



BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NATIONAL CONTRACT

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) have ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC). The Agreement was reached as a result of the BLET's participation in the Coordinated Bargaining Group, with five other Unions.

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the voting BLET members voted in favor of the five-year agreement, which covers rates of pay, health & welfare and other fringe benefits for approximately 25,000 BLET members nationwide. There are no work rule changes in the new contract. It includes general wage increases of 13.14

"I want to thank the members who took the time to cast their vote. The BLET is a membership-driven union; in fact, rank and file ratification of our contracts is one of the democratic cornerstones of the Union movement." – Dennis Pierce, BLET National President

percent over the life of the agreement and full retroactive payment for general wage increases for 2016 and 2017.

The agreement covers locomotive engineers employed by the following railroads: Belt Railway of Chicago; BNSF Railway; Conrail; CSX Transportation (H&W only); Indiana Harbor Belt; Kansas City Southern System (KCS/L&A, Gateway Western, MidSouth, South Rail, and Tex Mex); Longview Switching; Norfolk Southern (H&W only);

Portland Terminal; Soo Line Railroad (H&W only); Union Railroad (H&W only); Union Pacific Railroad; and Winston-Salem Southbound. It also covers all train service employees on the Texas Mexican Railway.

The BLET's National Wage Committee, led by National President Dennis R. Pierce, began negotiations for this new contract in January of 2015, shortly after the BLET filed its Section 6 notice with the NCCC in November of 2014.

"I want to thank the members who took the time to cast their vote. The BLET is a membership-driven union; in fact, rank and file ratification of our contracts is one of the democratic cornerstones of the Union movement," National President Pierce said. "It is clear to me that our members took the time to study the issues before making a very careful choice. BLET members show their strength every time they get involved, and I again thank all members who took the time to participate in their own future. I must also thank the other Unions who bargained with the Coordinated Bargaining Group. BLET members benefited from the solidarity shown by the CBG, and my hope is that these Unions will continue to work together going forward." ©



75TH ANNUAL SANTA TRAIN

BLET Division 781 member **Tony King** behind the throttle of the historic Clinchfield locomotive used to lead the 75th annual Santa Train. The F3 locomotive, built by Electro-Motive Division in 1948, was later upgraded to EMD F7 specifications and was used for more than 40 years in freight and passenger service. See pg. 6 for more info. Photo: Chase Gunnoe



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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

APPLYING THE LESSONS FROM THIS BARGAINING ROUND

In the weeks preceding this edition of the *News*, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen's National Wage Committee — along with five other Unions bargaining together as the Coordinated Bargaining Group — reached a Tentative National Agreement with the nation's Freight Carriers. The Tentative Agreement followed almost three years of negotiations, with a major shift in the Nation's political landscape, and dramatic changes to the railroads' operations as we bargained. In the end, it was a combination of these factors that convinced the BLET's National Wage Committee to present the Tentative Agreement to the membership for their consideration.

The rank and file "one member one vote" right to vote on contracts that our Bylaws enshrine is perhaps one of the most important rights that Union members have. Working Class Americans who aren't represented by a Union don't have rights like these; they don't have a voice when it comes to their workplace issues or their future in that workplace. Union members do, and it is imperative that we all do everything in our power to preserve this democratic right.

To complement that process, the officers of the National Division and the involved General Committees of Adjustment undertook an effort to ensure that all voting members knew exactly what was in, and not in, the Tentative Agreement. That effort also included an attempt to make sure all members understood the processes of the Railway Labor Act, so that the consequences of both a "Yes" vote and a "No" vote were clearly understood. Although I could not personally get to every terminal, I attended Town Hall meetings in seven cities across the country in five weeks' time, meeting with hundreds of BLET and



President Pierce addresses BLET members during the 2017 Myrtle Beach regional meeting.

SMART TD members to discuss the proposed contract.

When all was said and done on November 30, 2017, 48% of BLET's eligible members returned a ballot with 88% voting in favor of the Tentative Agreement. As I have repeatedly said, the membership's right to have a say in their future through our one member one vote ratification process is one of the core tenets of Union Democracy, and I want to thank all BLET members who participated in their future by casting a vote. Based upon the final outcome, the Tentative Agreement was signed and made effective December 1, 2017, with fully executed copies distributed to all affected General Committees shortly thereafter.

Now that BLET has reached the conclusion of the bargaining round, I think that it is important for all of us to step back and look at how the round unfolded, what the driving factors were in the process, and use the collec-

tive experience gained by all to make for a better and stronger union. Even more importantly, what we learned along the way must be used to better prepare us for the next bargaining round, which will be upon us in two short years.

I heard loud and clear at membership meetings that I attended, both before and after the Tentative Agreement was reached, that the railroads' callous treatment of their employees has reached an all-time high. Whether it be the railroads' never-ending efforts to dump their employees' lives upside down through operational changes all driven by profits, or the railroads' refusal to allow their employees to have lives outside of work, the impact is the same. There is no doubt that working on the railroad is vastly different today than it was even a decade ago. As one perceptive member said at a Town Hall meeting, there is a reason that you don't see sugges-

tions boxes at the railroad; the next time they want your opinion they will give it to you.

I share this not to incite more frustration, if that were even possible, but to say that I hear you loud and clear. We are closer and closer to a return to the days of the railroad "Robber Barons" where the nation's railroads ran roughshod not only over their employees, but over the very general population that they serve and profit from. In fact, just last week, the Association of American Railroads filed comments with the Department of Transportation seeking to deregulate the industry, all with the notion that the railroads should be allowed to "self regulate." I don't have to tell you what that means, as you see the railroads back up against only what regulations require day in and day out, all driven by profits. That drive not only stands to eliminate jobs and to require those still employed to do more for less, it also stands to increase the risks to life and limb that we face in an already hazardous railroad workplace.

Knowing all of this leads me to what we can do. First, it is more important now than ever that Rail Unions move forward working together to protect the interests of their collective memberships. BLE, now BLET, and UTU, now SMART TD, were faulted for years for not working together, but we changed that dynamic in this contract round. For the first time in my railroad career, BLET and SMART TD members, along with the members of our partner Unions in the CBG, voted on the same contract at the same time. While the ultimate outcome may not have satisfied everyone, I remain convinced that the solidarity of the CBG Unions was a major part of why the contract negotiations turned out better than they could have. My goal now is to continue in that

effort by working together going forward as we turn to the other issues of importance to our members.

First on the list will be an effort to prevent anti-labor forces, and their political allies, from dismantling the key programs that all Working Class Americans count on. Whether it be Medicare, which we are all counting on in our retirement years, along with Railroad Retirement or Social Security, it is clear that certain politicians have those programs in their crosshairs. Our only real way to block these efforts is to seek out and support politicians who support Working Class Americans and the workplace issues that are important to us.

As we just learned with our contract negotiations, that same political control must also be changed before our next contract negotiations if we expect to obtain a better result. Having met with hundreds of members over the past few weeks, I know that concerns about what Washington, D.C. is capable of right now had a large impact on our contract ratification. In the hours following our vote count, the Senate passed a tax plan that gives huge tax breaks to the upper 1% at the expense of your Medicare benefits. The Senate's action made it more than clear that our members made the right decision on their contract vote.

Join me next year in the midterm elections as we seek out and support politicians who support you. Look past the party affiliations that limit your options, and find out for sure if the politicians seeking your support will help you and your family, or take actions that harm you. Doing so will make us stronger in the workplace, and stronger at the bargaining table.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an "official communication." This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they have

reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a timely

response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender's membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This policy is intended to allow the National

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

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



GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JAMES P. HOFFA

THERE'S VALUE IN MEMBERSHIP

Across the United States and Canada, the Teamsters union is growing. But no union can rest on its laurels. Labor is increasingly up against anti-union forces in Michigan and across the nation who want to knock us down. That's why organizing is so essential. Worker advocates can stand up against corporations and their cronies in elected office by building union density and fighting for good-paying jobs with good health care and retirement benefits.

When faced with an untenable political climate, increasing membership is a way for unions to push back. They can make their voices heard in the fight against globalization and unfair trade agreements. It's more people to help us partner with unions around the world to stand up against injustice in the workplace as we fight for fairness in the global supply chain and elsewhere.

In fact, unions from the U.S., Canada and Mexico have come together to ensure that NAFTA 2.0 improves the lives of all workers in North America instead of encouraging a race to the bottom.

There are a lot of good reasons to join a union like the Teamsters, and the American public is increasingly recognizing it. In fact, a recent Gallup Poll found that 61 percent of those polled ap-

proved of unions, the highest level since 2003. More people also want unions to have greater influence in this country than ever before.

Why is that? Because unions lead the way in things like offering health care benefits. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics unveiled numbers in October showing that 94 percent of private sector union workers have access of employer-provided health care benefits as of this March, compared to only 67 percent of non-union workers.

It also pays to be in a union. The median union worker earns an additional \$10,000 a year more than the median non-union worker nationwide. That is a substantial difference that can make a big difference for a family trying to keep a roof over its head and food on the table. And at a time when women and people of color are fighting for fair pay, only union jobs ensure pay equity and fair treatment on the job.

The Teamsters will fight every step of the way to protect workers. Despite many challenges, this union is devoted to tackling them.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA

TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT



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In fact, a recent Gallup Poll found that 61 percent of those polled approved of unions, the highest level since 2003. More people also want unions to have greater influence in this country than ever before.

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Matt Parker reelected Nevada State Legislative Board Chairman

Matthew B. Parker was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Nevada State Legislative Board at the Board's quadrennial meeting in Reno, Nevada, September 20-21, 2017.

A Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Brother Parker has held continuous membership in Division 158 (Sparks, Nevada) since he joined the Brotherhood on May 1, 2004. Parker was elected to serve the Board as 1st Vice Chairman in July of 2009, and then moved up to the Chairman's office in January of 2013. He was then reelected to continue serving as Chairman at the Board's quadrennial meeting in June of 2013.

Also elected by acclamation were: 1st Vice Chairman Emidio Gonzalez Jr., Division 158 (Sparks); 2nd Vice Chairman Donna Domingo, Division 794 (Elko); Secretary-Treasurer Keith E. Underwood, Division 158 (Sparks); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Chad A. Holub, Division 766 (Las Vegas). Brother Underwood and Brother Holub were reelected to their second consecutive terms.

Elected by acclamation to serve with Brothers Parker, Gonzalez and Underwood on the Executive Committee were: Gerald Coon, Division 766 (Las Vegas); and Jay Phenegar, Division 158 (Sparks). Reelected by acclamation to serve on the

Audit Committee were: John Passi, Division 158 (Sparks); Will Bartlett, Division 158 (Sparks); and Justin White, Division 158 (Sparks).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; and Vincent G. Verna, BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs.

"I am proud to offer my thanks and congratulations to Brother Parker and all officers of the Nevada State Legislative Board," President Pierce said. "It was a great meeting and I have every confidence they will continue doing an excellent job of representing the best interests of our members in the proud state of Nevada."

Also in attendance were: Steve A. Leyshon, General Chairman, Union Pa-

cific-Western Region; and Sean H. Morgan, 1st Vice Chairman, California State Legislative Board.

Brother Parker reported that the National Division officers addressed the Board regarding subjects including: the political climate and labor issues ongoing in our nation's capital; the status of rail industry regulatory measures under consideration and matters pending before the Federal Railroad Administration; and the impact of the last national election on us as members of rail labor.

"These past four years have been an incredible journey," Brother Parker said. "I have had the opportunity to go places and do things I never envisioned, and I believe this has made me more well-rounded as a person." During the business meeting, he discussed the Board's achievements during the past

four years, including the success in passing two-person crew legislation through the Nevada legislature, which was disappointingly vetoed by the Nevada State's governor.

Nine of the Board's 10 members were present, including the Legislative Representatives from all three of the State's Divisions. The Board concluded its business on the first day of the meeting, while training for Board members took place on the second day. The topics covered the training day included: the BLET-PAC fund; whistleblower laws; the basic functions of a Division Legislative Representatives; lobbying; and the operations of the Nevada State Legislative Board.

The BLET's Nevada State Legislative Board represents more than 300 active and retired members from three Local Divisions. ©©

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

Dehart reelected NS-Northern Lines/CFE General Chairman

Dewayne L. Dehart was reelected to his second term as General Chairman of the BLET's Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/CF&E General Committee of Adjustment at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in Indianapolis, Ind., September 30-October 2, 2017.

Brother Dehart, a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer, is a member of BLET Division 548 in Peru, Ind. He has held continuous membership in the BLET since February 1, 2001. In 2009, he was elected 4th Vice General Chairman of the NS-Northern GCA, and was elected General Chairman in 2013.

Also elected were: 1st Vice Chairman Robert W. Peters, Division 537 (Fort Wayne, Ind.); 2nd Vice Chairman Jason S. Shannon, Division 86 (Moberly, Mo.); 3rd Vice Chairman Anthony L. Cerimele, Division 234 (Columbus, Ohio); 4th Vice Chairman Patrick M. Redmond, Division 607 (Cleveland, Ohio); and Secretary-Treasurer Brian E. Mills, Division 273 (Conneaut, Ohio). Elected to serve as Alternate officers were: 1st Alternate Vice General Chairman Rodney P. Kanous, Division 348 (Elkhart, Ind.); 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman Christopher R. Seyer, Division 4 (Toledo, Ohio); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Paul L. Forman, Division 548 (Peru, Ind.).

Elected to serve as Trustees were: Ryan M. Morris, Division 2 (Jackson, Mich.);



Vice President Rick Gibbons with officers of the Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/CF&E General Committee of Adjustment at their quadrennial meeting in Indianapolis, Ind., October 1, 2017. **Seated, from left:** National Vice President Rick Gibbons; General Chairman Dewayne Dehart, Div. 548; 1st Vice Chairman Bob Peters; Secretary-Treasurer Brian Mills; 2nd Vice Chairman Jason Shannon, Div. 537; 3rd Vice Chairman Anthony Cerimele, Div. 234; and 4th Vice Chairman Pat Redmond, Div. 607. **Standing, from left:** Alternate Trustee Ralph Fortner, Div. 155; Trustee Ryan Morris, Div. 2; 1st Alternate Vice Chairman Rodney Kanous, Div. 348; Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Paul Forman, Div. 548; 2nd Alternate Vice Chairman Chris Seyer, Div. 4; Trustee Lonnie Schindley, Div. 447; Alternate Trustee Bill Crisp, Div. 155; Alternate Trustee Fred Eyer, Div. 54; and Trustee Bill Wolfe, Div. 106.

Lonnie E. Schindley, Division 447 (Bellevue, Ohio); and William P. Wolfe IV, Division 106 (Muncie, Ind.). The following Alternate Trustees were elected: Bill D. Crisp, Division 155 (Decatur, Ill.); Fred J. Eyer, Division 54 (Port Jervis, N.Y.); and Ralph J. Fortner Jr., Division 155 (Decatur, Ill.).

National Vice President Rick Gibbons represented the National Division at the meeting.

"Congratulations to Brother Dehart and all the officers of the Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I thank

them for their dedicated service and for their ongoing efforts to secure a stronger future for our Brotherhood."

The Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/CF&E General Committee of Adjustment represents approximately 3,500 active and retired members in 29 different Divisions. @@



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Railroad retiree earnings limits rise in 2018

Railroad retirement annuitants subject to earnings restrictions can earn more in 2018 without having their benefits reduced as a result of increases in earnings limits indexed to average national wage increases.

Like social security benefits, some railroad retirement benefit payments are subject to deductions if an annuitant's earnings exceed certain exempt amounts. These earnings restrictions apply to those who have not attained full social security retirement age. For employee and spouse annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1938 to age 67 for those born in 1960 or later. For survivor annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1940 to age 67 for those born in 1962 or later.

For those under full retirement age throughout 2018, the exempt earnings amount rises to \$17,040 from \$16,920 in 2017. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2018, the exempt earnings amount, for the months before the month full retirement age is attained, increases to \$45,360 in 2018 from \$44,880 in 2017.

For those under full retirement age, the earnings deduction is \$1 in benefits for every \$2 of earnings over the exempt amount. For those attaining full retirement age in 2018, the deduction is \$1 for every \$3 of earnings over the exempt amount in the months before the month full retirement age is attained.

When applicable, these earnings deductions are assessed on the tier I and

vested dual benefit portions of railroad retirement employee and spouse annuities, and the tier I, tier II, and vested dual benefit portions of survivor benefits.

All earnings received for services rendered, plus any net earnings from self-employment, are considered when assessing deductions for earnings. Interest, dividends, certain rental income, or income from stocks, bonds, or other investments are not considered earnings for this purpose.

Retired employees and spouses, regardless of age, who work for their last pre-retirement non-railroad employer are also subject to an additional earnings deduction, in their tier II and supplemental benefits, of \$1 for every \$2 in earnings up to a maximum reduction of 50 percent. This earnings restriction does not change from year to year and does not allow for an exempt amount.

A spouse benefit is subject to reduction not only for the spouse's earnings, but also for the earnings of the employee, regardless of whether the earnings are from service for the last pre-retirement non-railroad employer or other post-retirement employment.

Special work restrictions continue to be applicable to disability annuitants in 2018. The monthly disability earnings limit increases to \$920 in 2018 from \$910 in 2017.

Regardless of age and/or earnings, no railroad retirement annuity is payable for any month in which an annuitant (retired employee, spouse or survivor) works for a railroad employer or railroad union. @@

Railroad Retirement benefits to increase in 2018



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RAILROAD UNEMPLOYMENT AND SICKNESS BENEFITS ADJUSTED DUE TO SEQUESTRATION RATE

Beginning October 1, 2017, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) reduced railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 6.6 percent, down from the current 6.9 percent reduction, as required by law.

The adjusted reduction amount is based on revised projections of benefit claims and payments under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. It will remain in effect through September 30, 2018, the end of the fiscal year. Reductions in future fiscal years, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.

The daily benefit rate is \$72, so the 6.6 percent reduction in railroad unemployment and sickness benefits will reduce the maximum amount payable in a 2-week period with 10 days of unemployment from \$720.00 to \$672.48.

Certain railroad sickness benefits are also subject to regular tier I railroad retirement taxes, resulting in a further reduction of 7.65 per-

cent. Applying the 6.6 percent reduction to these sickness benefits will result in a maximum 2-week total of \$621.04.

These reductions are required under the Budget Control Act of 2011 and a subsequent sequestration order to implement the mandated cuts. The law exempted social security benefits, as well as railroad retirement, survivor, and disability benefits paid by the RRB, from sequestration.

When sequestration first took effect in March 2013, railroad unemployment and sickness benefits were subject to a 9.2 percent reduction. This amount was then adjusted to 7.2 percent in October 2013, 7.3 percent in October 2014, 6.8 percent in October 2015, and 6.9 percent in October 2016, as required by law.

In fiscal year 2016, the RRB paid \$12.3 billion in retirement and survivor benefits to about 553,000 beneficiaries, and net unemployment-sickness benefits of \$133.3 million to approximately 31,500 claimants. ©©

BLET MEMBERS TO KEEP HEALTH FSA PLAN FOR 2018

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) will keep the Health Flexible Spending Account (Health FSA) through 2018 thanks to high enrollment levels in the money-saving plan.

A negotiated benefit obtained in the 2012 national contract, the Health FSA allows members to use pretax dollars to pay for certain medical expenses that are not covered under any health plan (including a railroad health & welfare plan) or any other source. The plan could allow members to save hundreds of dollars per year in taxes. The 2012 contract stipulates that at least 7.5% of eligible members must participate in the Health FSA or the Carriers obtain the right to terminate it.

Following the conclusion of the Open Enrollment for the 2018 Plan Year, 11.40% of eligible BLET members had enrolled in the program. This is the highest percentage of participation since the program began.

The FSA Plan is available to BLET-represented engineers working on participating railroads, and all train service employees of the Texas Mexican Railway. Also, BLET members subject to the September 16, 2011 UTU National Agreement are currently eligible to participate in the Health FSA program provided for in that Agreement. The national FSA is distinct and separate from the on-property BNSF FSA plan. The participation rates do not apply to BNSF engineers.

"Membership participation levels in the Health FSA have increased steadily each year over the last five years," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I believe those participation levels will continue to climb as word continues to spread about the positive benefits of our Health FSA program."

Any members with questions regarding the FSA should call United Healthcare at (877) 311-7849 or visit <http://www.yourtracktohealth.com>. ©©

Most railroad retirement annuities, like social security benefits, are scheduled to increase in January 2018 on the basis of the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the third quarter of 2016 to the corresponding period of the current year.

Cost-of-living increases are calculated in both the tier I and tier II benefits included in a railroad retirement annuity. Tier I benefits, like social security benefits, will increase by 2.0 percent, which is the percentage of the CPI rise. Tier II benefits will go up by 0.7 percent, which is 32.5 percent of the CPI increase. Vested dual benefit payments and supplemental annuities also paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) are not adjusted for the CPI change.

In January 2018, the average regular railroad retirement employee annuity will increase \$42 a month to \$2,711 and the average of combined benefits for an employee and spouse will increase \$60 a month to \$3,937. For those aged widow(er)s eligible for an increase, the average annuity will increase \$24 a month to \$1,353. However, widow(er)s whose annuities are being paid under the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 will not receive annual cost-of-living adjustments until their annuity amount is exceeded by the amount that would have been paid

under prior law, counting all interim cost-of-living increases otherwise payable. Some 50 percent of the widow(er)s on the RRB's rolls are being paid under the 2001 law.

If a railroad retirement or survivor annuitant also receives a social security or other government benefit, such as a public service pension, the increased tier I benefit is reduced by the increased government benefit. Tier II cost-of-living increases are not reduced by increases in other government benefits. If a widow(er) whose annuity is being paid under the 2001 law is also entitled to an increased government benefit, her or his railroad retirement survivor annuity may decrease.

However, the total amount of the combined railroad retirement widow(er)'s annuity and other government benefits will not be less than the total payable before the cost-of-living increase and any increase in Medicare premium deductions.

The cost-of-living increase is the largest since 2012, and follows a tier 1 increase of 0.3 percent in January 2017. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is expected to announce any Medicare Part B premium changes later this year, and information will be available then at Medicare.gov.

In late December the RRB will mail notices to all annuitants providing a breakdown of the annuity rates payable to them in January 2018. ©©

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BLET member helps Santa Train complete 75th annual run



With dozens of onlookers gathered trackside, the 75th running of the CSX Santa Train eases into Fort Blackmore, Va., on its way to Kingsport, Tenn., from Pikeville, Ky., on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2017.

**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY CHASE GUNNOE
SPECIAL TO THE BLET**

As the 75th running of the CSX Santa Train rolled in the rural communities of eastern Kentucky, southwestern Virginia, and eastern Tennessee the Saturday before Thanksgiving, tens of thousands gathered trackside to snap photos, catch presents, and get a glimpse of Santa Claus. While an annual tradition for many in rural Appalachia, the 75th anniversary was particularly special for BLET member and CSX engineer Tony King.

"To me, it was the people. All the people I had with me that were fun to be with, all of the people on the back of the train having a good time, and the thousands of people we saw along the way," said King, a member of BLET Division

781 in Erwin, Tenn. "It was amazing to me the amount of people that you really see during the trip."

King has held continuous membership in Division 781 since May 1, 2008. A railroader and bluegrass music fan, Brother King has worked the Santa Train before as a member of the many safety teams that manage onlookers at grade crossings and along the right-of-way, but he had never served as engineer until this year.

"When you're on the engine, you really see the crowds that (the safety teams) have to hold back. You get an overall perspective for how big this thing is."

And while the Santa Train always brings hundreds of families trackside in search of presents and Christmas cheer, the 75th anniversary was particularly unique in that it featured a historic locomotive that once operated on the Clinchfield Railroad — the route in which today's CSX Santa Train operates.

CSX Transportation, the Southern Ap-

palachian Railway Museum, and other railway preservationists coordinated the locomotive's cosmetic restoration leading up to November's Santa Train. The locomotive, built by Electro-Motive Division in 1948, was restored to its as-delivered gray and yellow Clinchfield Railroad scheme and renumbered to its original Clinchfield 800.

The F3 locomotive, and later upgraded to EMD F7 specifications, was a freight locomotive used on the Clinchfield Railroad until it was assigned to business train service for railroad officials on the Family Lines System and later, the Seaboard System Railroad. Both railroads were predecessors to today's CSX Transportation.

And No. 800 wasn't the only colorful locomotive to lead Santa through rural Appalachia. The Southern Appalachia Railway Museum of Oak Ridge, Tenn., also restored one of its diesel locomotives to Clinchfield to celebrate the train's 75th running.

King, a 25-year veteran with CSX, says the biggest takeaway from this year's Santa Train was seeing all the smiling faces along the route — coming from the photographers and the kids.

A member of BLET Division 781 traditionally operates the Santa Train each year. The train traverses difficult terrain and the BLET members are intimately familiar with the route's many challenging hills and curves. They are uniquely qualified for the job and are extremely proud of their contributions to the Santa Train heritage.

The 75th running of the Santa Train operated from Pikeville, Ky., south to Kingsport, Tenn., on Saturday, November 18, 2017, with stops in 13 communities along its 110-mile route. This year's train also featured Bluegrass star Ricky Skaggs.

CSX, Appalachian Power, Soles 4 Souls, Food City, and the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce sponsored the annual tradition. ©



With nearly 25 years under his belt, this is the first time CSX engineer Tony King has had the honors of leading Santa along the Clinchfield Railroad.



The 75th running of the CSX Santa Train arrives in Dante, Va., on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2017 led by recently restored Clinchfield EMD F7(A) No. 800.

Republican members officially join NMB

In November, Gerald W. Fauth, III and Kyle Fortson began serving as members of the National Mediation Board (NMB). Both are Republicans. Fauth will serve as Chairman of the Board, replacing Harry Hoglander, who separated from the Board on November 9, 2017. Linda Puchala, a Democrat, remains as the third Member of the Board.

Chairman Fauth was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on November 2, 2017 and assumed his position as a Board Member and Chairman of the National Mediation Board (NMB) on November 9, 2017. Ms. Fortson was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on November 2, 2017, and she assumed her position with the NMB on November 13, 2017.

The NMB is an independent agency of the U.S. government that coordinates labor-management relations within the U.S. railroad and airline industries. Under the Railway Labor Act, an airline or railroad union contract does not expire; it remains in force and amendable until a new contract is ratified by the union members or either side exercises "self-help," which could be a strike by employees or a lockout by management. Before this can happen, the NMB-appointed mediator must declare an impasse in negotiations, which starts a 30-day cooling off period, during which negotiations continue. Once the 30-day period has passed, either side is free to exercise self-help, unless the President authorizes a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB). The U.S. Congress also has the power to impose a contract.

Chairman Fauth has 40 years of experience in the private sector and Federal government working on economic, regulatory, public policy and legislative issues related to transportation. He served at the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB), where he worked for more than three years as Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to a Board Member. While serving at the STB, he reviewed, analyzed and made recommendations on hundreds of formal written decisions, which involved all matters of STB jurisdiction and had an impact on the transportation industry and the national economy.

Immediately prior to joining the NMB, Ms. Fortson served as Labor Policy Director at the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. She worked directly for the Chairman, Senator Lamar Alexander of Tennessee. As Labor Policy Director, Ms. Fortson was responsible for all labor, employment and workplace safety issues in the Committee's jurisdiction. During her tenure at the Committee, Ms. Fortson also worked for previous Republican leaders Senator Mike Enzi and Senator Judd Gregg. Prior to joining the Committee, she was a Policy Analyst for the Senate Republican Policy Committee handling labor and other issues. She has also served as Counsel to a member of the House Judiciary Committee.

Board Member Linda Puchala was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on November 2, 2017. This is her fourth term as a Board Member having served as Chairman at the time of her appointment in 2009 and during three more years since then. ©©



CSX TRAIN DERAILS IN HYNDMAN, PA.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators examine a ruptured tank car on August 4, 2017, after a CSX train derailed in Hyndman, Pa., on August 2, 2017. The train consisted of five locomotives and 178 rail cars. At least 32 cars derailed, some carrying hazardous materials, which forced the evacuation of about 1,000 residents from the town of Hyndman. No injuries were reported. Among the items that spilled and burned include liquefied petroleum gas (propane) and molten sulphur. Photo: by Erik Strickland, NTSB (via NTSB Flickr)

Three CBG partner unions also ratify national contract

In addition to the BLET, membership in three partner unions of the Collective Bargaining Group (CBG) ratified the new national contract during late November and early December of 2017.

On November 27, the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA) announced that over 62 percent of its membership voted for ratification. The ATDA's bargaining team consisted of President Leo McCann, Secretary-Treasurer Ed Dowell and Vice President Rory Broyles.

On November 28, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS) President Dan Pickett announced that BRS members

had ratified the pact. "Joining the CBG coalition proved to be an effective strategy for our members in this round of bargaining, and I am proud that our organization was a member," President Pickett said.

On December 1, members of the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART TD) ratified the contract by a nearly 4-to-1 margin. SMART TD President John Previsich said: "I believe that our negotiating team, along with the teams from the other unions in the CBG, are to be commended for staying the

course during a long and tedious round of negotiations. The easy thing for them to do when the going got tough was to declare defeat and walk away from the negotiating table, as others have done, but our team never wavered."

The six unions comprising the CBG include: ATDA; BLET; BRS; SMART TD; the International Brotherhood of Boiler-makers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, and Helpers; and the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers / SEIU. Collectively, the CBG unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers covered by the various organizations' national agreements. ©©



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is March 31, 2018.
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Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen News Brotherhood Of Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen

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12/17

Photo of the Month: November/December 2017

ALONG THE WESTERN NEW YORK & PENNSYLVANIA: The ME-1 rolls through Miller's Station PA on a crisp but cloudy September morning (28th) Heading for Falconer N.Y. for interchange with the OL-2 that comes out from Olean N.Y. hauling freight from local customers out of Meadville PA, the cars will be interchanged for loads to take back west. **Photo:** by BLET Member Eric Bochman of Division 421 in Buffalo, N.Y.



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 September/October 2017 Activity

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

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division Office, Independence, Ohio; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; Coordinated Bargaining Group national negotiations/mediation sessions, Washington, D.C. and Cleveland, Ohio; Division 404 mtg., Chicago; Town Hall mtg., Chicago; Division 683 mtg., Chicago; Nevada State Legislative Board mtg., Reno, Nevada; NS-N GCA mtg., Indianapolis, Ind.; National General Chairmen's mtg., Cleveland; Town Hall mtgs., Kansas City, Fort Worth, Texas, Houston, Texas, Indianapolis, Ind.; BNSF-ATSF GCA mtg., San Diego, 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.; Coordinated Bargaining Group national negotiations/mediation sessions, Washington, D.C. and Cleveland, Ohio; Holiday; Chicago Town Hall mtg., Roseville, Ill.; Local Chairman Class, Independence, Ohio; Nevada State Legislative Board mtg., Reno, Nevada; NS-N GCA mtg., Indianapolis, Ind.; Town Hall mtgs., Kansas City, Mo., Houston, Fort Worth, and Indianapolis; BNSF-ATSF GCA mtg., San Diego, 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; Town Hall mtg., Chicago; Local Chairman and Advanced Local Chairman Classes, Independence, Ohio; BNSF-ATSF GCA mtg., San Diego, Calif.; General Chairmen mtg., Cleveland; Kansas City and Indianapolis Town Hall mtgs.; Coordinated Bargaining Group national negotiations/mediation session, Cleveland, Ohio.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; FRA Region 2 mtg., Washington, D.C.; Trustee mtg., Cleveland, Ohio; National Conference of State Legislators, Boston, Mass.; Frontline mtg., Washington, D.C.; Legislative mtg., Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ Railroad Retirement Board member, Washington, D.C.; Nevada State Legislative Board mtg., Reno, Nevada; BNSF-ATSF GCA triennial mtg., San Diego, Calif.; RSAC mtg. w/ John Risch, SMART-TD National Legislative Director, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ Amy Hawkins, BNSF VP, Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ Michael Coplen, Chief Safety Policy and Promotion Division Office of System Safety (TSO-10), Federal Transit Administration, Washington, D.C.; Transportation Committee/Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO mtg., IBT Washington, D.C.; IMF/ World Bank annual mtgs., Washington, D.C.; House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure hearing, Building a 21st Century Infrastructure, Washington, D.C.; Multiple receptions and office visits with members of Congress and the leadership of both the GOP and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Vice Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Arb. Adv. Forum; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR and Illinois RR; Study dockets for Referee Benn, DL 399, NRAB, Chicago; Holiday; Assist GC Reynolds w/ rules issues and discipline appeal and submissions, WC, Chicago; Division 404 mtg., WC GCA mtg., Chicago; Town Hall mtg., Chicago; Assist GC Graves w/ disc. Appeal, BRC, Chicago; Study for DL 398, NRAB, Chicago; Study for DL 401, NRAB, Chicago; NRAB hearings, Referee Rinaldo, DL 401, Chicago; Study cases for PLB 7154, IC, Chicago; Assist GC Burns w/ submissions for PLB 7683, IHB, Chicago; NARR & NMB Section 3 committee mtgs., NRAB, Chicago; PLB 7154, Referee Wesman, IC, Chicago; Assist GC Balonek w/ arb. Prep, Metra, Chicago; CBG mtg., Independence, Ohio; Assist VGC Evans w/ submissions for PLB 7154, IC; Docket for DL 399, Referee Benn, NRAB hearings, Chicago; PLB 7683, IHB, Chicago; Executive session dockets 48872, Referee Benn, NRAB, 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.; Division 404 mtg., Chicago; BLET Town Hall mtg., Roselle, Ill.; Division 683 mtg., Northlake, Ill.; Division 525 mtg., Ft. Smith, Ark.; Griev-

ance mediation, UP-SR GCA, Hurst, Texas; NARR mtg., Chicago; Portland & Western Section 6 negotiations video conference, Andover, Mass.; General Chairmen's national bargaining update at National Division headquarters, Independence, Ohio; UP-Western Region PLB 7228, Chicago; Vacation; UP-Western Region Article IX negotiations, Las Vegas; UP RR Employees Health Services General Chairmen's mtg., Las Vegas; UP-Southern Region PLB 7332 and UP-Western Lines PLB 7721, Chicago.

VICE PRESIDENT GIL GORE: Assigned to all CSX; Grand Trunk Western; Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA special assignment; Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) issues, CSXT; General office duties, paperwork, correspondence, emails, telephone calls, etc.; WGCA mtg., Las Vegas; Advisory Board mtg., Las Vegas; Harrison letter w/ CSX GCs; CSX-NL GCA mtg., Pittsburgh, Pa.; Trip rate dispute conference call; UP-SR GCA retirement dinner for GC Warren Dent; CSX medical quarterly update, New Orleans; GTW negotiations, Atlanta.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Great Western; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Mtg. w/ BNSF Labor Relations and BLET General Chairmen, Fort Worth, Texas; Division 404 mtg., Vacation; Chicago; Division 683 mtg., Roselle, Ill.; BLET Town Hall mtg., Chicago; Division 285 mtg. w/ GC Thurman, Thayer, Mo.; Division 285 picnic w/ GC Thurman, Thayer, Mo.; NARR mtg., Chicago; PLB 7771, assist GC Thurman, BNSF, Chicago; Vacation; National Contract mtg. w/ General Chairmen, Independence, Ohio; Bill Hannah retirement, UP-Western Lines, Ontario, Calif.; Division 386 mtg., Birmingham, Ala.; BLET Town Hall mtg., Kansas City, Mo.; PLB 7333 w/ GC Thurman, Ft. Myers, Fla.; M&NA contract mediation w/ GC Thurman, Ft. Myers, Fla.; BLET Town Hall mtgs. in Fort Worth and Houston, Texas; BNSF-ATSF triennial meeting, GC Holdcraft, San Diego, Calif.

VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS: Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, SouthRail, 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.; PLB 7627, assist GC Semenek, Chicago; Huron & Eastern issues, assist GC Ladrigh; Illinois Midland issues, assist GC Craddock; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Heise; KCS issues, assist GC Spradlin; Louisville & Indiana issues, assist GC Hogan; MWRCSF, Excelsior Springs, Mo.; Springfield Terminal/D&H issues, assist GC Moore; Soo Line and DM&E issues, assist GC Semenek; MidSouth issues, assist GC Craddock; GCA merger, assist GC Moore; PLB 6884 and PLB 7239, assist GC Craddock and GC Spradlin, Ft. Myers, Fla.; National Contract update, ND headquarters, Independence, Ohio; GC Hannah retirement, Ontario, Calif.; WLE mediation, assist GC Fannon, Kansas City, Mo.

VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS: Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern; New York, Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; Connecticut Southern; Western New York & Pennsylvania; Indiana & Ohio; RSAC/RSIA Fatigue Management Group; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; SBA 1063, assist GC Dehart, Chicago; Division 285 mtg., assist GC Thurman, Thayer, Mo.; NECR mediation, assist GC Moore and GC Martin, Jacksonville, Fla.; PLB 7574, assist GC Wallace, Estero, Fla.; NS Northlines GCA mtg., assist GC Dehart, Indianapolis, Ind.; NS-Northlines GCA mtg., GC Dehart, Indianapolis, Ind.; GC Hannah retirement, UP-Western Lines GCA, Ontario, Calif.; CFER negotiations, assist GC Dehart, Columbus, Ohio; Town Hall mtg., Indianapolis, Ind.; BNSF-ATSF GCA mtg., GC Holdcraft, San Diego, Calif.

VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS: Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; Union Railroad; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Union Track mtgs. and training; Education & Training issues; BLET Regional Meeting planning; WNYP appeals; E&T issues; Labor Day holiday; Convention planning mtg., Las Vegas; Local Chairman Class, Independence, Ohio; Assist GC Dixon, SEPTA; Assist GC Sexton, LIRR; Division 382 and Division 421 mtg.; Assist GC Basile, contract talks, PATH; Assist GC Sexton, NY&A issues; Secretary-Treasurer Training, Independence, Ohio; Assist GC Kenny, Caltrain issues; WN&P discipline appeal; ND tentative agreement mtg., Independence, Ohio; Advanced Local Chairman Class, Independence, Ohio; Legislative Representative Class, Independence, Ohio; Caltrain contract talks, assist GC Kenny, Kansas City, Mo.; 2018 convention planning, Independence, Ohio.

DOT REPEALS MANDATE FOR ECP BRAKES

On December 4, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) repealed a May 2015 rulemaking that would have required the installation of electronically controlled pneumatic (ECP) brakes on certain tank cars,

The Federal Railroad Administration rulemaking had set a timetable for requiring ECP brakes on newer tank cars used to haul certain

hazardous or flammable materials, such as ethanol and crude oil. ECP brakes issue electronic signals to simultaneously apply and release brakes throughout the length of a train instead of each car applying brakes individually — a system designed to help trains stop more quickly and is considered more effective in emergency situations.

"The costs of this mandate would exceed three-

fold the benefits it would produce," the DOT said in a statement, which DOT attributed to studies by the National Academy of Sciences' Transportation Research Board and the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley criticized the rollback of the ECP brake rulemaking, saying it was a "step backwards" and that it would degrade oil train safety. ☺☺