March 6 that requested, among received. COVID-19 illnesses have been confirmed or suspected and over-the-road personnel, workers has not been issued by of the coronavirus among rail ders predicted increases in vol- bers, as well as to seamlessly han- railroads maintain sufficient of their duties, and that Class I sure of their employees to the mitigate against the spread of are essential to the health, safe- and security of the nation. Therefore, it is necessary that the railroads take immediate and appropriate precautions to mitigate against the spread of the virus amongst their work- forces, to minimize the expo- sure of their employees to the virus during the performance of their duties, and that Class I railroads maintain sufficient staffing levels to compensate for reduced headcounts caused by sick employees and family mem- bers, as well as to seamlessly han- dle predicted increases in vol- ume once the virus begins to subside,” SMART-TD President Jeremy R. Ferguson and BLET President Dennis R. Pierce wrote in their petition.

Although emergency relief procedures were activated by FRA Administrator Ron Batory on March 13, many rail carriers have been slow to adopt, or in some cases have neglected to adopt, Centers for Disease Con- trol and Prevention (CDC) mea- sures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. An action plan to help address the potential spread of the coronavirus among rail workers has not been issued by FRA and reports that Class I employees, both administrative and over-the-road personnel, have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 illnesses have been received.

The emergency request from their presidents sent on March 6 that requested, among other emergency remedial measures, thorough sanitation efforts in railroad facilities and on locomotives to prevent the infection of workers. The unions’ request includes that freight railroads adhere to CDC guidelines in the follow- ing areas: 

- **Locomotive sanitation**
- **Sanitation of common ar- eas used by employees**
- **Monitoring of employee temperatures**
- **Sanitation of crew trans- portation vehicles**

The unions also seek that accommodations for meals, in- cluding long waits for food, be made in the documentation of hours of service reports for away-from-terminal personnel, including an additional 30 min- utes to report in response to a call to work.

Procedures on how to han- dle employees who develop symptoms of the coronavirus requested by the unions re- flect CDC guidelines, which include isolation, personal protective equipment, trans- port, and self-quarantine. Several components of the unions’ passenger rail EO request mirror those requested in their joint freight petition, which includes: locomotive sanitation, common room sanitation, em- ployee temperature observation protocols, away-from-home ter- minal procedures, crew trans- portation sanitation, what to do if an employee develops symp- toms, and furlough recall pro- cedures. The unions’ petition for a passenger EO also covers: coach/passenger car sanitation standards, sleeper cars, and di- rectives in case a passenger de- velops symptoms.

Finally, the presidents wrote, “25% of furloughed rail personnel should immediately be re- called to service to deal with anticipated shortages and staffing needs, in accordance with President Trump’s invocation of the Defense Production Act. “To standardize and define the best protocols across the industry for the mitigation of the spread of the virus and the protection of employees, these safety precautions need to be immediately ordered by FRA,” Presidents Ferguson and Pierce stated.

**RAILROAD WORKERS TO BENEFIT FROM CORONAVIRUS STIMULUS PACKAGE**

The needs of railroad workers and their families — including improvements to railroad benefits — are included in the new coronavirus stimulus package, which was signed into law on March 27. In March 26, the U.S. Senate unanimously ratified H.R. 748, a $2 trillion stimulus package known as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the measure by a voice vote on March 27, and President Trump signed the bill into law later that same day.

The legislation benefits out-of-work rail- roaders by waiving the 7-day waiting period for benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUA) and providing $50 million to cover the costs of providing these additional benefits. It increases RUA unem- ployment benefits through an additional $15,000 weekly benefit, and provides $255 million to cover the costs of providing these additional benefits through July 31, 2020.

The legislation also allows the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to access approximately $130 million of remaining American Recovery and Reinforcement Act funds to provide extended benefits through December 31, 2020, and supplies RRB with $5 million to pay for ad- ditional administrative costs.

The measure also protects Amtrak work- ers by providing $1.02 billion in funding for the National Railroad Passenger Corp., which would be split between the Northeast Corri- dore (549 million) and National Network (526 million). The bill also provides $29.4 bil- lion in grants for various transit agencies throughout the nation.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, who also serves as President of the Teamsters Railroad Conference, sent a letter to U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), ranking member of the Senate Committee on Finance, on March 24 seeking special consideration to railroad workers. While many of his requests were included in the stimulus package, the bill does not remove the unemployment require- ments set forth in the Budget Control Act of 2011, which are applicable to RUA benefits, causing an artificial reduction in unemploy- ment benefits.

“I thank members of Congress and the White House for working together across party lines to help all Americans, especially railroad workers, during the current coro- navirus pandemic,” President Pierce said. “While I am disappointed that they did not remove the unemployment requirement, we will continue to lobby Congress to overturn this most unjust requirement.”

**BLET MOVES TO PROTECT MEMBERS FROM SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS**

**RAILWAY WORKERS TO ADDRESS CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

The BLET also urged the railroad industry to take steps to protect BLET members, their co-workers and the general pub- lic from the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce voiced the Union’s concerns in a March 5 letter to Brendan Branon, Chairman of the National Rail- way Labor Conference, Chuck Baker, President of the Ameri- can Short Line and Regional RAILROAD
Our common goal is to insist that the nation’s railroads provide a safe workplace so that all hard-working railroad employees can do their part to get America through this national emergency. Unfortunately, there are more reports of outright failures to provide a safe and sanitized workplace than there are reports of that being accomplished.

First, the nation’s rail carriers must work harder to get the sick employees out of the workplace so that those employees can start the healing process without the threat of job loss hanging over their heads. In the way of that shared goal are two decades of attendance policies, now “institutionalized” into the railroads’ management style. It is clear that all Americans, and American corporations, must evolve to survive the pandemic. But it has also become clear that many railroads’ institutional distrust of their employees, as evidenced in draconian attendance policies, is in the way of getting the sick employees away from the workplace so that the healthy employees can have some assurance that the workplace will not be where they get ill. It appears that many of the nation’s freight carriers have spent so much time chasing after the small number of employees who don’t work enough by arbitrary carrier standards that they have forgotten how to fairly treat the vast majority of their employees who are just here to do their jobs. The nation is counting on this latter group, but clinging to policies that prevent sick employees from taking time away from work for fear of termination or financial harm is preventing what should a shared goal of providing a safe and healthy workplace for the healthy employees to do their jobs.

Second, the nation’s rail carriers must work harder to clean the workplace once the sick employees have been given the time off that they need, so that the nation’s hard-working “essential” engineers and trainmen can come to work without fear of infection. That includes cleaning all shared on-duty stations, but more importantly, includes providing locomotive cabs, crew hauling vans, and bathrooms that have been cleaned and sanitized. There is much work to do here, and our General Chairmen are directly forwarding all correspondence to backfill for those sick employees out of the workplace, they must publicly state to their employees that all illness-related absences will be excused during this national emergency.

Our common goal is to insist that the nation’s railroads provide a safe workplace so that all hard-working railroad employees can do their part to get America through this national emergency. Unfortunately, there are more reports of outright failures to provide a safe and sanitized workplace than there are reports of that being accomplished.
The Year 2020 Brings Big Responsibility for Voters

By James P. Hoffa

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

B oth January 8-9, 2020. During the 2020 quadrennial meeting in Bismarck, N.D., Brother Sean M. Forschen was elected by acclamation to his first term as Chairman of the BLET’s North Dakota State Legislative Board during its quadrennial meeting in Bismarck, N.D., January 8-9, 2020. Forschen is a BNSF locomotive engineer and Legislative Representative of BLET Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.). He joined the BLET in 2001, and in 2006 and being deployed to Iraq in 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His father fought in Vietnam and his grandfather fought in World War II. He served two terms as Chairman, winning elections in 2012 and 2016. BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman represented the National Division at the meeting. "I am proud to congratulate Sean Forschen and all officers of the North Dakota State Legislative Board, and I thank them for their service to the Brotherhood.

Now is not a time to be overlooking the labor movement. Now is not a time to be overlooking the labor movement. Unions today are enjoying stronger support than they have in almost 50 years. That’s how the Teamsters were finally able to get Congress to end the regressive “Cadillac Tax” on high-quality health plans. Unions today are enjoying stronger support than they have in almost 50 years. That’s how the Teamsters were finally able to get Congress to end the regressive “Cadillac Tax” on high-quality health plans.

Forschen elected Chairman of North Dakota State Legislative Board

Officer's names and guests attending the BLET North Dakota State Legislative Board’s quadrennial meeting in Bismarck, N.D., January 8-9, 2020. From left: D.B. Kenner, Montana State Legislative Board Chairman; John Tolman, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative; Trustee Chad D. Haugtvedt, Division 695 (Minot, N.D.); 1st Vice Chairman and Trustee Charlie Weick, Division 160 (Harvey, N.D.); Trustee Charlie Weick, Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.); Secretary-Treasurer Darin L. Hamre, Division 671 (Enderlin, N.D.); Trustee Terry L. Paul, Division 69 (Grand Forks, N.D.); and Trustee Charlie Weick, Division 695 (Minot, N.D.).

BLET National Division President Dennis R. Pierce said, “I also thank Brother Charlie Weick for the dedication and leadership he displayed during his tenure as Chairman, and wish him all the best as he nears retirement in the next few years.”

Additional BLET members in attendance included: D.B. Kenner, Montana State Legislative Board Chairman, and Mike Muscha, former North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman. Brother Muscha’s wife, Naomi Muscha, was in attendance representing the BLET Auxiliary.

Guest speakers included: Andrew Bushaw, Field Director of the North Dakota AFL-CIO; Ross Keys, Representative from the Alliance For A Better North Dakota; State Senator Erin Oban (D-35), Minority Caucus Leader, and State Representative Josh Boschee (D-44), the North Dakota House Minority Leader.

The Board handled regular business and discussed a variety of topics, including the two-person crew bill, which is of great importance to the membership and the general public of North Dakota due to the vast number of oil trains that traverse the state via BNSF and CP Rail.

Brother Forschen is a second generation locomotive engineer. His father, Mike Forschen, worked for the CP Rail from 1978-2011 and is a retired member of BLET Division 160. Brother Forschen and his wife, Shari, have two children: Mariah, 21, and Noah, 15. He is a third generation combat veteran, having served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1998 to 2006 and being deployed to Iraq in 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His father fought in Vietnam and his grandfather fought in World War II. The North Dakota State Legislative Board represents more than 530 active and retired members from five different BLET Divisions in North Dakota.

Merica has begun a very important year at the threshold of its existence. Over the next several months, voters will decide who they want to lead this country and what they want its future to look like. The process will be tumultuous. But it is a critical decision that will have long-lasting implications for all who call this great nation home.

The Teamsters are taking their role in helping to shape this country’s path forward seriously. It’s why the union rolled out a plan to get involved early in the 2020 election cycle seven months ago and why it’s had the 2020 election cycle seven months, voters will decide who they want to lead this country and what they want its future to look like. The process will be tumultuous. But it is a critical decision that will have long-lasting implications for all who call this great nation home.

And fall to get the candidates on the record on issues that matter most to working Americans. But it hasn’t stopped there. Last December in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Teamsters hosted a presidential forum. There, several leading contenders shared their views with more than 700 Teamster members and retirees as well as a global audience of millions online about pension reform, expanding collective bargaining rights and other top issues that are important for hardworking Americans.

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Now is not a time to be overlooking the labor movement. Unions today are enjoying stronger support than they have in almost 50 years. That’s how the Teamsters were finally able to get Congress to end the regressive “Cadillac Tax” on high-quality health plans.
Sometimes it takes something major to happen to people to sit up and take notice. A wake-up call, if you will.

From the standpoint of our national contract negotiations, our union got another wake-up call even before our first session that is scheduled for the last week in February.

On February 11th, a U.S. district judge, who was appointed by President Donald Trump last year, ruled against our union in a lawsuit over crew-consist moratoriums. We’re now appealing that decision. The court ignored the Railway Labor Act strictures with regard to the moratorium provisions which have been upheld for decades. We are being pushed forward on these issues at a moment’s notice to respond when things go wrong. We need to carry this effort on in crew consist.

BLET President Pierce recently stated in a message to his union:

“...I share this information to make it clear to BLET’s membership that our proof Union stands with our Brothers and Sisters in SMART’s Transportation Division in the fight to preserve two-person crews,” Pierce wrote. “Be it on the regulatory front, the legislative front, in court or at the bargaining table, BLET is working with SMART to protect the interests of all operating employees.”

Last President of the SMART-TD wanted to make it clear to our union that we stand united with the BLET.

Any attempt to drive a wedge between our organizations in order to get officers and members alike to disregard the goal at hand — preserving two on the operating crew — plays into the carriers’ hands. It gets them closer to what they want: Fewer workers, more money in their pockets, a less-safe (cheaper) work environment and weaknesses of all of rail labor. Two unions with members and with leadership going in opposite directions would make it easier for carriers to accomplish their goal of eradicating jobs in favor of their idea of “innovation.”

I also agree with President Pierce when he stated:

“The bottom line is this: In order to preserve two-person crews, each Union must protect and preserve its member of those crews. With only a few exceptions, BLET cannot bargain nationally for Conductors. The same is true in reverse; with only a few exceptions, SMART-TD cannot bargain nationally for Engineers.”

This is not the time for anyone to give in to anxiety or paranoia or “what-if” scenarios. When all SMART-TD members put our names on the dotted line to pledge for membership to this organization, we pledged to fight for each other in solidarity. When elected president of SMART-TD last August, I took an oath to act in solidarity for the best interest for the organization and for all whom we represent. When I signed our organization up as a member of the 10-union Coordinated Bargaining Coalition, I pledged to bargain in solidarity with those other rail labor organizations in national talks.

All of us need to be focused on the situation that lies ahead and the decisions to be made for the future of rail labor and the crews who operate freight trains. We need to reinforce our lines of defense and prepare to go on the offense by reaching out to the public and to the media. Instead of wondering “what the union is doing for us?” it’s time to get to the local union meetings and get involved. It’s time for the spouses to join the SMART-TD Auxiliary and get involved. It’s time to up your SMART-TD PAC contributions, then get with your state and U.S. legislators, so they hear your voice this election year. It’s time to get involved in the SMART Army. It’s time to stand strong!

Brothers and sisters, BLET President Pierce and I are united. We will work in solidarity, together, to keep two on the crew as we bargain. We will work together to keep you informed. We know this issue is too important to our memberships and for the public’s and our safety not to.

In solidarity,

Jeremy Ferguson
President, Transportation Division

BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

SMART-TD PRESIDENT:
Facing crew challenges, SMART-TD and BLET will act in solidarity

On February 20, 2020. Ferguson was published

BLET EDITOR’S NOTE:

The following statement by SMART-TD President Jeremy Ferguson was published on October 20, 2020.

Editor’s note:

United, we bargain. Divided, we beg.

Brothers and sisters, BLET President Pierce and I are united. We will work in solidarity, together, to keep two on the crew as we bargain. We are moving forward, not backward.

Jeremy Ferguson
President, Transportation Division

The BLET first organized the GWR property in 2005. Its members are part of Division 256 in Denver, and they are represented by the BNSF (former ATSF) General Committee of Adjustment for purposes of contract negotiations and enforcement. GWR is an OmniTRAX property headquartered in Denver, Colo. The short line operates over 80 miles of track throughout Colorado and interchanges with the BNSF Railway and Union Pacific.

“We still have a lot of work to do on the GWR, but this contract made significant strides in bringing up the pay rates on this property,” General Chairman Cunningham said. “This should help with the employees retention rates, which have plagued the carrier in recent years.”

BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

UNITED, WE BARGAIN.
DIVIDED, WE BEG.

BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

You are going to hear speculation. You are going to have people beating their chests and criticizing decisions made years ago by prior leaders for putting us in what could be a critical — may be the most critical — moment in rail labor’s history with the in-cab role of the conductor in the balance. Ignore all of that noise. We are moving forward, not backward.

This is not the time for anyone to give in to anxiety or paranoia or “what-if” scenarios. When all SMART-TD members put our names on the dotted line to pledge for membership to this organization, we pledged to fight for each other in solidarity.

When elected president of the Transportation Division last August, I took an oath to act in solidarity for the best interest for the organization and for all whom we represent. When I signed our organization up as a member of the 10-union Coordinated Bargaining Coalition, I pledged to bargain in solidarity with those other rail labor organizations in national talks.

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In solidarity,

Jeremy Ferguson
President, Transportation Division
Two-person crew bill becomes law in Washington State

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

After more than seven years of hard work by the BLET’s Washington State Legislative Board and their counterparts within the SMART-TD Transportation Division, a two-person crew bill was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on March 27, 2020.

According to BLET Washington State Legislative Board Chairman Shahrain C. Allen, HB 1841 — Establishing Minimum Crews on Certain Trains — passed out of the Washington State House on a Concurrence Vote (64 yeas-33 nays) on March 10, 2020. It was then signed by Madame Speaker Laurie Jinkins on March 11, 2020, for its finalization in the Senate. In its final review in the Senate, the additional signature of Lt. Governor / President Cyrus Habib was added on March 12, 2020.

It was a team effort and I want to thank all who have supported our efforts over the last seven years,” Brother Allen said. “I especially want to thank our members who reached out to their legislators in Washington State. Our Organization’s State Legislative Boards, General Committee, mobilization teams and the guidance from the BLET National leadership helped to see us through to this day. With perseverance anything can and will be done.”

As written, the bill allows the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to “order railroad carriers to increase the number of railroad employees in areas of increased risk to the public, passengers, railroad employees, or the environment, or on specific trains, routes, or to switch assignments on their road with additional numbers of crewmembers, and may direct the placement of additional crew members necessary to protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public, passengers, or railroad employees, to prevent harm to the environment or to address specific safety or security hazards.”

It has been a long journey, but Brother Allen said he and the members of his Board became more determined to fight for passage of the legislation each time the state legislature failed to act over the past seven years.

“Each year the stakes got higher,” he said. “It became imperative to hold the carriers accountable as they relentlessly turned a blind eye to safety. As we experienced year after year, their greed for continued growth and profit was debatable to the point of compromising safety. It became abundantly clear that we had to make all aware of the railroad’s disregard for safe train operations and the risks involved.”

Brother Allen said great effort was spent over the last seven years building a coalition to support the two-person crew bill, which included first responders, organized labor, environmentalists, and the general public. In meeting with state legislators, Brother Allen would explain how train crews work in concert with one another, with valuable technologies, to anticipate problems and to prevent derailments from happening.

“Essentially, trains run through the communities in direct contact with the public. Every effort must be made to ensure these communities are not negatively impacted by the increased length of trains — up to two miles or more in length — as we operate through their backyards. Increased train length and over-reliance on technology senselessly pushes the limits of safety, which endangers everyone and puts our environment at risk. With additional eyes and personnel available, the risk is reduced. The implementation of technology alone is not the final answer or the ‘silver bullet’ fix to safety that railroad lobbyists would have everyone believe. It is the trained professionals in the cab — in concert with technology — who oversee and safely guard railroad operating practices. It is up to locomotive engineers and conductors to readily identify and correct problems — before they occur.”

To counter Rail Labor’s efforts, the railroad lobbyists did everything in their power to confuse legislators and stifle rail labor’s forward progress. But the BLET and SMART-TD stayed the course to educate their legislators about railroad safety.

“For the railroad corporate lobbyists, it was all about delay...to kick the can further down the road for another year, spending mass amounts of capital to game the legislative process,” he said. “Despite this fact, the game-changer was the joint actions performed daily, when educating our decision makers in elected offices, about the duties performed by train crew personnel. The legislators are voted into office by the people, for the people, and they make decisions on behalf of the people. We made sure their moral compasses were pointed in the correct direction.

And in a great bipartisan effort, our bill became law, which is scheduled to take effect on June 11, 2020.”

Washington becomes the most recent state to enact a two-person crew bill. In 2019, state governors in Illinois, Nevada and Colorado signed two-person crew bills in an effort to make train operations in their states as safe as possible.

“I wanted to thank Brother Shahrain C. Allen, the members of the Washington State Legislative Board, and all of our Brothers and Sisters throughout the great state of Washington for their collective efforts in securing passage of this much-needed safety legislation,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. “It is my hope that additional states will follow in their footsteps.”

BLET Response to Coronavirus

Continued from page 1

Railroad Association, and Paul Skoutelny, President of the Public Transportation Association.

In order to effectuate this recommendation, all railroads should immediately suspend all non-collaboratively bargained attendance policies as they relate to all illness-related time away from work, (in place, pending or in dispute) at least until the COVID-19 outbreak is under control,” President Pierce wrote. “This step will go far in providing separation between sick individuals and those who are healthy.”

Second, the railroads should immediately address workplace sanitation and provide crewmembers with hand sanitizer and high quality disinfecting wipes.

“We locomotives are serviced, all interior cab surfaces including the interior of the locomotive nose, bathroom, and door handles and window latches should be cleansed with a 60%-90% isopropyl alcohol-based surface sanitizer; exterior door handles, grab irons, railings and hand brakes also should be so cleansed,” President Pierce wrote. “Similarly, shared computer workstations and crew rooms should be routinely sanitized to prevent the ‘community spread’ of the virus. Further, crewmembers should be supplied with an adequate combination of (i) hand sanitizer that contains 60%-90% isopropyl alcohol; (ii) wipes containing at least 4% Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CG) and .5% Benzethonium Chloride (BZC), and/or (iii) wipes containing 60%-90% isopropyl alcohol.”

Pierce noted that wipes currently provided by some railroads typically contain only 0.1% CG and 0.08% BZC, which are far below the levels required to kill viruses.

Teamster Actions

The Teamsters are demanding that federal, state and local governments, as well as employers, listen to front-line workers in every industry about the actions needed to keep working people safe on the job and to protect our communities. Teamster members have greater job protections than nonunion workers. However, every worker must be provided basic economic security and protections during this crisis.

The Teamsters are active fighting to ensure that:

• Everyone has access to free COVID-19 testing;
• Every worker is provided some form of paid sick leave;
• Workers are not punished for calling in sick;
• Frontline workers who treat potentially infected populations be provided with the appropriate protective equipment;
• Workers understand that they are entitled to worker compensation benefits if they are infected as a result of employment;
• Those receiving unemployment benefits while affected by COVID-19 are exempt from searching for work during that time.

The Teamsters have established an information resource center at www.teamster.org/covid-19 for members who are seeking additional information.

Additional Information

The ongoing situation is fluid, and the BLET remains steadfast in its pursuit of a safe work environment for its members. The best way to stay up-to-date on the latest developments is through the BLET National Division website (www.bletc-ty.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/ BLETNational).
Pfeifer reelected Chairman of Nebraska State Legislative Board

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) President Dennis R. Pierce and SMART Transportation Division President Jeremy R. Ferguson sought clarification from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) after the agency granted 60-day emergency waiver requests to railroad crews in March 2020, ostensibly to maintain their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As you are already aware, SMART Transportation Division, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and other rail labor organizations take strong exception to certain aspects of FRA’s actions, which include the agency’s unconditional approval of such requests,” the presidents wrote in a letter to Administrator Ronald L. Baird, expressing concern about the risks DJs face during the coronavirus. "Petitioners assert that a reduction in the number of available employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic will affect railroads’ ability to keep freight trains carrying critical goods and materials necessary for the country’s welfare operating during this emergency, and that compliance with all Federal railroad safety regulations, with the expected workforce shortage, would significantly hinder railroads’ ability to operate," the FRA said in its response granting the waivers. But thanks in large measure to the railroads’ adoption of Precision Scheduling (PRS) practices, the total employee headcount for Class I freight carriers — including administration, management, maintenance and transportation crew, as reported by the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB), has been used by nearly 25,000 people since September 2016, and transportation crew headcounts are down over 18% since November 2019.

Union Leaders Demand Clarification from FRA on Waivers

Among the most dangerous aspects of this set of waivers is carriers’ ability to temporarily circumvent established federally mandated requirements for:

- Transfer test requirements are relaxed.
- Track inspection.
- The movement of defective equipment.
- Transfer test requirements are reduced.
- The ability to combine two operational tests and inspections.
- Restrictions on utility employees.
- The four-hour off-air time is extended.
- The ability to temporarily circumvent established federally mandated requirements for:
  - Territorial qualifications.
  - Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections.
  - Transfer test requirements are reduced.
  - The ability to combine two operational tests and inspections.
  - Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections.
  - The ability to temporarily circumvent established federally mandated requirements for:
  - Territorial qualifications.
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  - Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections.
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  - Territorial qualifications.
  - Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections.
  - The ability to temporarily circumvent established federally mandated requirements for:
  - Territorial qualifications.
  - Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections.

Verbal quick-fixes
- Lengthened time intervals for re-quired locomotive maintenance and inspections.
- The movement of defective equip-ment to the “nearest available” repair location.
- Only 95% of operable trains for carriers leaving their initial terminal.
- Trains can travel 1,200 miles with-out an intermediate Class IA brake in-spection.
- Extended haul trains can travel 2,000 miles without an intermediate Class IA brake test.
- The four-hour off-air time is extend-ed to 24 hours, and to 48 hours with FRA permission.
- Transfer test requirements are re-laxed.
- The ability to combine two operat-ing trains without additional inspections other than a Class II brake test.
- Relaxation of yard air source test-ing and calibration requirements, and of requirements for single car air brake tests.
- Relaxation of required testing and calibration of teleme-try equipment.

UNION LEADERS DEMAND CLARIFICATION FROM FRA ON WAIVERS

Brother Travis Kuenning (left), Division 388, accepts an award on behalf of Division 388 from President Pierce (right) for the biggest contribution to the Nebraska BLET PAC Fund in 2019.
POLICE OFFICER SUSPECTS INTERNAL COVERUP BY CP RAIL IN FATAL 2019 B.C. MOUNTAIN CRASH

A police officer probing the death of three Canadian Pacific Railway crewmen killed in a runaway train crash in B.C. in February 2019 alleges he was denied access to key evidence and suspects a “coverup” by the railway. Mark Tataryn was one of three officers with CP Police Service assigned to investigate the derailment of CP Train 301. Tataryn told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), saying his superiors prevented him from obtaining key witness accounts. “I would say it was some influence to sway the aspect of the investigation in some capacity.” Tataryn said that following the crash, he was instructed by supervisors to keep the investigation narrowly focused on the crew. “I believe that they were looking out for the better interests of the corporation,” he said. “I was embarrassed to be a part of this investigation.”

The Fifth Estate, Canada’s premier investigative documentary program, conducted a seven-month investigation into the accident, talking with witnesses, railroad workers, families and sources within police and government, and uncovered a string of failures in the Train 301 tragedy. The result of their investigations were explored in a documentary titled “Runaway Train,” which aired on January 26, 2020.

Locomotive engineer Andrew (Doc) Dockrell, conductor Dylan Paradis and trainee Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer suffered fatal injuries when their westbound freight train left the tracks about 1 a.m. just east of Field, B.C., some 124 miles west of Calgary on February 4, 2019. The train, which had three locomotives and 112 cars, left the tracks while crossing a bridge over the Kicking Horse River, plunging some 197 feet to the icy waters below. (From the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation)

TWO RAILROAD WORKERS RESCUE 5-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO WANDERED AWAY FROM HOME IN ST. PAUL

A two-person train crew working in St. Paul, Minnesota, rescued a 5-year-old little girl who had wandered away from home in early February. It was an instance where having two people in the cab of the locomotive likely saved a life. Angie Knutson, a member of the Rail Division 369 (Minneapolis, Minn.), is always alert and aware of her surroundings while on duty as a locomotive engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad. Around midnight on Saturday, February 1, she noticed something that didn’t look quite right as her train passed through east St. Paul. “Is that a little kid?” she asked her conductor, Jared Campbell. A split second later they both exclaimed, “It’s a little girl!”

Sister Knutson called first responders. While the rail industry pushes to reduce the number of crew members in its pursuit of the all mighty dollar, this story emphasizes Rail Labor’s point that technology can never replace the eyes and ears of professional locomotive engineers and conductors working together as a team inside the locomotive cab. The life of a 5-year-old little girl was likely saved that night, thanks to Angie Knutson and Jared Campbell.

(From Minneapolis television station KMSP)

CLASS IS EMPLOYED FEWER WORKERS IN JANUARY 2020

For the first eight weeks of 2020, U.S. railroads reported cumulative volumes of 1,858,165 carloads, down 6.5 percent from the same point last year; and 1,999,804 intermodal units, down 6.2 percent from last year. Total U.S. traffic for the first eight weeks of 2020 was 3,857,969 carloads and intermodal units, a decrease of 6.4 percent compared to last year.

(From the Association of American Railroads)
President Pierce Message

Continued from page 1

Now is the time to quib-ble over which illness it is that made an employee sick, espe-
cially when even getting a CO-
VID-19 test is virtually im-
possible in many parts of the

country. “Sick is sick,” and un-
til the nation’s rail carriers fairly treat their sick employ-

ees, they will continue to come to

work, by coercion, elimi-
nating all hope that the healthy employees are being provided
with a virus-free railroad. Railroads must also recon-
sider their refusals to provide additional paid leave to sick employees so that they can af-

ford to leave the workplace when they are ill. Other trans-

portation companies like J.B. Hunt, whose containers are routinely hauled by the nation’s

railroads, have adopted addi-
tional paid leave policies for

that very reason. Target, one of

country’s largest retailers who

where the same products that Railroads haul are sold to the pu-

blic — has also adopted ad-

ditional paid leave policies for

its sick employees. Invest in

your employees; get the sick

crew members to sit in their

away from terminals in qua-

iﬁable hotels with no food

available for way longer than their needed legal rest.

are so deplorable in some cases that we are ap-

proaching the point of need-

and appealing for a balance

between the necessities of life. Their

are on the

front lines, day in and day

out, to keep America stocked with the

needs of our great nation. The

is a difﬁcult time, but I

have never been more proud of

our carriering and their unions

stand ready to do their part in

that effort; it’s time for the rail-

roads to step up to the plate and

do their part.

The nation’s rail carriers must take the actions noted here im-

mediately if they expect to meet the needs of our great nation with

no tools to clean that cab, is

completely irresponsible. Requiring 4 or more crew

members to share transportation in a minivan is equally

irresponsible, as is forcing crew members to sit in their

vehicle cabs that could have

been occupied for 12 hours by

someone ill with COVID-19, with

no tools to clean that cab.

The nation’s rail carriers must take the actions noted here im-

mediately if they expect to meet the needs of our great nation with

no tools to clean that cab. The hard-working operating crew

members and their unions stand ready to do their part in that

effort; it’s time for the rail-

roads to step up to the plate and

do their part.

This is a difﬁcult time, but I

have never been more proud of our membership and our

Union. Our members are on the

front lines, day in and day

out, to keep America stocked with the

needs of our great nation. Their

have contributed to their

environmental health and safety.

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