American locomotive engineers.

"There is no requirement whatsoever that the engineers to whom the railroad has given our work receive classroom and on-the-job training of a duration and curriculum required of a Train Service Engineer (TSE) to be certified, even though the service they will perform requires a TSE certification," President Pierce said. "Moreover, the

only English language requirement contained in the Part 240 Program pertains to the language used in records that KCS must produce for FRA inspection at the agency's request. There is no requirement whatsoever that foreign national locomotive engineers must take their written tests in English or show any proficiency in the English language at all; there is nothing in Section 7 of the Program that requires foreign national locomotive engineers to take the 200-question test required of KCS TSEs, and to pass that test by achieving at least a 90% grade."

President Pierce questioned the FRA's priorities in this situation. "The memorandum makes us wonder whether some at FRA are less interested in railroad safety, which is the agency's statutory mandate, than they are in the railroad's bottom line," he said. "This degradation in safety is unacceptable, and we will not give up in our fight to protect good American jobs, and for the safety of those Americans living in communities where these trains operate." @@



BNSF's New Power

A pair of brand new BNSF Railway GE ET44AC's lead an eastbound baretable train through the Mojave Desert on BNSF's ex-Santa Fe Transcon (BNSF Needles Subdivision) near Siberia, Calif., on April 6, 2017.

Photo: Chase Gunnoe



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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT UNION SOLIDARITY

(BLET EDITOR'S NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS A TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS DELIVERED BY BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE AT THE BROTHERHOOD OF RAILROAD SIGNALMEN'S (BRS) 52ND REGULAR CONVENTION IN BOSTON, MASS., IN EARLY AUGUST 2018.)

Good morning ... my name is Dennis Pierce, and I am honored to serve as National President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and as President of the larger Teamsters Rail Conference.

I thank my friend and Brother — President Dan Pickett — for the invitation to address you today at the 52nd Regular Convention of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen. Our two unions, BLET and BRS, work side by side, day in and day out, and I am truly honored to be here.

I would like to take a few minutes this morning to share with you why I am so proud to be a Union member, and even more importantly, why I believe in, and support, the Union movement. I didn't grow up in a Union household like many of my union brothers and sisters did. I have worked with second, third and fourth generation railroaders over the years, and they have shared the lessons they learned at the supper table of a union household. I did not have that growing up, and when I entered the workplace as a young adult, my first jobs were not Union jobs.

At age 18, I went to work in a non-union factory, where the boss's friends and relatives had the best jobs. I was neither one of those, so my work environment included everything from low wages, to timed restroom breaks and impossible quotas on a steel press machine. Looking back now, I am convinced that my non-Union experience is what makes me support the Union workplace with all of my being.

That is because I **know** the difference; I **know** what it's like not to have access to adequate health care. I **know** what it's like to have no voice in the workplace, and I **know** what it's like to face termi-



President Pierce, right, with Kyle Bagby, Vice Chairman of the UP Central Region GCA, at the BLET regional meeting in Monterey, Calif.

nation with no ability to fight workplace injustice.

All that changed for me when I started on the Burlington Northern Railroad some 41 years ago and got my first union job. I spent about three seasons working in the track department; I then transferred to the clerical ranks. Next, I became a Locomotive Fireman and, eventually, I was promoted to Locomotive Engineer. Four crafts, represented by four Unions:

- the BMW, which is now a Division of the Teamsters Rail Conference ...
- the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks — BRAC — which is now TCU ...
- the United Transportation Union, now SMART TD ...
- and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers.

And I didn't have to track any of those unions down to become a member. In fact, it was incredibly easy for me to be part of a labor union.

Each time I entered a new craft, someone from the union contacted me to fill out my application to become a member. I didn't have to fight for the right to belong to a union, and I didn't

pay my dues to these four rail unions out of any obligation ... I paid them because I personally knew the value of a union job.

Yes there were furloughs, and I was forced to work away from my family for months at a time; but I also knew I was accumulating seniority because of my union contract, and that I had insurance benefits that allowed me to start a family I could take care of in times of sickness.

We are fortunate to work in an industry that is virtually completely organized, and for that reason, our members have benefits that come not only from collectively-bargained contracts, but also from legislation crafted and promoted by our Unions. Think for a minute about these combined benefits that come from over a century and a half of trade unionism in the railroad industry:

- A Railroad Retirement system that allows you to retire with 30 years of service at age 60, and that pays retirement annuities double those paid under Social Security.
- An Occupational Disability system for railroaders with 20 years of service that pays double

the annuity paid to SSI recipients who are totally disabled.

- A Medicare system that provides you with health care in your retirement years.

- Health and welfare coverage while working, that — despite some flaws — pays about 90% of all medical costs, and provides bridge coverage for those who take early retirement and are not old enough to qualify for Medicare.

- The FELA System that protects you in the event that you get injured on the job. We all know that railroading is a dangerous occupation, and FELA is there to not only protect you if injured, but it also protects the families of railroad workers whose lives are lost on the job.

These benefits and protections are only part of the benefits of union membership. And the five I mentioned were all won by past generations of Union Brothers and Sisters.

It may be that, in some ways, ease of unionization in this industry has led some to take for granted that rail unions will always be there to provide representation and other services, without any action required on their part. Such thinking could be fatal for our movement, for our economic security, and for our standard of living.

Front and center in today's legislative halls is the corporate-backed push called "right to work". As I've often said, anytime corporate-backed politicians give something a catchy name, you need to do your homework on the details. What this type of legislation does is relieve nonmembers of the obligation to pay for the representation they receive while retaining the union's duty of fair representation. The biggest con ever pushed on the American worker by the corporate bosses is the notion that he or she is better off without a Union contract. Those corporate interests invent employees like Mark Janus, who are nothing more than shells for a corporate agenda intended to destroy the union movement.

To accomplish that, they spew lies and make false promises, and they promote division

within the house of labor ... all to create a class of freeloaders that will drive unions into bankruptcy and out of existence because the costs of representation far outweigh the unions' income. So, we really should call this type of legislation "right-to-freeload". Ultimately, it is the right to make the union weaker, and the bosses richer.

If these corporate-backed politicians succeed in eliminating labor unions from the American workplace, your Union contracts go away with them. Many of our members do not realize that without a union and a union contract, there is no seniority roster or seniority district.

Much like my first factory job, pay rates will be decided by the boss, without regard to anything but personal favoritism and nepotism.

There are no work rules that limit what you can be forced to do for a day's pay.

Insurance is only provided to the extent required by government, and if you complain about any of this, you are terminated without the hearing and arbitration process that your contract currently provides you.

What I have just described is the non-union workplace in America, the one I left 41 years ago. And the non-union workplace actually hasn't changed much in that time.

I don't think anyone in this room wants to go backwards to a non-union workplace at your railroad. I don't think anyone wants to go back to a workplace where contractually negotiated wages, work place rules and benefits are gone.

But if we are complacent, it could happen in our lifetimes. Over a century and a half of trade unionism in the railroad industry could be wiped out if these anti-union politicians, largely bought and paid for by Corporate America, get their way.

Here is what we must remember: strong unions are what built the American Middle Class, and the decline of unions over the past 40 years is what made it possible to hollow out that Middle Class.

Anyone who believes for one

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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

PENSION REFORM, 2018 ELECTION TOP ISSUES AT IBT POLITICAL CONFERENCE

Teamsters from across the nation descended on Capitol Hill in mid-July to lobby lawmakers and learn about the union's plans to get involved and activate membership in advance of the 2018 election.

About 125 political coordinators from locals all over the U.S. spent time going from office to office meeting with elected officials and talking about pension reform, specifically the Butch Lewis Act. The bill would boost financially troubled multiemployer pensions so they don't fail. It would create a new agency under the U.S. Treasury Department that would sell bonds in the open market to large investors such as financial firms.

Pensions were a top issue during the first day of the Teamsters Political & Legislative Coordinators Conference, when several lawmakers spoke to attendees about the need for reform. Lawmakers like Sen. Sher-



rod Brown (D-Ohio), Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.) and Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) said it was time for a bipartisan collection of lawmakers to stand together for retirement security.

They noted that working people had done their part by forgoing some wage increases so they could pay into their pensions. "Working people kept their part of the deal on this,"

Rep. King said. "To lose [their pensions] now ... is completely unfair."

Of course, the concerns of Teamsters go beyond pensions. Focusing on the upcoming elec-

tion season, Teamsters officials told attendees they must be ready to seize upon the momentum building to elect officials who will stand up for hardworking Americans.

This union recognizes that workers are longing for change. The Teamsters need to get people out to the polls. We have to be at the forefront to turn the political landscape around so that the concerns of workers will be matched with results from our elected officials in Washington.

Democratic Party officials on hand agreed that the climate is building that could flip control of Congress. But it starts with those on the ground. The Teamsters are ready to return power to the people.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

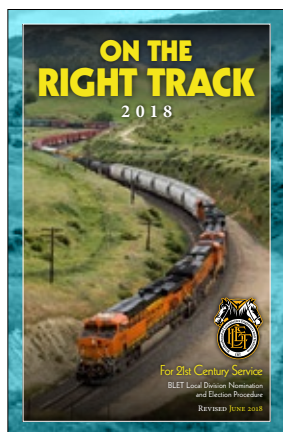
66 This union recognizes that workers are longing for change. The Teamsters need to get people out to the polls. We have to be at the forefront to turn the political landscape around so that the concerns of workers will be matched with results from our elected officials in Washington. 99

ON THE RIGHT TRACK: 2018 Triennial Election manual now online

The 2018 edition of "On the Right Track," the Local Division nomination and election procedure manual, is now available for download from the BLET website and for those Officers who have access, the document is also accessible in Document Library in UnionTrack.

Triennial elections for BLET Divisions are being held this year, and nominations will be held at each Division's first regular meeting in September of 2018.

The "On the Right Track" election manual will assist the officers whose job it is to oversee the election process as well as the members who have an interest in running for office.



If you are a Division Secretary-Treasurer, you will also serve as an election official for your Division and will be receiving a hard-copy of "On the Right Track" in the mail in the coming days. An additional package of election materials will be mailed to you from the National Division office shortly, and copies of the Notice of Nominations and the Nominating Form are also currently available in UnionTrack.

Because determinations of eligibility to run for office may involve an interpretation of the BLET Bylaws, any eligibility questions must be submitted, in writing and via a signed letter, to National President Dennis R. Pierce.

A username and password must be used for logging into the Members' Area of the BLET National Division website to download the 2018 edition of "On the Right Track" (PDF). It is available at: www.ble-t.org/members/OnTheRightTrack.asp

If you are a BLET member and you do not have a username and password, you can sign up for one at: www.ble-t.org/signup.asp @@



Photo: Chase Gunnoe

National Division launches 2018 convention website

BLETCONVENTION.ORG

The BLET National Division has launched a new website — <https://bletconvention.org> — to provide key information to delegates, vendors and guests attending the union's Fourth National Convention, which will be held October 1-4, 2018.

The BLET's Fourth National Convention will convene at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, from Monday, October 1, 2018, through Thursday, October 4, 2018. Delegate registration begins on Sunday, September 30. Approximately 500 delegates will represent nearly 37,000 active locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States.

The new website has numerous sections containing news and other information for delegates, visitors and vendors. The goal is to expedite the registration process by providing as much information as possible in advance of the convention, and to serve as a one-stop information source for convention-related news, photographs and videos.

The delegate section includes a video from BLET National Division President Dennis R. Pierce explaining the convention process. There is a special link directly to the Rio Hotel website that allows delegates to make their room reservations, and another to reserve transportation between the airport and the hotel.

The visitors section provides an online pre-registration form

for non-delegates who plan to attend the Fourth National Convention and observe the proceedings. Advance registration for visitors is encouraged as visitors will be required to display a name badge when they are in the convention visitor seating area. The visitors section also contains links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations.

Vendors are required to register in advance. A vendor application is available online, and the website provides information regarding vendor booth set up, loading and unloading, security, and other specifics, as well as access to links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations.

Additional key elements of the website include a tentative agenda for both the BLET Convention and the BLET Auxiliary Convention, as well as maps of the hotel and the convention area. In addition to the link allowing delegates, visitors and guest to make hotel and

airport ground transportation reservations, the new website also contains weather information for the Las Vegas area.

Lastly, the BLET Auxiliary will hold its Third National Auxiliary Convention at the Rio from October 1-3, 2018. Auxiliary delegates will elect National Officers and consider important resolutions. A separate section of the BLET convention website focuses on the Auxiliary's Convention, and similarly includes links for hotel room and airport ground transportation reservations.@@



BLET ASKS PRESIDENT TRUMP TO INTERVENE IN LAREDO

As part of its continuing fight to save American jobs on the Texas border, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) has asked President Donald J. Trump to help the union in its struggle to preserve the jobs of BLET members who work for the Texas Mexican Railway (Tex Mex). On July 9, Tex Mex unilaterally replaced U.S. citizen crewmembers with Mexican train crews between Laredo Yard and the International Bridge, more than 9 miles away.

The letter, from BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, outlined numerous ways in which multi-national corporation Kansas City Southern Railway and its Tex Mex subsidiary are either ignoring or violating federal laws and important rail safety regulations.

President Pierce wrote, "Mr. President, we believe the railroads' actions to give the jobs of American workers to foreign workers run counter to your own trade goals, and to your commitments to all American workers. It certainly is contrary to the joint position of the representatives of railroad train crew employees in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. A 10-mile retreat from our borders, as the railroads intend to do as this is being written, is certainly inconsistent with keeping work in the hands of American workers. On behalf of our nearly 37,000 working members — and particularly those who stand to lose the work they perform today — I respectfully request that you assist the affected American workers by giving this critical matter your personal attention." @@

A copy of the letter to President Trump can be found at: www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Trump_TexMex_Letter.pdf.



BLET members lobby Congress over safety, Tex Mex jobs issue

BLET Legislative Representatives visited 150 Congressional offices in Washington, D.C. on July 13 as part of a major railroad safety lobbying effort and to make members of Congress aware of the union's struggle to preserve the jobs of BLET members who work for the Texas Mexican Railway (Tex Mex). On July 9, Tex Mex unilaterally replaced U.S. citizen crewmembers with Mexican train crews — who work under relaxed federal safety standards — between Laredo Yard and the International Bridge, more than 9 miles away.

Twenty-seven BLET Division Legislative Representatives (LRs) and State Legislative Board Chairmen (this number does not include additional BLET officers and staff in attendance) participated. The most pressing issue the group tackled was educating members of Congress about the pending issue of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) certifying Mexican nationals as locomotive engineers and trainmen in the United States. The group visited 150 House and Senate offices and provided legislators and their staff with a copy of President Pierce's letter to President Trump ([https://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Trump_TexMex_](https://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Trump_TexMex_Letter.pdf)



Group photograph from the BLET Education and Training Department's Legislative Representative class at Teamster Headquarters in Washington, D.C., July 11-12, 2018.

Letter.pdf), which details the BLET's safety concerns regarding the certification of engineers who live and work in Mexico to also work in the United States under relaxed federal safety standards.

The BLET representatives also educated legislators regarding the BLET's two-person crew bills (S. 2360 and H.R. 233), which would mandate a minimum crew size for freight trains in the United States. Other subjects included in meetings with elected officials included Positive Train

Control (PTC), Amtrak funding, right-to-work issues, rail worker fatigue, and other topics of importance to BLET members.

Prior to the lobby day, the BLET members participated in a two-day classroom training session on July 11 and 12 conducted by the BLET Education & Training Department and the BLET National Legislative Office. Among other items, they learned about BLET and Teamster plans to get involved and activate the membership in advance of the 2018 election in an

effort to elect officials who will stand up for hardworking Americans. The attendees also heard presentations on communications, the upcoming election in November and details of the BLET Political Action Committee.

Speakers included: BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce; BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman; FRA Administrator Ron Batory; and U.S. Rep. Mike Capuano (D-MA). President Pierce discussed the importance of the upcoming elections and the difficulties unions face in the current climate in Washington, D.C.

Formal classroom presentations were made by: Vice President Tolman; BLET National Vice President Jim Louis; Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna; Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Bob Hagan; Director of Education & Training Jason Wright; and Teamsters Political Staff Member Sunshine McBride.

Vice President Tolman thanked all those involved in the classroom training and lobby day events. "There is no possible way we could have visited 150 offices in a single day to deliver our message of safety without the class's help," he said. "Washington D.C. politicians heard our voice today loud and clear." @@

News Briefs

TEAMSTERS DECRY SUPREME COURT RULING THAT ROLLS BACK PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with anti-union advocates attempting to undercut the rights of millions of public employees to negotiate with their employers for a fair return on the value of their work.

By backing the plaintiffs in *Janus v. AFSCME*, the high court's decision is an attempt to limit the collective voices of not only government workers, but those in the private sector as well.

"The Supreme Court's ruling is at a time when so many Americans are struggling just to make ends meet," Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said. "The Teamsters and our allies in the labor movement will redouble our efforts to ensure that working men and women have a voice on the job through strong unions."

The median salary for working people represented by labor unions is \$11,000 a year more than non-union people who have no right to negotiate.

"By overturning 40 years of judicial precedent, conservative judges endorsed an agenda supported by corporations and the wealthiest in our society to take away the right of public employees to negotiate over wages, benefits and working conditions," said Michael Filler, Director of the Teamsters' Public Services Division.

TCRC MEMBERS RATIFY 4-YEAR AGREEMENT WITH CP RAIL

On July 20, 2018, members of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) at Canadian Pacific (CP) voted 64.7% to ratify a four-year agreement covering over 3,000 conductors and locomotive engineers. Approximately 25 workers of the Kootenay Valley Railway (KVR) also ratified a five-year agreement by 91.7%.

This comes after a short strike by CP train crews in May 2018. TCRC officials are now focused on implementing the new collective agreement and moving forward with the company.

"Our members demonstrated incredible solidarity during the negotiations and the strike," said Doug Finson, President of the TCRC. "Workers won a fair deal from CP. Moving forward, we hope to continue working with the company to improve job conditions and ease labor relations."

Fatigue was one of the major issues behind the recent strike. Under the new collective agreement, workers will be able to book 48-hour rest periods three times a month instead of only twice. There was also improved rest provisions for yard employees in the agreement.

The new contract also addressed other equity issues, improvements to work rules, benefits



and provides a 9% increase over the term of the agreement. Both the main agreement and the KVR agreement expire on December 31, 2021.

Teamsters Canada once again thanked Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for standing up for workers' right to negotiate. They also thanked the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) and Labor Minister Patty Hajdu for helping parties find common ground.

CP RAIL MANAGER FOUND GUILTY IN CASE OF TRAIN LEFT ON CANADIAN MOUNTAIN SIDE WITHOUT HANDBRAKES

A CP Rail manager faces possible jail time for his role in illegally parking a freight train carrying explosive materials on a mountain slope above Revelstoke, British Columbia, without proper handbrakes. On July 16, a British Columbia provincial court judge found Tim McClelland guilty of two charges of contravening an emergency directive from Transport Canada, a breach of the Railway Safety Act. He faces a maximum penalty of \$50,000 in fines and/or six months in jail.

Canadian Pacific Railway and former CP superintendent Mark Jackson were acquitted of the same charges. McClelland was director of dispatching at CP's Calgary operations center when 58 railcars were left unattended on the main track east of Revelstoke in the early hours of Feb. 15, 2015, according to the provincial court judgment. Two of those cars held ammonium nitrate, a potentially explosive chemical. At the time, CP Rail was scrambling to lock down all of its equipment because of a pending workers' strike. The only mechanism holding the train in place was the air brakes, despite an emergency directive issued after the 2013 Lac-Mégantic rail disaster in Quebec that laid out the number of hand brakes needed to secure freight trains. The train was left unattended overnight and moved

the next day. The incident was revealed after Transport Canada raided CP Rail's Calgary Headquarters in June 2015.

According to judge's ruling, the train's crew left the cars unattended after speaking with a rail traffic controller who'd received directions from McClelland and Jackson. At trial, McClelland's defense team argued the crew members had misunderstood his directions. The lawyers argued he'd only meant for the tail of the train to be left temporarily while 19 cars carrying fuel oil were separated and secured on a backtrack. But the crew understood things differently, according to the judgment. The only two workers on the train, a conductor and an engineer, both questioned the directions repeatedly, the judge said. The engineer testified that he found it "absurd" to leave the train on a mountainside without handbrakes.

Both the engineer and conductor were relatively junior employees and their concerns were apparently dismissed out of hand, according to an audio recording of a phone call between McClelland and Jackson that was played for the court. In another audio recording, Jackson mocked the two train crew members, calling them "two idiots." He has since been fired from CP Rail but has sued the company over his dismissal.

(Reporting from CBC News.)

MINNESOTA JUDGE FINES BNSF \$4.6 MILLION FOR MISCONDUCT DURING INJURY LAWSUIT

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Co. has been smacked with a \$4.6 million misconduct penalty by a Minnesota judge for destroying evidence — and it's not the first time.

Hennepin County Judge Amy Dawson ordered the penalty in late June 2018 in connection with the lawsuit filed by former Fridley rail yard employee Scott Kowalewski. The penalty came on top of \$15.3 million awarded to Kowalewski by

a jury in February. Dawson scolded BNSF for "misconduct" leading up to the trial that included concealing and destroying evidence — nearly identical to a judge's findings against the railroad in 2009.

In 2009, Washington County Judge Ellen Maas said BNSF had engaged in a "staggering" pattern of misconduct by lying and concealing evidence in the 2003 deaths of four young people in a collision with a train at a malfunctioning crossing gate in Anoka.

Maas slapped the railway with a \$4 million penalty — on top of a \$21.6 million jury award for the families of the victims. When BNSF appealed, the state Supreme Court upheld the penalties.

In Kowalewski's case, he was working four years ago at a Fridley rail yard when he started to feel a burning in his chest. He later collapsed in a break room and was taken to a hospital.

Lawyer Paula Jossart said her client was unaware of leakage from one of the cars carrying "wellhead casing oil" from fracking sites in Texas. Later testing determined that he'd been exposed to a highly toxic cocktail of "various hydrocarbons, including benzene, hydrogen sulfide, and toluene."

The lawsuit said BNSF didn't tell doctors at the hospital about his possible exposure to the toxins and brushed off the incident.

Shortly thereafter, Kowalewski, who is 53, began losing motor function and the ability to write. He was diagnosed with a progressive neurological disorder and filed the lawsuit in January 2017, saying he had not been warned about the danger of exposure to crude oil.

Dawson's order said BNSF "likely exacerbated" Kowalewski's condition by failing to comply with court orders requiring the company to produce 11 hydrocarbon cars that had been at the rail yard on the day he became ill. The company also didn't provide shipping papers or documents that detailed the contents of the cars.

Kowalewski's lawsuit alleged that the company violated the Federal Employers' Liability Act. The judge also agreed that the rail company had destroyed crucial evidence in the case and misled federal investigators.

(From the Minneapolis Star-Tribune.)

STB: CLASS I EMPLOYMENT STEADY IN MID-JUNE

As of mid-June 2018, U.S. Class I railroads employed 147,282 workers, up 0.19 percent from mid-May, but down 0.9 percent from mid-June 2017, according to Surface Transportation Board (STB) data. The number of transportation employees (train and engine) increased 0.31 percent on a month-over-month basis from mid-May 2018 to 61,787. That number is a 2.81 percent when compared to train and engine service employment levels for mid-June 2017. ©©

UNION SOLIDARITY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 — minute that wage, benefit and work rules levels would remotely resemble what is in existence today if there was no BLET, BRS ... or other railroad union ... really needs to go back and study the history of this industry — as well as all U.S. manufacturing and transportation industries — from the 1850s onward.

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 histor-

ic struggle.

We must also redouble our efforts to strengthen the solidarity between rail unions that we saw when the BRS, BLET, SMART TD, ATDA, NCFO and IBB bargained together as the Coordinated Bargaining Group in the last round of national negotiations. I am proud of that group, and when I think of solidarity, I think of respect between the involved crafts and their unions. That respect is displayed in the way we treat one another, both in front of the rail carriers and when behind closed doors. It is also displayed in respecting each Union's right to negotiate an agreement that is best for the crafts that it represents, and in doing so, its members.

For true solidarity to exist, this

must all occur without being attacked by any other union. One union attacking another as they work to protect the interests of their membership is the opposite of solidarity; public division within the house of labor will never make us stronger ... instead, such conduct does the carriers' work of weakening us.

And in the end, the members must be given the right to decide if a contract settlement is worthy of their consideration. That is true democracy; respecting each and every union's right to let its membership decide what is best for them.

Going forward, we must all work to bring Unions together who share this view of Union solidarity. And we must redouble our efforts to get even more union

members actively involved in their future.

This is not a job that any one of us can do alone ... we need your help to spread the word, and the help of every union member who is willing to pitch in and do their part. To stop the anti-worker movement in the legislative halls across the country, we must seek out and elect politicians who will work for working class Americans.

We must support politicians who know that a vibrant working middle class is what is needed to make America great again ... not some slogan silk-screened on a baseball cap that was made in China.

To restore this nation, we must elect politicians who are not afraid to say the word UNION

and support us in our efforts. We will have a chance this fall to do just that; we must not let this opportunity pass without an all-out effort to change government from one that works for the bosses to one that works for those doing the work day in and day out.

As I said when I started, I did not come from a Union family, and for that reason, I know better than anyone the difference a Union makes. For that reason, I will always believe in the Union movement. Join me in our fight to preserve what our unions have accomplished over the last century and a half, be active and engaged in your Union whenever you can be.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

RRB Q&A: Unemployment and sickness benefits for railroad employees

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) administers the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act, which provides two kinds of benefits for qualified railroaders: unemployment benefits for those who become unemployed but are ready, willing and able to work; and sickness benefits for those who are unable to work because of sickness or injury. Sickness benefits are also payable to female rail workers for periods of time when they are unable to work because of pregnancy, miscarriage, or childbirth. A new benefit year begins each July 1.

The following questions and answers describe these benefits, their eligibility requirements, and how to claim them.

1 What are the eligibility requirements for railroad unemployment and sickness benefits in July 2018?

To qualify for normal railroad unemployment or sickness benefits, an employee must have had railroad earnings of at least \$3,862.50 in calendar year 2017, counting no more than \$1,545 for any month. Those who were first employed in the rail industry in 2017 must also have

at least five months of creditable railroad service in 2017.

Under certain conditions, employees who do not qualify on the basis of their 2017 earnings may still be able to receive benefits in the new benefit year. Employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more months of service) who received normal benefits in the benefit year ending June 30, 2018, may be eligible for extended benefits, and employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more months of service) might qualify for accelerated benefits if they have rail earnings of at least \$3,862.50 in 2018, not counting earnings of more than \$1,545 a month.

In order to qualify for extended unemployment benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily quit work without good cause and not have voluntarily retired. To qualify for extended sickness benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily retired and must be under age 65.

To be eligible for accelerated benefits, a claimant must have 14 or more consecutive days of unemployment or sickness; not have voluntarily retired or, if claiming unemployment benefits, quit work

without good cause; and, when claiming sickness benefits, be under age 65.

2 What is the daily benefit rate payable in the new benefit year beginning July 1, 2018?

Almost all employees will qualify for the maximum daily benefit rate of \$77. Benefits are generally payable for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day claim periods, which yields \$770 for each two full weeks of unemployment or sickness. Sickness benefits payable for the first 6 months after the month the employee last worked are subject to tier I railroad retirement payroll taxes, unless benefits are being paid for an on-the-job injury. (Claimants should be aware that as a result of a sequestration order under the Budget Control Act of 2011, the RRB will reduce unemployment and sickness benefits by 6.6 percent through September 30, 2018. As a result, the total maximum amount payable in a 2-week period covering 10 days of unemployment or sickness will be \$719.18. The maximum amount payable for sickness benefits subject to tier I payroll taxes of 7.65 percent will be \$664.16 over two weeks. Future reductions, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.)

3 How long are these benefits payable?

Normal unemployment or sickness benefits are each payable for up to 130 days (26 weeks) in a benefit year. The total amount of each kind of benefit which may be paid in the new benefit year cannot exceed the employee's railroad earnings in calendar year 2017, counting earnings up to \$1,996 per month.

If normal benefits are exhausted, extended benefits are payable for up to 65 days (during 7 consecutive 14-day claim periods) to employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more cumulative service months).

4 What is the waiting-period requirement for unemployment and sickness benefits?

Benefits are normally paid for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day registration periods. Initial sickness claims must also begin with four consecutive days of sickness. However, during the first 14-day claim period in a benefit year, benefits are only payable for each day of unemployment or sickness in excess of seven which, in effect, provides a one-week waiting period. (If an employee has at least five days of unemployment or five days of sickness in a 14-day period, he or she should still file for benefits.) Separate waiting periods are required for unemployment and sickness benefits. However, only one seven-day waiting period is generally required during any period of continuing unemployment or sickness, even if that period continues into a subsequent benefit year.

5 Are there special waiting-period requirements if unemployment is due to a strike?

If a worker is unemployed because of a strike conducted in accordance with the

Railway Labor Act, benefits are not payable for days of unemployment during the first 14 days of the strike, but benefits are payable during subsequent 14-day periods.

If a strike is in violation of the Railway Labor Act, unemployment benefits are not payable to employees participating in the strike. However, employees not among those participating in such an illegal strike, but who are unemployed on account of the strike, may receive benefits after the first two weeks of the strike.

While a benefit year waiting period cannot count toward a strike waiting period, the 14-day strike waiting period may count as the benefit year waiting period if a worker subsequently becomes unemployed for reasons other than a strike later in the benefit year.

6 Can employees in train and engine service receive unemployment benefits for days when they are standing by or laying over between scheduled runs?

No, not if they are standing by or laying over between regularly assigned trips or they missed a turn in pool service.

7 Can extra-board employees receive unemployment benefits between jobs?

Yes, but only if the miles and/or hours they actually worked were less than the equivalent of normal full-time work in their class of service during the 14-day claim period. Entitlement to benefits would also depend on the employee's earnings.

8 How would an employee's earnings in a claim period affect his or her eligibility for unemployment benefits?

If a claimant's earnings for days worked, and/or days of vacation, paid leave, or other leave in a 14-day registration period are more than a certain indexed amount, no benefits are payable for any days of unemployment in that period. That registration period, however, can be used to satisfy the waiting period.

Earnings include pay from railroad and nonrailroad work, as well as part-time work and self-employment. Earnings also include pay that an employee would have earned except for failure to mark up or report for duty on time, or because he or she missed a turn in pool service or was otherwise not ready or willing to work. For the benefit year that begins July 2018, the amount is \$1,545, which corresponds to the base year monthly compensation amount used in determining eligibility for benefits in each year. Also, even if an earnings test applies on the first claim in a benefit year, this will not prevent the first claim from satisfying the waiting period in a benefit year.

On the other hand, earnings of no more than \$15 a day from work which is substantially less than full-time and not inconsistent with the holding of normal full-time employment may be considered subsidiary remuneration and may not prevent payment of any days in a claim. However, a claimant must be sure to report all full and part-time work on each claim, regardless of the amount of earn-



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ings, so the RRB can determine if the work affects benefits.

9 How does a person apply for and claim unemployment benefits?

Employees can file for and claim unemployment benefits online or by mail.

To file their applications -- or their bi-weekly claims -- online, claimants must first establish a Benefit Online Services account. Instructions on how to do so are available by visiting Benefit Online Services and then clicking on the link for requesting a Password Request Code (PRC). The RRB automatically mails a PRC to employees without online accounts who file a paper application for unemployment or sickness benefits. Employees are encouraged to establish their accounts while still employed so the account is ready if they ever need to apply for these benefits or use other online services.

To apply by mail, claimants must obtain an Application for Unemployment Benefits (Form UI-1) from RRB.gov, any RRB field office, their labor organization, or employer. The completed application should be mailed to the local RRB office as soon as possible and, in any case, must be filed within 30 days from the date the claimant became unemployed or the first day for which he or she wishes to claim benefits. Benefits may be lost if the application is filed late.

The local RRB field office reviews the completed application, whether it was submitted online or by mail, and notifies the claimant's current railroad employer, and base-year employer, if different. The employer has the opportunity to provide information about the benefit application.

After processing the application, bi-weekly claim forms are made available on the RRB's website, and are mailed to the claimant, as long as he or she remains unemployed and eligible for benefits. Claim forms should be signed and sent on or after the last day of the claim. This can be done online or by mail. The completed claim must be received by the RRB within 15 days of the end of the claim period, or within 15 days of the date the claim form was made available online or mailed to the claimant, whichever is later. Claimants must not file both an online and a paper claim form for the same period(s). Once an individual submits a claim online, all subsequent claim forms will be made available online only, and will no longer be mailed.

Only one application needs to be filed during a benefit year, even if a claimant becomes unemployed more than once. However, a claimant must, in such a case, request a claim form from the RRB within 30 days of the first day for which he or she wants to resume claiming benefits. These claims may then be filed online or by mail.

10 How does a person apply for and claim sickness benefits?

An Application for Sickness Benefits (SI-1a) can be obtained from RRB.gov, any RRB field office, railroad labor organizations, or railroad employers. An application including a doctor's statement of sickness is required at the beginning of each period of continuing sickness for which benefits are claimed. Claimants should make a special effort to have the doctor's statement of sickness completed promptly since no claims can be paid without it.

The RRB suggests that employees keep an application for sickness benefits on hand, and that family members know where the form is kept and how to use it. If an employee becomes unable to work because of sickness or injury, the employ-

ee should complete the application and then have his or her doctor complete the Statement of Sickness (SI-1b). If a claimant receives sickness benefits for an injury or illness for which he or she is paid damages, it is important to be aware that the RRB is entitled to reimbursement of either the amount of the benefits paid for the injury or illness, or the net amount of the settlement, after deducting the claimant's gross medical, hospital, and legal expenses, whichever is less.

If the employee is too sick to complete the application, someone else may do so. In such cases, a family member should also complete a Statement of Authority to Act for Employee (Form SI-10), which accompanies the statement of sickness.

After completion, the forms should be mailed to the RRB's headquarters in Chicago within 10 days from when the employee became sick or injured. However, applications received after 10 days but within 30 days of the first day for which an employee wishes to claim benefits are generally considered timely filed if there is a good reason for the delay. Upon receipt, the RRB will process the application and determine if the employee is eligible for sickness benefits.

After processing the application, the RRB provides those qualified with bi-weekly claims, which are made available for completion online and mailed to the employee, as long as he or she remains unable to work due to illness or injury. Completed claim forms must be received at the RRB within 30 days of the last day of the claim period, or within 30 days of the date the claim form was made available online or mailed to the claimant, whichever is later. Benefits may be lost if an application or claim is filed late.

As with claims for unemployment benefits, once a claim for sickness benefits is submitted online, all subsequent claims will be made available online only, and will no longer be mailed.

Claimants are reminded that while claim forms for sickness benefits can be submitted online, applications must be returned to the RRB by mail. Statements of sickness may be mailed with the sickness application or faxed directly from the doctor's office to the RRB at 312-751-7185. Faxes must include a cover sheet from the doctor's office.

11 Is a claimant's employer notified each time a biweekly claim for unemployment or sickness benefits is filed?

The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act requires the RRB to notify the claimant's base-year employer each time a claim for benefits is filed. That employer has the right to submit information relevant to the claim before the RRB makes an initial determination on the claim. In addition, if a claimant's base-year employer is not his or her current employer, the claimant's current employer is also notified. The RRB must also notify the claimant's base-year employer each time benefits are paid to a claimant. The base-year employer may protest the decision to pay benefits. Such a protest does not prevent the timely payment of benefits. However, a claimant may be required to repay benefits if the employer's protest is ultimately successful. The employer also has the right to appeal an unfavorable decision to the RRB's Bureau of Hearings and Appeals.

The RRB also conducts checks with other Federal agencies and all 50 States, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to detect fraudulent benefit claims, and it checks with physicians to

verify the accuracy of medical statements supporting sickness benefit claims.

12 How long does it take to receive payment?

Under the RRB's Customer Service Plan, if a claimant files an application for unemployment or sickness benefits, the RRB will release a claim form or a denial letter within 10 days of receiving his or her application. If a claim for subsequent biweekly unemployment or sickness benefits is filed, the RRB will certify a payment or release a denial letter within 10 days of the date the RRB receives the claim form. If the claimant is entitled to benefits, his or her benefits will generally be paid within one week of that decision.

However, some claims for benefits may take longer to handle than others if they are more complex, or if an RRB office has to get information from other people or organizations. If a claimant does not receive a decision notice or payment within the specified time period, he or she may expect an explanation for the delay and an estimate of the time required to make a decision.

Claimants who think an RRB office made the wrong decision about their benefits have the right to ask for review and to appeal. They will be notified of these rights each time an unfavorable decision is made on their claims.

13 How are payments made?

Railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits are paid by Direct Deposit. With Direct Deposit, benefit payments are made electronically to an

employee's bank, savings and loan, credit union or other financial institution. New applicants for unemployment and sickness benefits will be asked to provide information needed for Direct Deposit enrollment.

14 How can claimants get more information on their railroad unemployment or sickness claims?

Claimants with Benefit Online Services accounts can view their individual railroad unemployment insurance account statement. This statement displays the type and amount of the claimant's last five benefit payments, the claim period for which the payments were made, and the dates that the payments were approved. Individuals can also confirm the RRB's receipt of applications and claims.

In addition, claimants can call the agency toll-free at 1-877-772-5772 to access the RRB's automated HelpLine service which provides information about the status of unemployment and sickness claims or payments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Individuals with questions about unemployment or sickness benefits, or who need information about their specific claims and benefit payments, can also contact an RRB office by calling the toll-free number. Persons can find the address of the RRB office serving their area by clicking on Field Office Locator, or by calling the RRB's HelpLine service and selecting the appropriate option from the automated menu. Most RRB offices are open to the public on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., except on Wednesdays when offices are open from 9 a.m.-noon. All RRB offices are closed on Federal holidays. @

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VOLUME 32 • NUMBER 7 • July 2018

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN NEWS (ISSN 0898-8625)

is published monthly by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen,
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131

USPS: 0002-244 ISSN: 0898-8625

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News — BLET Record Department,
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131.

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Photo of the Month: July 2018

AMTRAK IN WASHINGTON, D.C.: As seen from Washington Union Station's track No. 30, a quartet of Siemens-built ACS-64 locomotives at rest in-between trips on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor. Photo taken at Washington Union Station, District of Columbia, on March 6, 2017. **Photo:** Chase Gunnoe BLET Division 74 in Harrisburg, Pa.



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 June 2018 Activity

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

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division Office, Independence, Ohio; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; BLET General Chairman Clay Craddock retirement event, Hernando, Miss.; Union Pacific St. Louis hub Town Hall mtg., St. Louis, Mo.; BLET regional meeting, Monterey, Calif.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: Shortline Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; National duties, Independence, Ohio; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Clay Craddock retirement, Hernando, Miss.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER STEPHEN J. BRUNO: General supervision of Accounting Dept., Record Dept., Online Services Dept., Tax Compliance Dept.; Safety Task Force; PAC and FEC reports and filings; Implementation and training for BLET membership database/Union Track; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Union Track issues, testing, status updates, etc.; Triennial election planning and oversight duties; Clay Craddock retirement, Hernando, Miss.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; Vacation.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; FRA mtg., Dallas, Texas; 50th anniversary of JFK assassination events, Arlington, Va., and Washington, D.C.; Meetings with candidates for Governor and Congress, Washington, D.C.; Various meetings with U.S. Senators working on rail issues; Numerous receptions and office visits with members of Congress and the leadership of both the DOP and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Vice Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Arb. Adv. Forum; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, CN-Cedar River, Indiana Harbor Belt, Illinois Rwy., Belt Railway of Chicago, METRA, GRR, and Union Railroad; Discuss docket 48049 w/ Referee Benn, Chicago; IHB issues, Chicago; Begin drafting Circular 1-89, NRAB; Assist GC Bangham with Arbitration, URR, Chicago; Assist DWD w/ Circular 137, NRAB, Chicago; Clay Craddock retirement, Hernando, Miss.; BLET regional meeting, Monterey, Calif.; 1st Division adoption session, NRAB, Chicago; Mtg. w/ Roland Watkins, NRAB, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ rules and discipline issues, WC, Chicago; Conference call w/ SEPTA GC Hill, re: Docket 48365.

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-Western Region conferences at UP HQ, Omaha, Neb.; UP-Eastern District Division 183 outing, Papillion, Neb.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; Vacation.

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.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; CSXT and GTW paperwork; IRR PLB, Estero, Fla.; South Buffalo negotiations; SBRR BLET; PLB 7664, assist GC Driscoll; Safety survey; Conference call w/ GTW GC Karakian.

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.; BLET Local Chairman workshops, Santa Fe GCA, Ontario, Calif. and Phoenix, Ariz.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; M&NA contract talks, assisting GC Thurman, Irving, Texas.

VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS: Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, SouthRail, Gateway Western, Illinois & Midland), KCS-Louisiana Arkansas Rwy., Texas Mexican Rwy.; CP Rail System/US Soo Line (Indiana Southern, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern); Springfield Terminal (St. Lawrence & Atlantic, Delaware & Hudson), New York, Susquehanna & Western (Connecticut Southern, New England Central), Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern, Wheeling & Lake Erie Rwy.; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; DM&E and CP issues, assist GC Semenek; Soo Line issues, assist GC Semenek; Mid South and I&M issues, assist GC Craddock; W&LE issues, assist GC Fannon, Chicago; D&H and Springfield Terminal issues, assist GC Moore; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Heise; KCS issues, assist GC Spradlin; Louisville & Indiana issues, assist GC Hogan; Clay Craddock retirement, Hernando, Miss.; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.

VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS: Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees (Northern, Eastern and Southern Lines); Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern; Indiana & Ohio; RSAC/RSIA Fatigue Management Group; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; Clay Craddock retirement, Hernando, Miss.; Vacation; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.

VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS: Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro-North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Western New York & Pennsylvania Rwy.; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Union Track mtgs. and training; Education & Training issues; BLET Regional Meeting planning; BLET National Convention planning; MBRCR contract mtg., assist GC Kenny, Philadelphia; NMB mtg., assist SEPTA GC Hill, Philadelphia; BLET regional mtg., Monterey, Calif.; Assist GC Kenny w/ Caltrain issues; Assist GC Basile w/ PATH contract issues; Assist LIRR GC Sexton w/ NY&A contract issues.

BNSF files for PTC extension due to interoperability delays with other railroads

On June 13, BNSF announced that it submitted a request to the Department of Transportation (DOT) for a two-year extension of the PTC deadline. The extension is required due to the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) current interpretation of the law that full implementation status cannot be achieved until all non-BNSF trains and/or equipment operating on its PTC-equipped lines are also PTC-compliant.

BNSF previously announced in Decem-

ber 2017 that it had fully installed and was operating under Positive Train Control (PTC) on all mandated subdivisions in advance of the December 31, 2018 deadline.

As reported, BNSF completed the installation of all mandated PTC infrastructure at the end of 2017, including 88 required subdivisions covering more than 11,500 route miles on its network. However, to be considered fully implemented requires that all other railroads operating across any of BNSF's PTC-equipped lines

must be capable of operating with BNSF's PTC system. This interoperability of PTC systems between Class I, commuter and short line rail carriers remains a challenge.

BNSF has successfully demonstrated interoperability with several railroads that operate on its network, including commuter railroads and Amtrak. However, not all railroads that operate on BNSF will have completed their PTC installation by the end of 2018.

(From a BNSF press release.) ©

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