



## Rail Chiefs announce formation of Coordinated Bargaining Coalition

**T**op leaders of 10 rail unions announced that their organizations will be participating in coordinated bargaining in the round of national negotiations that began on November 1, 2019. The unions comprising the Coordinated Bargaining Coalition are:

American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA)

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen /  
Teamsters Rail Conference (BLET)

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS)

International Association of Machinists (IAM)

International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB)

National Conference of  
Firemen & Oilers/SEIU (NCFO)

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)

Transport Workers Union of America (TWU)

Transportation Communications  
Union / IAM (TCU)

Transportation Division of the International  
Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail,  
and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD)

The following statement was jointly issued by ATDA President **Leo McCann**, BLET National President **Dennis Pierce**, BRS President **Jerry Boles**, IAM General Vice President – Transportation **Sito Pantoja**, IBB Director of Railroad Lodge Services **John Mansker**, IBEW Railroad Department Director **Bill Bohne**, NCFO President **John Thacker**, SMART-TD President **Jeremy Ferguson**, TWU Railroad Division Director **John Feltz**, and TCU National President **Bob Scardelletti**: “We are pleased to announce the creation of the Coordinated Bargaining Coalition as we are on the threshold of the most critical round of national bargaining in a generation. Our Coalition is founded on two key values that we all share. One is that we understand the importance of each Union’s autonomy to pursue membership-specific goals within a framework of broad solidarity to defend and improve the wages, benefits and working conditions of our members. The other is that we will spare no effort to defeat the attack by the railroads on the very foundation of our members’ economic security.”

Jointly, the Coordinated Bargaining Coalition unions represent more than 105,000 railroad workers covered by the various organizations’ national agreements, and comprise over 80% of the workforce who will be impacted by this round of negotiations. ©©

## SAVE THE DATE:

# 2020 BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

**T**he Milwaukee regional meeting will be held at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center and the Cincinnati regional will be held at the Hyatt Regency Cincinnati.

As with the past regional meetings, the 2020 meetings will be arranged on a Monday through Friday schedule. Travel to the meeting, registration and a welcome reception for each of the two meetings will

be on Monday (June 22 for Milwaukee and August 17 for Cincinnati). Meetings, training classes and other events will be scheduled throughout the remainder of the week and will include a closing dinner on Thursday night. Travel home is on Friday for each meeting (June 26 for Milwaukee and August 21 for Cincinnati).

Per the BLET Bylaws, regional meetings are held “for the purposes of membership training, education and discussion of mat-

ters of importance to the membership.” Additionally, the meetings are structured to include options for fellowship with other members and their families.

More specific details will be announced at a later date. Registration information will be available online at the BLET National Division’s regional meeting website (<http://bletregionals.org>). All members are encouraged to attend one or both of these regional meetings in 2020. ©©

Mark your calendars and plan to attend one or both of the BLET’s 2020 regional meetings! Details coming soon.



Photo: Visit Milwaukee

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Photo: Jeff Swinger/Cincinnati USA

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**BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE**

# THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

**I**n the spirit of the Thanksgiving holiday, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude and appreciation to all BLET members, officers and staff for their hard work and dedication throughout 2019.

In addition, I ask you all to join me in remembering our service men and women who are fighting overseas or are stationed at military bases throughout the world and cannot be home this year. Let us also remember our own BLET Brothers and Sisters, who are sitting in the cab of a locomotive or in a hotel instead of at the Thanksgiving dinner table with their families.

Let us remember those who have fallen in the workplace; not only our members, but all railroaders and all workers who have given their lives in the performance of their duties.

At this time of year, I would also like to express my appreciation to our Brotherhood's Advisory Board. I am also thankful for all of our Local Division officers, as well as the officers and staff serving General Committees of Adjustment and State Legislative Boards throughout

the country. These men and women are some of the hardest working individuals in the entire Brotherhood, and they deserve our respect and gratitude — not only during the holiday season — but also all year long.

Also deserving of gratitude and thanks are our staff at National Division headquarters in Independence, our National Legislative office in Washington, D.C., and our BLET Auxiliary.

But most of all, I am thankful for our members, both past and present. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Brothers and Sisters of past generations, whose

commitment and sacrifice helped to lay a solid foundation for the successes enjoyed by our Brotherhood and all members for over 156 years. And I am also proud of today's generation of locomotive engineers and trainmen for continuing to build upon that foundation so that today, the BLET stands as the leading rail labor union in America.

Finally, Thanksgiving can be an especially challenging time of year for BLET members and their families. Many members will find themselves in the cab of a locomotive or at an away-from-home terminal instead of at the dinner

table with loved ones. While our work at the railroad often prevent us from fully enjoying the fruits of our labor, we are blessed with the knowledge that our hard work and dedication puts food on the table and clothes on the backs of our children and families. Please join me in keeping all hardworking BLET members in our thoughts and prayers for a safe journey back home.

On behalf of the BLET Advisory Board, I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving.

**DENNIS R. PIERCE**  
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

66 While our work at the railroad often prevent us from fully enjoying the fruits of our labor, we are blessed with the knowledge that our hard work and dedication puts food on the table and clothes on the backs of our children and families. 99

## BLET TOWN HALL MEETING HELD IN SEATTLE

**O**n October 23, the BLET hosted a Town Hall meeting in Seattle for members living and working in the Pacific Northwest.

Dozens of members were in attendance, primarily representing workers from Amtrak, BNSF Railway, and the Union Pacific.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce and National Vice President Mike Priester represented the National Division at the meeting. Also in attendance were Mark Kenny, Amtrak General Chairman; Kent Psota, BNSF/MRL General Chairman; Steve Leyshon, UP-Western Region General Chairman; and Shahraim Allen, Washington State Legislative Board Chairman.

President Pierce gave an update to members regarding affairs of the National Division, and engaged in a lengthy question and answer session with the members following his presentation.

The National Division thanks Brother Shahraim Allen for providing photographs from the meeting. ©©



President Pierce, center, with several members of BLET Division 518 (Seattle) at the union's Town Hall Meeting in Seattle on October 23, 2019.



## BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

**O**fficial 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

# THE STAKES ARE HIGH FOR THE 2020 ELECTION

**A**s we head toward 2020, one thing is clear: Whoever is elected president will have to confront major challenges that have a significant impact on the livelihoods of millions.

For Teamster members and working people across America, these challenges include numerous crises that threaten the existence of our diminishing middle class. The financial security of 1.5 million retirees is at risk because hundreds of multi-employer pension plans are in danger of failing. Collective bargaining rights — the backbone of America's middle class — are under attack. And millions upon millions of U.S. jobs are being shipped overseas because of unfair trade practices favored by big business.

That is why the Teamsters are embarking on a 2020 presidential election endorsement process shaped by and for our 1.4 million members nationwide who represent a diverse cross-section of working Americans who vote.



In recent months, tens of thousands of Teamsters completed our 2020 survey at work sites, union meetings and online to provide us with insight into what their top election issues are. Members' responses made it overwhelmingly clear they're looking for a president who will focus on three core issues: protecting pensions and retirement security, expanding

collective bargaining rights and pursuing fair trade agreements.

Candidates know that Teamsters vote, and that our members — many of whom reside in critical early primary and swing states — will shape the outcome of the 2020 election. But our members can't be easily won. Their voices, and the voices of all American workers, must be heard. That is why we have asked all of the candidates, Democrats and Republicans, to make several serious commitments to receive consideration.

First, we are asking candidates to sign our pledge to support legislation that protects pensions and retirement security, strengthens the ability of workers to join a union and establishes a new trade policy that protects working people. Twelve Democratic presidential candidates have already signed.

Second, we're asking candidates to directly explain how they will address key issues facing Teamsters and all working people. Nine Democratic presiden-

tial candidates have already completed interviews.

Third, since all workers deserve a union, we've asked campaigns to acknowledge a union should campaign workers seek to form one. We are pleased to see there are currently five campaigns with union workers.

Finally, because it is not enough for candidates just to say that they stand with working people, we are inviting them to join us in action fighting on the front lines. We've asked all candidates to partner with us in support of workers, either at a strike line or an organizing committee meeting.

The stakes in the 2020 election could not be higher for working people. The Teamsters are ready to make a difference in the fight and we're challenging candidates to be bolder in their stand alongside working Americans.

Fraternally,

**JAMES P. HOFFA**  
TEAMSTERS GENERAL  
PRESIDENT

66 Candidates know that Teamsters vote, and that our members — many of whom reside in critical early primary and swing states — will shape the outcome of the 2020 election. But our members can't be easily won. Their voices and the voices of all American workers, must be heard. 99

## In the Line of Duty

### BRUCE A. DOMINIQUE JR.

**BROTHER BRUCE A. DOMINIQUE JR.**, a member of BLET Division 219 in Shreveport, Louisiana, was killed in a railroad accident on September 6, 2019. He was 36 years old.

Employed by the Union Pacific Railroad, Brother Dominique hired out as a trainman with UP on December 31, 2012, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on June 24, 2018. He joined the Brotherhood on February 1, 2019.

According to media reports, Brother Dominique was severely injured when an 18-wheeler collided with his train at a grade crossing on West 70th Street at Kennedy

Drive in Shreveport. He was taken to Ochsner LSU Health hospital where he died at 4:25 p.m. The National Transportation Safety Board is not investigating this fatal accident.

Brother Michael D. Stokes, close friend and fellow member of Division 219, said Brother Dominique was hard working and had a generous nature. He loved working for the railroad.

"He was the kind of guy who would give you the shirt off his back," Brother Stokes said. "He loved railroading. He lived and breathed it."

When not on duty, Brother Dominique

enjoyed model railroading, railroad photography, collecting railroad memorabilia, and studying railroad history. He built his own model railroad, the Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas & Eastern (aka "LATE"). Brother Dominique worked for the Kansas City Southern as an engineer and trainman before joining the Union Pacific. Brother Stokes said Dominique ran the KCS business train, the Southern Belle, on a couple of occasions.

Prior to his railroad career, Brother Dominique was an officer with the Bossier City Police Department. Brother Stokes said Dominique was especially close to his moth-

er and father. Brother Dominique is survived by his father Bruce, brother Christopher "Chad" Speir, and wife Christina. Sadly, his mother Anita passed away on July 24, 2019.

A visitation and celebration of life were held on September 14 at the Hill Crest Memorial Chapel in Houghton, La.

"It is a terrible tragedy when someone so young is taken from us," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "On behalf of the BLET National Division, I extend our deepest condolences to Brother Dominique's family and to all his friends and co-workers." ☹☹



Prior to his railroad career, Brother Dominique (left), was an officer with the Bossier City Police Department. He is pictured here with his late mother Anita (center) and his father Bruce (right).



# BLET members urged to contact Congress on two critical issues as union lobbies in D.C.

**T**he Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is urging all members to contact their Representatives and Senators in Congress to support the union's two most pressing legislative issues: foreign crews operating trains into the United States at the southern U.S./Mexican border, and two-person train crews.

In addition to this nationwide membership lobbying campaign, the Brotherhood had boots on the ground last month in Washington, D.C., as nearly two dozen BLET officers made face-to-face visits with members of Congress to educate them on the importance of these two safety issues.

## CROSS-BORDER RAIL OPERATIONS

On October 21, U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) introduced S. 2652, a bill that supports the BLET's position on train crew cross border issues with Mexico. The bill would amend title 49 of the United States Code to provide that only citizens or nationals of the United States may operate trains within the United States that originate in Mexico. All members are urged to contact their Senators to urge support for this much needed legislation, which is designed to help protect BLET member jobs. A copy of the bill is available here: [bit.ly/2P9qkcf](http://bit.ly/2P9qkcf).

Senator Blumenthal's bill comes on the heels of similar legislation introduced over the summer in the U.S. House of Representatives. The House version of the bill, H.R. 3896 ([bit.ly/2SywNNz](http://bit.ly/2SywNNz)), also would provide that only citizens or nationals of the United States may operate trains within the United States that originate in Mexico. H.R. 3896, which was introduced by Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), Chairman of the Railroad Subcommittee, and co-sponsored by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA).

## TWO-PERSON CREWS

Also, BLET members and their families are urged to contact their Representatives in the House and their Senators to support the Safe Freight Act. H.R. 1748 was introduced in the House by Rep. Don Young (R-AK) and S. 1979 was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA). With 114 co-sponsors in the House and 12 in the Senate, these bills have appeal to both parties and seek to put a certified



**From left:** General Chairman Dick Crow, UP-Northern Region GCA; New York State Legislative Board Chairman (SLBC) Bill Fleischmann; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman; Massachusetts SLBC Dan Cadogan; and Division 125 Local Chairman Tim McCue



**From left:** Arizona SLBC Nick Johnson; Nebraska SLBC Pat Pfeifer; Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna; and General Chairman Mike Ball, Texas-Mexican Railway



Arizona SLBC Nick Johnson

engineer and a certified conductor on freight trains in the U.S.

Copies of the two-person crew bills can be found at [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov):

HOUSE VERSION: [bit.ly/2JH7150](http://bit.ly/2JH7150)

SENATE VERSION: [bit.ly/2JHkpYR](http://bit.ly/2JHkpYR)

To find your Representative's or Senators' contact information, please visit: [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) or [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

## BOOTS ON THE GROUND

On October 22 and 23, nearly two dozen BLET officers converged on the

Nation's Capital to meet in person with members of Congress to lobby on the Mexican cross-border issue and for the Safe Freight Act. This follows significant lobbying efforts previously held in July and August 2019.

Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman lead the BLET lobbyists, along with Director of Legislative and Political Affairs Bob Hagan and Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna. They were accompanied by 19 officers from BLET State Leg-

islative Boards and General Committees of Adjustment representing all areas of the country.

"Regardless of your political party of choice, I urge all BLET members to take a few minutes to call your members of Congress to voice your support for our position on these two critical issues," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "Please help us to protect our jobs, our craft and our future."

Updates on the issues will be provided as they develop in Washington D.C. @@

# BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACTS WITH TASI, LOUISVILLE & INDIANA

**M**embers of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen have ratified two new contracts in recent weeks: one with Transit America Services Inc. (TASI) for Caltrain engineers, and one with the Louisville & Indiana Railroad (LIRC).

The TASI agreement was ratified on October 15 and governs wages, benefits and work rules for more than 60 members. The five-year agreement provides for general wage increases of 14.5%

through 2021, including retroactive pay to 2017. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce recognized General Chairman Mark Kenny and the members of the Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment's (GCA) Executive Committee for bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion. He also thanked the TASI membership for their perseverance and participation in the negotiating process.

With an average of 65,000 riders each weekday, Caltrain commuter ser-

vice operates between San Francisco on the north end, through San Jose to Gilroy on the south end. Previously, Amtrak operated the service until the spring of 2012.

The LIRC contract was ratified on October 28 and governs wages, benefits and work rules for approximately 20 members. The five-year agreement runs through November 2024 and provides a 17% increase in wages over the life of the agreement. The BLET successfully negotiated guaranteed rest days on the

guaranteed extra board, secured expanded bereavement leave, and protected the seniority of the membership when filling vacancies.

President Pierce recognized General Chairman Randy Fannon, Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines GCA, and the members of his negotiating team for their hard work throughout negotiations. President Pierce also thanked the LIRC membership for voting in this most important of union processes.

The Louisville & Indiana Railroad is a subsidiary of the Anacostia Rail Holdings Company and is headquartered in Jeffersonville, Ind. Its 106-mile main line runs between Louisville, Ky., and Indianapolis, Ind. Anacostia Rail Holdings acquired the former Pennsylvania Railroad trackage from Conrail and began operating 25 years ago on March 12, 1994. It connects with CSXT, Norfolk Southern, the Indiana Rail Road, and the Paducah & Louisville Railway. @@



## BLET part of union group suing to overturn new NMB rule that undermines workers

**T**he Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, along with 14 other unions and union groups representing railroad and airline workers, has filed a joint lawsuit to protect workers covered by the Railway Labor Act from an anti-union rule change recently implemented by the National Mediation Board (NMB).

In a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) dated January 31, 2019, the NMB proposed a rule change that would make it easier to decertify labor unions under the Railway Labor Act. Also, the rule doubles the amount of time a union has to wait before it can apply to again become the representative after a decertification from one year to two years. By a 2-1 vote, the NMB adopted the Final Rule during the summer of 2019.

According to the unions' lawsuit: "The Board's Final Rule allowing a direct decertification application, election, and the two-year bar on applications following such an election are unjustified repudiations of eight decades of past practice under the Act, contrary to the statutory language and legislative history, and are without factual basis or adequate justification. The Final Rule is arbitrary, capricious, and an abuse of discretion."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said: "The NMB's Final Rule is contrary to 80-plus years of established practice. It is unfair, unnecessary, and is harmful to the stability of the airline and railroad industry because it undermines the balance of labor-management relations."

The unions' lawsuit asks the court to declare that the NMB's Final Rule is invalid because it exceeds the Board's statutory authority under, and is contrary to, the Railway Labor Act. The unions also ask the court to declare that the NMB's Final Rule is invalid because it is arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with law. Finally,

the unions asked the court to preliminarily and permanently enjoining the NMB from implementing the Final Rule.

The Complaint filed by the unions states: "The NMB has exclusive jurisdiction to resolve representation disputes in the air and rail transportation industries. But Congress has expressly limited the circumstances in which the Board may exercise that jurisdiction. It may only do so at the request of employees, and it may only act when an individual or organization seeks to be 'certified as the representative of ... employees.' Absent such an application, Congress has instructed that the Board 'shall not direct an election or use any other method to determine who shall be the representative.' In contravention of this express limit on its jurisdiction, and in an abrupt deviation from over 80 years of past practice, the Board in a Final Rule issued on July 26, 2019 now claims authority to direct an election based on an application by any employee seeking exclusively to 'decertify' an existing representative. This action is in excess of the Board's limited jurisdiction and is a 'gross violation' of the Railway Labor Act and should be enjoined."

The NMB's new rule also bans any union from attempting to re-organize the workforce for two years, an increase from the current one-year ban. "There is no legitimate reason for this limitation on employees' statutory rights to organize," according to the unions' lawsuit. "This new and extraordinary limitation on employee's statutory rights is wholly unjustified by the Board, and is twice as long as the existing limits on representation elections following an effective loss of representation under the Board's long-standing prior procedures. This aspect of the Final Rule is arbitrary and capricious."

The suit was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia on October 16, 2019. ©©

**"THE NMB'S FINAL RULE IS CONTRARY TO 80-PLUS YEARS OF ESTABLISHED PRACTICE. IT IS UNFAIR, UNNECESSARY, AND IS HARMFUL TO THE STABILITY OF THE AIRLINE AND RAILROAD INDUSTRY BECAUSE IT UNDERMINES THE BALANCE OF LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS."**

— DENNIS PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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## BLET establishes new Short Line Department



BLET National Vice President Mike Twombly, pictured here at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018, has been appointed Head of the BLET Short Line Department.

**F**ollowing through on actions taken by delegates to the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce has authorized the creation of a Short Line Department at the National Division level.

The new BLET Short Line Department will expand the union's ability to organize new members throughout the United States. Also, it will better serve current members from very small divisions who work for short line railroads by providing assistance from the National Division during contract negotiations and with other matters while also providing them with the freedom to form their own local grievance committees for contract enforcement and grievance handling at the local level.

In creating the new Short Line Department, President Pierce chartered a single Local Division — Division 16 — as the home for new and future short line members. Division 16 is structured to allow for the creation of multiple Sub-charters for each individual short line.

President Pierce has appointed BLET National Vice President Mike Twombly to serve as Head of the BLET Short Line Department and Special Representative Paul Aird as the Director of the BLET Short Line Department.

"Vice President Twombly has been assigned to assist numerous short line railroads over his past 11 years on the BLET Advisory Board, negotiating many contracts that have benefitted countless members," President Pierce said. "He is a natural fit for the job, and I have every confidence that he will do an excellent job as Head of the BLET Short Line Department."

President Pierce estimates that there are thousands of short line workers currently employed on non-union properties throughout the United States. "The new Short Line Division structure is expected to give the National Division added flexibility to organize new members and to grow our organization," President Pierce said. "Brother Aird, who also serves the National Division as Director of Organizing, is the ideal

candidate to serve as Director of the Short Line Division."

To begin the process, short line members of five BLET Divisions are being merged into Division 16, including: Division 394 (Belt Railway of Chicago); the portion of Division 421 (Buffalo, N.Y.) that represents locomotive engineers and train service employees on the Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad; the portion of Division 520 (Joliet, Ill.) that represents locomotive engineer employees on the Gary Railroad; Division 700 (Union Railroad); and Division 895 (South Buffalo Railway). The mergers into Division 16 became effective November 1, 2019.

Vice President Twombly explains: "The structure of the Short Line Department ensures that collective bargaining, claim and grievance handling, and the discipline process are protected during day-to-day operations on behalf of the membership, while protecting local representation through and in coordination with each subdivision's grievance committee. By establishing consistent leadership from the National Division and pooling resources back on the combined properties, it is easier and more efficient to establish one full roster of elected officers with one executive board in connection with separate subdivision grievance committees to handle the business of each railroad. The Short Line Division is working with the National Division and elected local officers from each railroad to quickly establish this process."

President Pierce is optimistic about the future of the new BLET Short Line Division.

"I thank our delegates at the Fourth National Convention for showing the foresight and wisdom to authorize creation of our new Short Line Division, and I know Brother Twombly and Brother Aird are up to the challenge of leading this new endeavor," President Pierce said. "I am optimistic that the BLET will be able to provide a voice to America's non-union short line railroad workers who are looking for the strength and protection that come from belonging to a union." ©©



# Ronnie Rhodes reelected to third term as UP-Central General Chairman

**R**onnie E. Rhodes was re-elected by acclamation to his third full term as General Chairman at the Union Pacific-Central Regional General Committee of Adjustment's quadrennial meeting in New Orleans, La., October 8-9, 2019. All other officers of the GCA were also elected by acclamation.

Brother Rhodes is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and a member of Division 915 (Alexandria, La.). He first joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1980. Brother Rhodes has been serving as General Chairman since October 1, 2011, and was elected to the office of 1st Vice General Chairman at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in 2008. He was reelected by acclamation to continue serving as General Chairman at quadrennial meetings in 2011 and 2015.

Also elected were: Vice General Chairman Kyle J. Bagby, Division 81 (Kansas City, Kan.); Secretary-Treasurer and Kansas City Hub Vice General Chairman Scott D. Thibodeau, Division 81 (Kansas City, Kan.); Executive Committee Member Kevin S. Leyerle, Division 81 (Kansas City, Kan.); Little Rock Hub Vice General Chairman Norman J. Baker, Division 585 (North Little Rock, Ark.); and St. Louis Hub Vice



Officers and guests attending the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment's quadrennial meeting in New Orleans, La., October 8-9, 2019.

General Chairman Brian J. Young, Division 48 (St. Louis, Mo.).

The following Alternate officers were also elected: Alternate Secretary-Treasurer and Kansas City Hub Alternate Vice General Chairman Chris S. Mullin, Division 336 (Osawatomie, Kan.); Little Rock Hub Alternate Vice General Chairman Kim Thomas, Division 182 (North Little Rock, Ark.); and St. Louis Hub Alternate Vice General Chairman Michael L. Gurley, Division 42 (St. Louis, Mo.). Additionally, Brother Baker was

elected 1st Alternate Vice General Chairman; Brother Thibodeau was elected 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman; and Brother Young was elected 3rd Alternate Vice General Chairmen.

Delegates elected the following Trustees: Jeff Jones, Division 609 (Jefferson City, Mo.); Kim Thomas, Division 182 (North Little Rock, Ark.); and Chaderick Black, Division 724 (Salem, Ill.). Elected to serve as Alternate Trustees were: Daniel Thielemann II, Division 152 (Kansas City, Mo.); W.J. (Joe) Fer-

ris Jr., Division 152 (Kansas City, Mo.); and Brian Doty, Division 251 (Villa Grove, Ill.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting was National President Dennis R. Pierce and National Vice President Mark L. Wallace. Also in attendance was retired National Vice President Gil L. Gore.

"Brother Rhodes is a dynamic and resourceful leader who continues to do an excellent job representing our membership," President Pierce said. "I congratulate and thank Brother Rhodes and all officers of the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment for their service to our Brotherhood."

Also in attendance were five other Union Pacific General Chairmen: Dick Crow, UP-Northern Region GCA; Dana Marlow, UP-Southern Region GCA; Steve Leyshon, UP-Western Region GCA; Dave Geisler, UP-Eastern District GCA; and Brian Carr, UP-Western Lines GCA. Additionally, Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Groose was also in attendance.

The BLET's UP-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment encompasses 18 BLET Divisions in five states (Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Illinois and Kansas) and represents more than 2,200 active and retired members. @@

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# Rich reelected Tennessee SLB Chairman

**J**eff B. Rich of BLET Division 129 (Nashville, Tenn.) was elected by acclamation to his first full term as Chairman of the Tennessee State Legislative Board at the Board's quadrennial meeting in Nashville, Tenn., October 4-5, 2019.

Brother Rich is a CSX locomotive engineer who has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood since November 1, 2000. He was elected to the position of Legislative Representative of Division 129 in 2015, which is the same year he was also elected to the Auditing Committee of the Tennessee State Legislative Board. He was then elevated to the chairmanship in January 2019 after former chairman C.R. (Rusty) Jones was elevated to serve as 2nd Vice Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment.

Also elected were: First Vice Chairman Gregg S. Garland, Division 41 (Nashville, Tenn.); Second Vice Chairman Jimmy C. Smallwood, Division 672 (Memphis, Tenn.); Secretary Treasurer Lee H. Myhan, Division 198 (Chattanooga, Tenn.); and Alternate Secretary Treasurer Ronnie L. Tate, Division 205 (Chattanooga, Tenn.). Elected to serve as Trustees were: Stanley G. Lomax, Division 762 (Memphis, Tenn.); Greg K. Hicks, Division 782 (Etowah, Tenn.); and Corey J. Williams,



Members of the Tennessee State Legislative Board at the quadrennial meeting in Nashville, October 4-5, 2019.

Division 610 (Bruceton, Tenn.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis Pierce; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman; Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna; and Special Representative and Director of Mobilization-Eastern Region Matt Kronyak.

"Brother Rich has done an excellent job representing the BLET in Tennessee," President Pierce said. "I am confident he will continue working hard to represent our members to the best of his ability. I congratulate Brother Rich and all officers of the Tennessee State Legislative Board and thank them for their dedicated service to our Brotherhood."

Chairman Rich comes from a long line of railroaders dating back to the 1880s, many of whom participated in building the railroad labor community of Nashville, Tenn. Brother Rich hired out in 1987 with the Nashville & Eastern Railroad as a locomotive engineer, and during his tenure at that company, he also worked as a track laborer, a track foreman and a track inspector. In 1998, he hired out with CSX and attained his locomotive engineer seniority in 2000. He currently works on the Chattanooga Subdivision (former Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis) as an engineer on local road switchers.

Secretary-Treasurer Lee Myhan of BLET Division 198 (Chattanooga, Tenn.) also comes from a railroad family. He follows in the footsteps of his father, Gene, who is a retired Norfolk Southern engineer with 37 years of service. The elder Myhan was Secretary-Treasurer of both the Tennessee State Legislative Board and Division 198, retiring from his post with the Tennessee SLB in 2007. Lee, the younger Myhan, was elected Alternate Secretary-Treasurer at the Tennessee SLB's 2015 quadrennial meeting, and then elected Secretary-Treasurer at the 2019 quadrennial. A Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer, Brother Myhan has held continuous membership in the BLET since January 2004.

The Tennessee State Legislative Board represents approximately 825 members in 11 BLET Divisions from four different railroads (Norfolk Southern, CSX, BNSF and CN-IC). ©©

## RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD CHANGES SET TO TAKE EFFECT

### Railroad Retirement benefits will increase

**M**ost railroad retirement annuities, like social security benefits, will increase in January 2020 due to a rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the third quarter of 2018 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 1.6 percent, which is the percentage of the CPI rise. Tier II benefits will go up by 0.5 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 2020, the average regular railroad retirement employee annuity will increase \$36 a month to \$2,875 and the average of combined benefits for an employee and spouse will increase \$50 a month to \$4,174. For those aged widow(er)s eligible for an increase, the average annuity will increase \$20 a month to \$1,428. 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. Almost 52 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, any cost-of-living increase in that benefit will offset the increased tier I benefit. However, 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 follows a tier I increase of 2.8 percent in January 2019, which had been the largest in 7 years. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will announce Medicare Part B premiums for 2020 later this year, and this information is available at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.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 2020. ©©

### Railroad retiree earnings limits will increase

**R**ailroad retirement annuitants subject to earnings restrictions can earn more in 2020 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 after 1959. For survivor annuitants, full retirement age ranges from age 65 for those born before 1940 to age 67 for those born after 1961.

For those under full retirement age throughout 2020, the exempt earnings amount rises to \$18,240 from \$17,640 in 2019. For beneficiaries attaining full retirement age in 2020, the exempt earnings amount, for the months before the month full retirement age is attained increases to \$48,600 in 2020 from \$46,920 in 2019.

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 2020, 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 2020. The monthly disability earnings limit increases to \$990 in 2020 from \$950 in 2019.

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 unemployment and sickness benefits will increase slightly due to new sequestration rate

**S**tarting October 1, 2019, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) will reduce railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 5.9 percent, down from the current 6.2 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, 2020, the end of the fiscal year. Reductions in future fiscal years, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.

The current daily benefit rate is \$78.00, so the 5.9 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 \$780.00 to \$733.98.

Certain railroad sickness benefits are also subject to regular tier I railroad retirement taxes, resulting in a further reduction of 7.65 percent. Applying the 5.9 percent reduction to these sickness benefits will result in a maximum 2-week total of \$677.83.

Under the Budget Control Act of 2011, and a subsequent sequestration order to implement mandated cuts, railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits are reduced by a set percentage, which is subject to revision at the beginning of each fiscal year.

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, 6.9 percent in October 2016, 6.6 percent in October 2017, and 6.2 percent in October 2018, as required by law.

In fiscal year 2018, the RRB paid about \$12.7 billion in retirement and survivor benefits to about 540,000 beneficiaries, and net unemployment-sickness benefits of about \$92.6 million to approximately 24,000 claimants. ©©





## Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen News Brotherhood Of Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen

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Independence, Ohio 44131

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### Photo of the Month: November 2019

**HONORING OUR MILITARY:** After bringing military equipment to Washington, D.C., to be displayed at the nation's Independence Day celebration, CSX's "Salute to Freedom" train W899 is pictured here returning south to Richmond, Va. The train is passing underneath the overhead signals at North Acca Yard along the Richmond Terminal Subdivision is led by CSX locomotive 911 "The Spirit of our First Responders" and CSX locomotive 1776 "The Spirit of our Armed Forces" on July 5, 2019. **Photo:** by Brother Mike Marra, an Amtrak Auto Train locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 14 in Washington, D.C.



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

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

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

## Advisory Board August and September 2019 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; Arkansas State Legislative Board mtg., Little Rock, Ark.; BNSF-ATSF GCA Local Chairman training, Las Vegas, Nevada; Vacation; Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; UP-E GCA Local Chairman Workshop, Clinton, Iowa; National Association of Railroad Referees mtg., Chicago.

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT:** National Duties include but not limited to: 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.; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio.

**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 oversight duties; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio.

**VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN:** Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; Several mtgs. w/ members of the Senate Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee and their staff regarding H.R. 3896, H.R. 1748, S. 1079, and other safety issues, Washington, D.C.; Arkansas State Legislative Board mtg., Little Rock, Ark.; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Mtg. w/ Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa, Washington, D.C.; Even honoring the Massachusetts Democratic Party, Washington, D.C.; Tennessee State Legislative Board mtg., Nashville, Tenn.; Mtg. w/ Congressman Richard Neal's team (D-MA) and House Ways & Means staff, Washington, D.C.; Various 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) Advisory Forum-Labor Member; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to CN-Wisconsin Central, CN-Illinois Central, CN-Cedar River, Belt Railway of Chicago, Gary Rwy., Illinois Rwy., Indiana Harbor Belt, Metra (Chicago), CP Rail System/US (Soo), Indiana Southern RR, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern, Union RR; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Vacation; Assist GC Burns w/ discipline appeal, IHB, Chicago; NRAB administrative duties, Chicago; Assist LC Donze w/ awards research, Metra, Chicago; Assist GCs Balonek, Evans and Semenek with Section 6 talks, Metra, Chicago; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline appeal, WC; Assist GC Semenek w/ rules case appeal, Metra; Atten Labor Rep. breakfast at Clearing Yard, BRC, Chicago; Assist GC Burns and LC Rudy w/ various rules issues, IHB, Chicago; NRAB 1st Division adoption session, Chicago; NRAB labor member caucus, Chicago; NRAB annual meeting, Section 3 briefing by NMB, Chicago; Metra Section 6 negotiations, Chicago.

**VICE PRESIDENT MIKE TWOMBLY:** Department Head, BLET National Short Line Division and Organizing Department; Designated Representative of the BLET Short Line Department; Assigned to: CN-Grand Trunk Western; Springfield Terminal; Delaware & Hudson; St. Lawrence & Atlantic; New York Susquehanna & Western; Connecticut Southern (G&W); New England Central (G&W); Louisville & Indiana; Huron & Eastern; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Tacoma Municipal Belt Line Railroad; National Short Line Division (Local Division 16, Union Railroad, Belt Railway of Chicago, South Buffalo Railway, Western New York & Pennsylvania and Gary Railway); General office duties, telephone, email,

correspondence communications, etc.; On duty at home office; Louisville & Indiana Railroad Section 6 negotiations, Jeffersonville, Ind. and Clarksville, Ind.; CN-GTW GCA meeting, Novi, Mich.; National Short Line Division logistics mtgs. at ND headquarters, Independence, Ohio; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Delaware & Hudson mediation A-13917 mtgs. at National Mediation Board, Washington, D.C.; Louisville & Indiana contract ratification mtg., Clarksville, Ind.

**VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER:** Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Great Western Railway of Colorado; Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Otter Tail; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Division 134 mtg. w/ GC Cunningham, BNSF, Winslow, Ariz.; Division 232 meeting and picnic w/ GC Psota, MRL, Laurel, Mont.; BNSF-ATSF GCA Local Chairman training w/ GC Cunningham, Las Vegas, Nevada; Contract signing, discipline/claims conference w/ GC Psota, MRL, Missoula, Mont.; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Mtg. w/ GC Posta and Vice GCs, BNSF/MRL, Boulder, Colo.; Mtg. w/ GC Brown, BNSF, Amarillo, Texas; PLB 7928 w/ GC Psota, BNSF/MRL, Chicago; National Association of Railroad Referees mtg., Chicago; Great Western Rwy. contract negotiations, Denver.

**VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS:** Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees (Northern, Eastern and Southern Lines); Chicago, Ft. Wayne & Eastern; Indiana & Ohio (G&W); General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; National Association of Railroad Referees annual conference, Chicago; NS-Northern Lines GCA workshop w/ GC Dehart, Indianapolis, Ind.

**VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS:** National Division Department Head, BLET Education & Training Dept.; Department Head of the BLET Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Department Head, BLET Passenger Dept.; Assigned Amtrak: Keolis Commuter Services; Keolis Rail Services of Virginia, LLC; TransitAmerica Services, Inc.; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro-North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Union Track mtgs. and training; Education & Training issues; BLET Regional Meeting and Convention planning; Assist GC Hill w/ SEPTA issues; LR class, VRE, GC Mark Kenny, Fairfax, Va.; Local Chairman class, Independence, Ohio; Assist GC McCarthy w/ PATH contract issues; WNYP committee issues; SBA 940 assisting NJ Transit GC Brown; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio.

**VICE PRESIDENT MARK L. WALLACE:** Assigned to all Union Pacific GCAs (Eastern District, Northern Region (former C&NW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western RR, Portland Terminal), Central Region, and Southern Region); Utah RR; Longview Portland & Northern and Longview Switching; General office duties, telephone, emails, correspondence, communications, etc.; On duty at home office; Portland & Western mediation, Dallas, Texas; Utah RR negotiations, Salt Lake City, Utah; Mtg. w/ UP and all BLET UP General Chairmen, Kansas City, Mo.; Meetings w/ UP-Southern Region GCA and Local Chairmen, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio, Texas; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Local Chairman training session, UP-Northern Region GCA, Clinton, Iowa; Mtg. w/ UP, Cleveland, Ohio.

**VICE PRESIDENT J. ALAN HOLDCRAFT:** Assigned to all CSX Transportation GCAs (Eastern Lines, Western Lines, Northern Lines (Bombardier Transportation Services), Conrail Shared Assets/CSX Northern District); KCS-Kansas City Southern/Louisiana & Ark. RR.; KCS-Texas Mexican Railway; KCS-Mid South Rail, South Rail, Gateway Western RR, Illinois Midland (G&W); General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Mtg. w/ members of Indiana RR and GC Keith Kerley; Assist GC Billy Evans in negotiations w/ KCS management, re: MidSouth/ Southrail agreement; Assisting CSXT GCS Gary Best, Pat Driscoll, Billy Lyons and Keith Kerley in negotiations w/ CSXT management, Jacksonville, Fla.; General Chairmen's mtg., Independence, Ohio; BLET Advisory Board mtg., Independence, Ohio; Vacation; National Association of Railroad Referees annual conference, Chicago.

## News Briefs

### AAR: RAIL TRAFFIC DOWN IN OCTOBER 2019

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) reported U.S. rail traffic for the week ending November 2, 2019, as well as volumes for October 2019. U.S. railroads originated 1,224,477 carloads in October 2019, down 8.4 percent, or 112,703 carloads, from October 2018. U.S. railroads also originated 1,331,944 containers and trailers in October 2019, down 7.8 percent, or 111,910 units, from the same month last year. Combined U.S. carload and intermodal originations in October 2019 were 2,556,421, down 8.1 percent, or 224,613 carloads and intermodal units from October 2018. For the week ending November 2, total U.S. weekly rail traffic was 510,012 carloads and intermodal units, down 8.8 percent compared with the

same week last year. Total carloads for the week ending November 2 were 245,319 carloads, down 8.9 percent compared with the same week in 2018.

### STB: U.S. CLASS I WORKFORCE DOWN IN OCTOBER 2019

As of mid-October, Class I railroads employed 134,582 people in the United States, down 1.67 percent from mid-September's level and down 9.51 percent from October 2018's count, according to Surface Transportation Board (STB) data. There were month-to-month decreases in the following job categories: transportation employees (train and engine), down 3.07 percent to 55,361 employees; maintenance of equipment and stores, down 1.4 percent to 23,780; maintenance of way and structures, down 0.49 percent to 31,330; and transpor-

tation (other than train and engine), down 0.31 percent to 5,457. On a year-over-year basis, the number of transportation employees (train and engine) was down 11.82 percent.

### NORFOLK SOUTHERN FURLOUGHS WORKERS IN CHATTANOOGA AND ALTOONA

Norfolk Southern furloughed 58 workers on November 5 at its DeButts yard in Chattanooga, Tenn. The railroad said the move was part of its company-wide cutback in diesel shop operations in response to a drop in demand for diesel engine use in the current market. The same day, NS also furloughed 95 workers from its Juniata Locomotive Shop in Altoona, Pa. The Altoona furloughs came on the heels of a layoff of about 100 workers on September 3. ☺☺