

# *LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN* **Journal**

VOLUME 123 | No. 1 | SPRING 2019

WWW.BLE-T.ORG

## **Railroad retirement**

*An 84-year success story*

### **Heroes Among Us**

New York & Atlantic  
train crew honored

### **Happy Trails**

BLET honors outgoing  
Vice Presidents

### **Also inside:**

**Last Runs**

**BLET Auxiliary Update**

**Legislative &  
Regulatory Update**

**Brotherhood News**



Published by the BLET, a division of the Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters





## *BLET President's Message*

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

# Investing in the BLET's future

**T**he mission of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is to promote and protect the rights, interests, and safety of its members through solidarity, aggressive representation, and education. To help fulfill our educational mission, the Delegates to the BLET's Second National Convention in 2010 voted overwhelmingly to provide a dedicated funding stream for our Education and Training Department. Part of their intent was to increase the frequency and availability of the valuable training classes offered to BLET officers and the general membership. As your National President, and speaking on behalf of the Advisory Board, I can tell you that improved education remains our goal, too. The more training we can provide, the better and stronger our Brotherhood will be.

Over the past nine years that dedicated funding stream has been wisely invested. First, in the summer in 2015, we opened a state-of-the-art Education and Training Center at our former headquarters in downtown Cleveland, which was completed in part with a grant from the Teamsters Rail Conference. The original Training Center was much more than a brick



President Pierce with members who participated in a recent Secretary-Treasurer training class at BLET headquarters in Independence, Ohio, on March 19, 2019.

and mortar classroom. We were able to take virtually all of the equipment and technology we invested in to our new National Division headquarters in Independence, Ohio, in early 2016.

We also were able to broaden our technological capabilities when we relocated to our new headquarters building. Today's Training Center in Independence features 21st Century equipment and communications technology in a modern, user-friendly collaborative environment. The classroom environment is fully interactive with unrestricted collaboration capabilities, allowing for the inclusion of offsite instructors and officers using video and Internet-based

computer technologies.

While hundreds of BLET officers and members have been able to take advantage of the valuable educational opportunities offered by the National Division since 2010, it became apparent that we needed to do even more. The time constraints placed on the lives of locomotive engineers and trainmen make it difficult for them to break away from the railroad and their families and travel to attend one of our training classes. We decided that if members could not attend one of our training sessions, then we needed to figure out a way to make those sessions more readily available for our members.

Technology has helped us solve this dilemma.

Over the past five years, we have been developing and testing technology that would allow members to participate in our workshops via the Internet. I am proud to say that — in another significant milestone — the National Division launched its initial catalogue of online video training courses for Secretary-Treasurers and Local Chairmen on February 6, 2019. Online training allows these officers to complete informative, repeatable, and cost-effective training from the convenience of their own homes, and on a schedule that meets their personal needs.

The training is available in secure online forums using

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## HAPPY TRAILS

BLET National Division hosts dinner reception for retiring VP's Gil Gore and Cole Davis.



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# Journal

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## Teamsters Women's Conference

**A** large contingent of BLET and BMWED members proudly represented the Teamsters Rail Conference at the annual Teamsters Women's Conference in Orlando during September of 2018. The three-day conference was filled with opportunities to learn through various educational workshops, panels and social activities. Speakers included Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa, Teamster General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, Teamster Local 700 President Director of the Women's Conference Becky Strzechowski, and several others.

Anita Ferguson of BLET Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio) was one of five BLET representatives at the Women's Conference. In a thank you note to National President Dennis R. Pierce, she wrote: "Thank you for allowing me to attend the 2018 Women's Conference in Orlando. I was blown away by the amount of people who were there from all over the country, as well as some from other parts of the world! The women I had the pleasure of meeting came from so many different backgrounds and work in so many different fields. In many cases I had no idea!

"There were many different speakers who were so inspiring to me. It made me



**BLET attendees at the 2018 Women's Conference, from left:** Anita Ferguson, Secretary-Treasurer, Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio); Margo Storsteen, Division 57 (Boston, Mass.); Erin Schmelzer, Local Chairman, Division 3 (Cleveland, Ohio); Jacqueline Pettyjohn, Division 71 (Philadelphia, Pa.); and Donna Domingo, Legislative Representative, Division 794 (Elko, Nevada).

wish I could begin my career over! While I may not be able to do that, it did inspire me to talk with my daughter, granddaughters and others to shoot for the stars! Nothing is unattainable and they don't have to settle for second best.

"I did take away so much from the

classes that were offered. The one thing that stands out the most is that if it weren't for the Teamsters, there would still be thousands of women and men alike, struggling to get by. This is 2018 and that shouldn't be happening. Thank you again for this rare opportunity!"





# BLET pride on display at Ohio Labor Day events

**T**he BLET's Ohio State Legislative Board was active and energized for Labor Day 2018. The Board participated in organized events throughout the state, including Cleveland, Toledo and the state capital of Columbus.

In Cleveland, State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Price spread the word

about the BLET and the union's efforts in support of two-person train crews and rail safety in general. Throughout the day in Cleveland, Chairman Price and his crew welcomed numerous labor-friendly politicians and candidates for office. Brother Price is a member of BLET Division 607 in Cleveland.

He received support from other BLET

officers, including: Ohio State Legislative Board 2nd Vice Chairman Kevin McGinty, a member of Division 3 (Cleveland, Ohio); and Patrick M. Redmond, Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer of Division 607 (Cleveland). Brother Price's daughter Cami was also in attendance to help greet visitors at the Board's display booth.



**From left:** Kevin McGinty, Cami Price, Michelle Sheehan (candidate for judge), and Tim Price.



**From left:** Kevin McGinty, the Honorable Francine B. Goldberg, a judge in Cuyahoga County's Domestic Relations Court, and Tim Price.



A group of "Team Clyde" members, who are wearing green and supporting candidate Kathleen Clyde in her bid for election as Ohio's Secretary of State, stopped by the BLET booth. Pat Redmond of Division 607 is at the far left in the back row (black hat and t-shirt). Additional BLET members in the back row (from left, in gray t-shirts) are Lou Shuster, Division 607, Kevin McGinty, Division 3, and Tim Price, Ohio State Legislative Board. At far right, back row, is Tim Piatt, candidate for the Ohio House of Representatives, 36th District.



**From left:** Kevin McGinty, Tim Piatt (candidate for Ohio House District 36), and Tim Price.



# Two BLET families win 2018 Union Plus scholarships

**U**nion Plus recently awarded \$150,000 in scholarships to 115 students representing 32 unions, including two winners from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). The two BLET winners are:

- **Tevya Parette**, daughter of Jeff Parette of BLET Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.); and
- **Cale Sherwood**, son of Jason B. Sherwood of BLET Division 811 (Clovis, N.M.).

## A FUTURE METEOROLOGIST

Tevya won a \$750 scholarship. She is a 2018 graduate of Hammonton High School (HHS) in New Jersey. She plans to major in atmospheric sciences when she begins college this fall and hopes to become a research meteorologist. Tevya is active in the community, serving on the Main Street Hammonton Committee and volunteering in various ways, including a summer reading program for children and making pillowcases for children battling cancer. Cindy Pierce, her high school guidance counselor, said Tevya is articulate and has a compelling desire to succeed.

"Tevya sets extremely high goals and has the fortitude to reach them," Pierce said. "She will not allow herself to settle for mediocrity in any form and does not understand failure. Her work ethic is the reason she will excel in the classroom and every facet of her life."

Her father, Jeff Parette, is a NJ Transit locomotive engineer and has been a member of BLET Division 373 in Trenton, N.J., since May 1, 1997.

## BLET PROVIDES SAFE, SECURE JOB

Cale won a \$1,000 scholarship. He is a 2018 graduate of Texico High School (THS) in New Mexico. He plans to major in agronomy when he begins college this fall and aspires to start a custom harvesting business. Cale already has three years' experience in the field, having worked



Cale Sherwood



Tevya Parette

for two farms and a custom harvester in New Mexico. He is very active with Future Farmers of America (FFA), placing third at the New Mexico FFA Ag Mechanics Career Development Event and earning a Silver emblem in Agricultural Technology and Mechanical Systems at the FFA National Convention.

Cale said BLET has helped his family in many ways. "Without union backing, employees would not be able to take a stand against opposing views for better wages, hours, and working conditions," Cale said. "Thanks to BLET, my father is able to have a financially secure and safe job."

His father Jason B. Sherwood is a BNSF locomotive engineer and has been a member of BLET Division 811 in Clovis, N.M., since March 1, 1995.

## ABOUT UNION PLUS

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 27th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$4.3 million in educational funding to more than 2,900 union members, spouses, and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is very competitive, and this year over 6,000 applications were received from 70 unions and all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories.

Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship) for applications and benefit eligibility. The deadline is usually January 31 each year. 📺



# 48 BLET families win Hoffa scholarships in 2018, including eight \$10,000 winners

**F**orty-eight BLET families were winners of scholarships from the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2018, including eight \$10,000 scholarship winners. The \$10,000 awards are the highest honor bestowed by the Hoffa scholarship fund.

## The eight \$10,000 winners are as follows:

- **Katelin Bodine**, daughter of J.P. Bodine III of BLET Division 703 (Teague, Texas), a Burlington Northern Santa Fe locomotive engineer;
- **Nicole Durham**, daughter of R.A. Durham of BLET Division 20 (Los Angeles, Calif.), an Amtrak locomotive engineer;
- **Hunter Grimes**, son of M.D. Grimes of BLET Division 499 (Whitefish, Mont.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Peytan King**, daughter of R.E. King of BLET Division 392 (Havre, Mont.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Max Lavers**, son of S.S. Lavers of BLET Division 777 (Argentine, Kan.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Elesa McDonald**, daughter of C.D. McDonald of BLET Division 577 (Mattoon, Ill.), a Canadian National-Illinois Central locomotive engineer;
- **Lauren McGuire**, daughter of C.S. McGuire of BLET Division 776 (Galveston, Texas), a BNSF locomotive engineer; and
- **Madison Thompson**, daughter of B.C. Thompson of BLET Division 442 (Dexter, Mo.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer.

## There were 36 BLET winners in the \$1,000 scholarship category. They are:

- **Steven Adamson**, son of S.R. Adamson of BLET Division 110 (Ludlow, Ky.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Alison Anderson**, daughter of M.D. Anderson of BLET Division 333 (St. Paul, Minn.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;
- **Alfred Andrews**, son of A.E. Andrews II of BLET Division 498 (Abbeville, S.C.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **Kaitlin Bargo**, daughter of R.B. Bargo of BLET Division 463 (Corbin, Ky.), a CSX locomotive engineer;

## ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIPS

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund awards scholarships annually to outstanding high school seniors. The next application deadline is March 31, 2019. Recipients are selected by an impartial committee of university admissions and financial aid directors based on academic achievement, SAT/ACT scores, character, potential and financial need. The Teamsters consider all applicants without regard to race, religion, gender, disability, or any other legally protected status. In 2017 the Fund awarded \$1.4 million in scholarships. For more information, please visit the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund website (<http://www.jrhmsf.org>).



- **Kalei Bock**, daughter of J.D. Bock of BLET Division 6 (Boone, Iowa), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;
- **ALLee Branchomb**, daughter of N.F. Branchcomb of BLET Division 179 (Parsons, Kan.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;
- **Lauren Callahan**, daughter of J.S. Akeroyd of BLET Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;
- **Caleb Chambers**, son of L.D. Chambers Jr. of BLET Division 110 (Ludlow, Ky.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Madelynn Cherry**, daughter of T.A. Cherry of BLET Division 106 (Muncie, Ind.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Sydney Clarke**, daughter of T.C. Clarke of BLET Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Sarah Crosby**, daughter of J.M. Moore of BLET Division 30 (Atlanta, Ga.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **Justice DeLong**, daughter of J. Brown Jr. of BLET Division 172 (Fort Worth, Texas), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Benjamin Eggen**, son of J.R. Eggen of BLET Division 517 (St. Paul, Minn.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Riley George**, daughter of J.L. George of BLET Division 121 (Indianapolis, Ind.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **Morgan Hoatson**, daughter of S.D. Hoatson of BLET Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;

- **Parris Hunt**, daughter of R.L. Hunt Jr. of BLET Division 561 (Richmond, Va.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **Claudia Labhart**, daughter of S.D. Labhart of BLET Division 754 (Elkhart, Ind.), a CP Rail-Soo Line locomotive engineer;
- **Alaina McWhirter**, daughter of W.B. Dondero of BLET Division 573 (Greenville, Texas), a Kansas City Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Clayton Morgan**, son of T.L. Morgan of BLET Division 86 (Moberly, Mo.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Layla Obregon**, daughter of V.J. Obregon of BLET Division 386 (Birmingham, Ala.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Tevya Parette**, daughter of J. Parette of BLET Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.), a NJ Transit locomotive engineer;
- **Lacy Petty**, daughter of J.C. Petty of BLET Division 592 (Dalhart, Texas), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;
- **Daniel Schwenneker**, son of K.C. Schwenneker of BLET Division 621 (Wymore, Neb.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Cale Sherwood**, son of J.B. Sherwood of BLET Division 811 (Clovis, N.M.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **Lucas Sikorski**, son of L.E. Sikorski of BLET Division 382 (Buffalo, N.Y.), a Conrail locomotive engineer;
- **Tallyn Simpson**, daughter of W.A. Simpson of BLET Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;

• **KodiAnn Skinner**, daughter of R.A. Skinner of BLET Division 228 (Pocatello, Idaho), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;

• **Makynlee Smith**, daughter of J.E. Smith III of BLET Division 636 (Lafayette, La.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

• **Jenna Soulvie**, daughter of J.M. Soulvie of BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.), a Union Pacific locomotive engineer;

• **Emily Stoker**, daughter of C.D. Stoker of BLET Division 205 (Chattanooga, Tenn.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;

• **Shelby Surrency**, daughter of M.M. Harvey of BLET Division 803 (Savannah, Ga.), a CSX locomotive engineer;

• **Lauryn Tankersley**, daughter of J.T. Tankersley of BLET Division 156 (Birmingham, Ala.), a CSX locomotive engineer;

• **William Vierra**, son of C.A. Vierra of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

• **Katie Warren**, daughter of T.C. Warren of BLET Division 163 (Proctor, Minn.), a Canadian National-Wisconsin Central locomotive engineer;

• **Lily Westney Stevens**, daughter of T.J. Stevens of BLET Division 752 (Rensselaer, N.Y.), an Amtrak locomotive engineer; and

• **Izabella Zalewski**, daughter of Z.Z. Zalewski of BLET Division 272 (Dover, N.J.), a NJ Transit locomotive engineer.

## There were four BLET winners in the vocational scholarship category, ranging up to \$2,000:

- **Noah Anderson**, son of R.F. McLean of BLET Division 325 (Wilkesburg, Pa.), a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer;
- **Logan Cogdill**, son of M.L. Cogdill of BLET Division 78 (Louisville, Ky.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **Jonathon Kletsch**, son of J.L. Kletsch of BLET Division 202 (Dilworth, Minn.), a BNSF locomotive engineer; and
- **Abigail Voight**, daughter of W.R. Voight of BLET Division 60 (Seattle, Wash.), an Amtrak locomotive engineer.



## letters to the editor

**Thank you, BLET!**

Brothers and Sisters:

First and foremost I have to say thank you. I like to think I am fairly gifted in the art of word-smithery, but to me those two words sum up my feelings perfectly. No need for any further head scratching to find something better. It truly has been an honor and a privilege to have served as the BLET's Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman for the past dozen years. It was an unbelievable journey and one I will always cherish. I have spent just short of 42 years of my life at the railroad and over half of that as a BLET union officer. I sincerely appreciate you having the confidence to elect me to four terms as Division Legislative Representative and three terms as Missouri SLB Chairman. Most of all I truly thank you for all your support and involvement during my tenure. You made me a better person and a better union Brother and I am forever indebted to you for so doing.

Some of you I hold among the closest friends I have in the entire world. I say that proudly with a lump in my throat and a tremble in my hands. Others of you, sadly, I never got to personally meet or honestly get acquainted with. Life is about opportunities — I seized most of mine and encourage all of you to do the same. It is too late for you and me to get to know one another as fellow BLET members, officers, and co-workers; but it is not too late for you to get to know my successor.

Brother Calvin Goose was elected to take my place and assumed his new role on June 1, 2018. Calvin is a wonderful Brother and friend. I believe he will do an outstanding job as my replacement and take the Board to an even higher level. Please make sure you meet

**“My charge to myself as  
Chairman was to be eyes, ears,  
and perhaps most importantly,  
a voice for you and our fellow  
Brothers and Sisters. I did my very best  
and that is all you can ever do in life!”**

**— Brian P. Kelley, Div. 502, Retired**

him soon if you have not already and also do yourself and your Division a favor by personally inviting him to attend your meetings. Every BLET Division in Missouri should have an open invitation for the State Legislative Board Chairman to attend any meeting or function they have. My Division, The Fighting 502 has already stated he can come anytime to ours!

Over two decades ago I was a fledgling BLET member. I was about as engaged in my new union as I had been in the UTU prior. Rarely did my shadow darken the door of the union hall. Yes, I stole that from you Brother Steve Gillett! When my ballot showed up at the mailbox for the triennial Division elections back then I opened it and started casting my votes. I was stunned to find my own name on the ballot and had no idea what the position even was: Division Legislative Representative — Delegate to the State Legislative Board. What is that? I was not only baffled to find my name there in print I was also angry. Who the hell pulled that stunt? I contacted a friend and Brother of mine who was a former BLET Local Chairman and asked him how I would go about getting my name removed from the ballot. I called the wrong person because he told me that if I was part of an organization then I should be willing to help out if and when called upon. So I rethought the situation and also asked some more ques-

tions. It turned out I was in a three way race with the incumbent and another Brother. I felt like I was a shoo-in to lose! It ended up being a tie between me and the incumbent who promptly withdrew his nomination so I became the new Legislative Representative for Division 502. And as they say the rest is history!

I am leaving with confidence that the Missouri State Legislative Board is in great hands and has the support it needs to be successful. I implore you to do your part wherever and whenever possible. My charge to myself as Chairman was to be eyes, ears, and perhaps most importantly, a voice for you and our fellow Brothers and Sisters. I did my very best and that is all you can ever do in life!

At the risk of sounding too sentimental or heaven forbid sophisticated or cultured I am going share a quote by Shakespeare in saying, “Parting is such sweet sorrow!” I will miss seeing and hearing from all of you. Please give me a shout if you are ever in the Kansas City area and maybe we can have a beer (on you of course since I will be on a fixed income) or grab some barbecue or better yet both. As I said at our quadrennial meeting and at several union meetings over this past farewell year, “Soon I will no longer be a railroader or a union officer, but I will always still be your Brother!” If you need me I will do my best to be there for you. Please never forget that.

Good luck and best wishes for the future my comrades, my friends, my brothers and sisters!

Fraternally,  
Brian P. Kelley  
Retired Member  
BLET Division 502  
Kansas City, Mo.

**Congratulations  
on 155 years**

President Pierce:

As the former Secretary of Labor under President of Obama and the Chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), I want to congratulate you and the men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) on 155 years of organizing and fighting for working families.

Your mission, “to promote and protect the rights, interests, and safety of its members through solidarity, aggressive representation, and education,” has led to many victories for the 57,000 members of the BLET and also countless more workers, families and communities across our nation.

The Democratic Party believes that when workers are strong, America is strong. Democrats fight to make it easier for workers, public and private, to exercise their right to organize and join unions. As you know, a major factor in the 40-year decline in the middle class is that the rights of workers to bargain collectively for better wages and benefits have been under attack at all levels. The Democratic Party believes so-called “right to work” laws are wrong for workers — such as teachers and other public employees who serve our communities every day — and wrong for America. We will continue to vigorously oppose those laws and



other efforts that would eliminate dues check-off procedures, roll-back prevailing wage standards, abolish fair share requirements, restrict the use of voluntary membership payments for political purposes, attack seniority, restrict due process protections, and require annual recertification efforts.

Congratulations again to you and your members. Please don't ever hesitate to contact me if there is any way the Democratic National Committee can help support the important work you and your members are doing.

We have your back and are so thankful for the 155 years of organizing your members have done.

Sincerely,  
Tom Perez  
Chair  
Democratic National Committee

## Overtune Citizens United

*(The following letter to the editor by BLET member Tony Lecholat originally appeared in the Sheridan Press.)*

Indeed, what about unions? I get that same question when I talk

**“Union PAC contributions are donated by workers for workers in the effort to keep business a tool of the public and not the other way around.”**

**– Tony Lecholat, Div. 624**

with coworkers about political campaign finance reform and the 2010 landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision known as Citizens United. I tell them that I agree that unions should be held to the same standard as corporations if reform is to take place.

I'm a member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), the nation's oldest labor organization. I'm also the Legislative Representative for my local Division and elected to the BLET's Wyoming State Legislative Board. Along with national elected leaders of the BLET, I can whole heartily say that Citizens United must be overturned. The playing field is far from level. In the years 2014-16 the nation's leading railroad industries spent more than \$90 million lobbying Congress and \$10.4 million on the 2016 election alone. Compare that to our BLET

PAC Fund contributions of just over \$500,000 the last election cycle, and one can see that the playing field is definitely tilted.

A common misconception of unions is that they are able to spend indiscriminate amounts of money, just like their corporate counterparts, trying to sway our elected officials. Nothing can be further from the truth. The only way that unions can contribute monetarily is through PAC donations, which are not part of dues payments. PAC contributions are completely voluntary and come from our members. If money equals speech, as Citizens United has affirmed, corporate railroads contribute approximately 90 percent more speech to the lobbying effort. Union PAC contributions are donated by workers for workers in the effort to keep business a tool of the public and not the other way around.

The work that former Wyoming Sen. Alan Simpson is doing with Wyoming Promise in promoting free and fair elections and advocating for a 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to overturn Citizens United, can and will help restore our democratic republic to the people.

Tony Lecholat  
Secretary-Treasurer, Wyoming State Legislative Board and Legislative Representative, BLET Division 624  
Sheridan, Wyo.

## WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS

The Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal welcomes Letters to the Editor. Please include your name, address, BLET Division number, email address, and/or phone number on any submission. We reserve the right to edit your submission for grammar, punctuation, content and space considerations.

### Address letters to:

Editor, Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal,  
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road,  
Independence, Ohio 44131.  
**Or email:** Bentley@ble-t.org

# Division 142 supports local education in Wyoming

**T**he BLET National Division is proud to recognize the members of BLET Division 142 in Rawlins, Wyoming, for their generosity in supporting local education in their community. Earlier in 2018, the members donated \$300.00 to the Carbon County Higher Education Center (CCH-EC), which works cooperatively with other agencies to provide adult education programs, courses and services. Representing Division 142 at the check presentation were (from left), were: Ernst Celli; Donny Pixler; Leo Martinez, Local Chairman; Larry Yarusinsky, Secretary-Treasurer; Beryl Wright, President; and Russ Sapp. Brother Sapp is shaking hands with CCH-EC Administrator David Throgmorton Ph. D. The members of Division 142 work for the Union Pacific Railroad. 📷





## Former BLET Vice President Willard Knight, 1951-2018

**WILLARD E. KNIGHT, FORMER NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN**, passed away peacefully on December 20, 2018, following a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Brother Knight, 67, was born on February 15, 1951 in Portsmouth, Ohio to Ernest Freeman Knight and Nellie Miller Knight. He spent 34 of his 44 years in the railroad industry serving the membership as an elected officer of the Brotherhood. His railroad career began in 1969 as a fireman on the Norfolk & Western Railroad in Portsmouth, Ohio. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1972 and first joined the Brotherhood on January 1, 1974, as a member of BLET Division 511 in Portsmouth. After joining the Brotherhood, he was elected Local Chairman of Division 511 in 1979, a position he held until he was elected General Chairman on January 1, 1992.

He was elected by acclamation to the position of third-alternate vice president at the BLET's First Quadrennial Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 2006, and was promoted to the BLET's Advisory Board on April 24, 2009. He retired in 2013.

Immediately prior to his elevation to the Advisory Board, Knight served as General Chairman of the BLET's Norfolk Southern-Eastern Region General Committee of Adjustment, a position he held for 18 years. He also served the Brotherhood as a delegate to the 1996 quinquennial convention in Detroit, the 2001 quinquennial convention in Miami, and the 2006 quadrennial convention in Las Vegas.



Vice President Willard Knight at former BLET headquarters in the Standard Building

As General Chairman, he was involved in Conrail merger negotiations in the mid-1990s and participated in all on-property agreements on the Norfolk Southern. Those agreements have provided wage increases, quality of life improvements and important job protections for the members he represented. Brother Knight also helped negotiate an agreement that contains an important scope rule that protects locomotive engineer jobs in the face of changing technology, without sacrificing jobs in other crafts.

His father, Ernest Knight, worked for 42 years for the Norfolk & Western as a supervisor in the car department.

Brother Knight was known for being a hard working family man who

put in long, difficult hours to provide for his family. He married his soul mate, his wife of 47 years, Teresia Lynne Stidham on November 27, 1971. The light of his life, his daughter, Michele Dawn, was welcomed into the world on November 23, 1974. Willard was a devoted father and family man who was very involved in the life of his daughter and grandchildren, Brady and Creed. His adored his grandchildren and always made certain that their needs were met. There was not a ball game of his grandsons he missed and he was their biggest cheerleader and fan.

He is survived by his wife, Teresia Lynne Knight, his daughter, Michele (Pat) Warren and grandchildren Brady Warren and Creed Warren. He is also survived by his nephews, who saw him as a father figure, Aaron (Cassie) McHenry and Chad (Sara) McHenry, several great nieces and

nephews along with special cousins, Marvin (Jackie) Knight, Wayne (Leah) Knight, Mary (Marvin) Grashel and Carl (Kathy) Reese.

"Willard Knight leaves behind a profoundly positive legacy with our union," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "The contracts he helped negotiate over the years have had a positive and lasting impact on a generation of locomotive engineers. Brother Willard's family should be proud of what he accomplished for the BLET and its members throughout his railroad career. On behalf of all men and women of the BLET, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to Teresia Lynne and all members of the Knight family." ■

## George Hucker, former BLE-Canada Vice President, 1943-2018

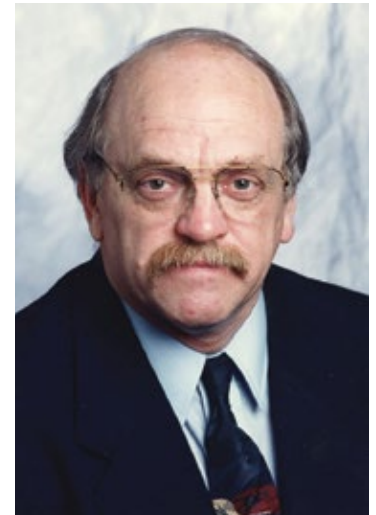
**THOMAS GEORGE HUCKER, FORMER BLE INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE-CANADA**, has passed away unexpectedly in November 2018. He was 75 years old.

Brother Hucker began his railway career in 1966, working as a yardman for the Canadian Pacific Railway in Fort William, Ontario. He earned his promotion to engineer in 1975 and joined BLE Division 243 (Thunder Bay, Ontario) in 1976. He served his Division as Local Chairman from 1980 until 1986, when he began serving as General Chairman of the Canadian Pacific-Prairie & Pacific Regions General Committee of Adjustment.

Brother Hucker was first elected to the BLE Advisory Board at the Fifth Quinquennial Convention in 1991, and due to his strong work ethic and dedication, was reelected at subsequent International conventions in 1996 and 2001.

Coinciding with the historic merger between the BLE and IBT in 2004, and the formation of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) as part of Teamsters Canada, Brother Hucker had the honor of being the very first TCRC Vice President and National Legislative Director. He was instrumental in the formation of the TCRC and the successful merging of the railway running trades crafts throughout Canada. Brother Hucker completed his long and exemplary union career at the inaugural TCRC convention in 2006, and he retired at that time.

"It is through the hard work of Brother Hucker that so many of our union Sisters and Brothers received the highest level of representation, and we all are a little bit better off because of the work of Brother Hucker and his dedication to the union and to the union membership," then-TCRC President Douglas Finnsion said.



Vice President Hucker in 1980 (left) and in 1996 (right).

"George made many, many friends and was not afraid to be confrontational if that is what it took to get the job done for the members. His unique slang and his epic stories are legendary and many of our current officers remember 'Hucker stories' and recall how unique George was in so many ways. There will never be another George Hucker, and collectively we wish to commemorate his contribution to so many union members lives, and together mourn his passing."


Brother Hucker attended Lake Head University in Thunder Bay, Ontario, where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in history and political science. As a guest lecturer, he taught collective bargaining, conflict resolution, and arbitration courses at Lake Head University.

Brother Hucker was a driving force behind the Canadian Alertness Assurance Project (CANALERT '95), a scientific study to combat and reduce on-the-job fatigue among rail workers. The program identified a number of fatigue countermeasures as an alternative to the traditional regulatory approach to rail safety. Over time, CANALERT '95 established clear

guidelines for fatigue management and led to the Canadian government's adoption of national work/rest guidelines for running trades employees in 2003. These guidelines have helped reduce fatigue-related accidents and have helped save lives.

"Without a doubt, countless accidents, injuries and deaths have been prevented thanks to the efforts of Brother George Hucker," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "Though they may not know his name, many engineers and trainmen working today owe a debt of gratitude to Brother George Hucker for making the railroad a safer place. On behalf of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, I extend our deepest condolences to the Hucker family during this difficult time."

Besides being an active union member, Brother Hucker also belonged to the Grand Order of Elks. He was born on February 18, 1943 in Thunder Bay. He and wife Gabriele were married on July 31, 1971 and have two daughters, Elizabeth and Katherine.

The family is expected to announce funeral plans for the spring of 2019. 



## Karen Brasfield served Illinois Central GCA for 30 years

**KAREN BRASFIELD, FORMER OFFICE SECRETARY FOR THE BLET'S** Canadian National-Illinois Central (CN-IC) General Committee of Adjustment for 30 years, passed away on June 8, 2018. She was 76 years old.

In her 30-year career, Karen worked for five General Chairmen — Billy Hayden, Jim McCoy, John Koonce, Mark Whitchurch and Clay Craddock. She began working part-time for the Brotherhood in 1986, when then-General Chairman Billy Hayden moved the



Karen Brasfield

Illinois Central GCA office from Chicago to Memphis, Tenn. In August of 1986, Brother Hayden was elevated to the office of BLE International Vice President, and Jim McCoy took over. Brother McCoy's first official action after being elevated to the General Chairman's office was to hire Karen on a full-time basis.

During her years as office secretary, Karen was extremely dedicated to her work, foregoing her vacation year after year. She became much more than a secretary as she studied extensively and became knowledgeable of investigation appeals, submissions and board cases.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said: "On behalf of the National Division, I extend our deepest sympathies to the Karen's friends and family." 

## BROTHERHOOD OBITUARIES:

THIS INFORMATION IS BASED UPON REPORTS  
FILED BY THE SECRETARY-TREASURERS OF THE VARIOUS BLET DIVISIONS

### AS OF MARCH 31, 2018

20 — H. Durazo  
30 — Kevin R. Kelly  
35 — Michael Kempf  
57 — William F. Endicott  
112 — P.M. Falandes  
158 — Bryan J. Ward  
170 — J. E. Powe  
194 — H. M. Grounds  
343 — Stuart R. Scott  
401 — Paul E. Curry  
508 — Larry K. Washam  
607 — Ronald C. Harris  
782 — F. K. Manis  
857 — Jerry L. Cooley

### AS OF APRIL 30, 2018

98 — M. J. McKelvey  
122 — W. F. Butts  
153 — Joe E. Adkins  
155 — William P. Potter  
203 — Michael R. Perrier  
315 — Mark A. Anders  
315 — Cornelius J. Nerich  
491 — Gilbert V. Riley  
518 — E. J. Phillips  
548 — Richard A. Good  
678 — Mark A. Wiford  
696 — C. R. Hammons  
757 — James M. Zimmers

### AS OF MAY 31, 2018

14 — Floyd R. Turner  
198 — R. J. Gaddis  
333 — David G. Johnstone  
357 — John W. Raskob

362 — Franklin J. Dalton  
404 — Christopher D. Robertson  
446 — L. J. Silva  
497 — J. Courtney  
498 — Norman F. Sorrow  
531 — R. D. Price  
548 — Robert J. Grant  
587 — Alan L. Carter  
597 — Timothy A. Eggert  
696 — Karl E. Dickerson  
778 — R. H. Horn  
782 — R. L. Connatser  
846 — L. E. Aiello  
940 — L. E. Altman

### AS OF JUNE 30, 2018

57 — C. Sagar  
78 — B. J. Jones  
125 — Tim J. Judge  
133 — J. W. Honey  
171 — Anantpal Singh  
171 — Edgar F. Wooten  
190 — J. E. Creger  
207 — Candyce A. Thompson  
239 — William J. Cook  
239 — Norman V. Hodge  
262 — Josh A. Vestre  
269 — J. K. Bender  
336 — Steve P. Grate  
456 — L. A. Harris  
463 — William H. Penn  
463 — Gilbert Smith  
491 — S. E. Larrison  
497 — C. J. Pirillo  
497 — Stanley R. Thomas  
566 — Darrel W. Senney

### AS OF JULY 31, 2018

14 — Frank J. Lex  
30 — Larry A. Vaughan  
31 — D. A. Bleifuss  
31 — L. P. Fritz  
85 — W. E. Babb  
197 — Robert E. Brewer  
202 — Kathy M. Hettenbaugh  
443 — Duane A. Fairburn  
779 — James G. Snyder  
782 — Gregory A. West  
846 — Shawn R. Fowler

### AS OF AUGUST 31, 2018

4 — J. J. Wilcik  
28 — Willard K. Osmer  
35 — R. F. Flynn  
35 — Darryl B. Murray  
60 — A. H. Taylor  
112 — Mike L. Sulham  
115 — Donald E. Walton  
269 — A. Wider  
325 — Charles O. Shaffer  
416 — Michael L. Fledderjohann  
548 — H. L. Crandall  
574 — Arnold R. Dunavan  
582 — E. M. Kurtz  
609 — G. W. Osterhage  
700 — Carl R. Linn  
803 — H. E. Fields  
937 — Bradford B. Clemmons

### AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

126 — P. T. Guerrero  
198 — Jerry A. Byrd  
215 — Lewis H. Fraser

231 — Benjamin Gonzalez  
239 — Jeff A. Boyd  
269 — Raymond H. Anderson  
269 — L. P. Cersosim  
269 — R. G. Gandt  
269 — W. T. Jeffries  
269 — D. J. Kostew  
392 — Jonnie R. Holden  
421 — R. E. Buckley  
463 — Curtis B. Rezek  
590 — T. Feden  
842 — D. S. Walker

### AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2018

59 — R. J. Bennett  
59 — R. E. Byington  
59 — D. C. Watkins  
59 — M. B. Watson  
77 — Robert D. Collins  
182 — W. T. Mendenhall  
190 — L. J. Edleman  
269 — J. J. Bishop  
269 — E. Bodelson  
269 — A. W. Douglas  
269 — R. L. Sprague  
269 — K. Wargas  
285 — Joey W. Pendarvis  
286 — H. L. Smith  
287 — William J. Brandt  
304 — F. P. Parrent  
325 — James M. Elliott  
425 — R. E. Below  
442 — Don R. Lee  
517 — John D. Desm  
520 — Darryl L. Kilgore  
548 — Thomas W. Sharp  
548 — William J. Wood



## More wins for minimum wage hike

**E**lections have consequences. That's not only the case at the federal level, but at all levels of government. Fortunately, workers in New Jersey and Illinois are beginning to see how supporting candidates who support them can benefit them where many need it the most — their wallets.

New Jersey lawmakers recently became the fourth state in the U.S. to approve a minimum wage hike to \$15 an hour, and a similar bill in Illinois was signed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker into law. Both Pritzker and New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy earned the endorse-

ment of the Teamsters when they ran for office in 2018 and 2017, respectively.

It's a position more and more elected officials are supporting. Why? Because the people want it and Capitol Hill isn't moving on it. They know that federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour isn't getting it done, and that workers need much more to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads. It is expected that Connecticut and Vermont will enact similar legislation in the months ahead.

Of course, Congress must get involved to fix the wage

floor nationally. The spending power of minimum wage earners has fallen 40 percent in the past five decades. As the National Low Income Housing Coalition detailed in a recent report, full-time minimum wage workers would need to work 2.5 full-time jobs in order to afford a one bedroom apartment in most of the U.S.

Meanwhile, corporate America continues to pocket huge profits while hardworking Americans see their paychecks remain flat or worse. While economy boosters like to point to the nation's low unemployment rate, that

doesn't mean much when workers can't pay their bills.

Cost-of-living projections show that by 2024 workers nationwide will need at least a \$15 an hour full-time job to afford life's basics. It's time for Capitol Hill to take up legislation that would allow more than 40 million workers to have more money to support their families.

Fraternally,

**JAMES P. HOFFA**  
TEAMSTERS GENERAL  
PRESIDENT

## California's high-speed rail project will get built

**T**o paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of California's high-speed rail death are greatly exaggerated.

A close reading of Gov. Gavin Newsom's State of the State speech and follow up comments reveal that nothing has changed for the construction of the project. Governor Newsom said the state will continue with construction of the Central Valley segment, the electrification of Caltrain, the environmental impact studies, train station development studies along the corridor, etc. Exactly what it has been doing.

Newsom appears to be threading the needle. Actually, it's an astute political position to take given the intense political pressure the project is facing. Newsom's position deflates the political opposition and gives the project breathing room to complete the Merced to Bakersfield segment while continuing the work that needs to be done to connect the Bay Area and Los Angeles Basin bookends.

California's HSR project is arguably the single largest civil works project in U.S. history. As with any such project, delays, cost overruns and controversy come with the terri-

tory. The fact remains, successful economies depend on efficient and effective transportation infrastructure. Without it, the economy ossifies and businesses that have made California the 5th largest economy in the world will flee the state.

Silicon Valley homes have a median price of \$1.2 million, and has a shrinking available workforce. The Central Valley has both workers and affordable homes. The missing link is an efficient transportation system connecting the two.

California will get this project completed because its fu-

ture depends upon it. Like the controversial Boston Big Dig that went billions over budget and was completed a decade behind schedule, when California's HSR project is completed, we won't be talking about how much it cost or how long it took, we'll just be wondering why we didn't do it sooner and where can we build it next.

Fraternally,

**JOHN F. MURPHY**  
DIRECTOR, TEAMSTERS  
RAIL CONFERENCE  
AND INTERNATIONAL  
VICE PRESIDENT

### About the Authors:



**James P. Hoffa** grew up on picket lines and in union meetings. He is the only son of James R. Hoffa, former General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. On his 18th birthday, Hoffa received his own union card and was sworn in by his father.



**John Murphy** has been an Eastern Region Vice President since 1998. He spearheaded merger negotiations with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and now serves as Director of the Rail Conference.





## Guest Columnist

BY WALTER A. BARROWS  
FORMER LABOR MEMBER, U.S. RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

# An 84-year success story

THE STRENGTH OF RAILROAD RETIREMENT COMES FROM WORKERS STANDING TOGETHER

### About the Author:

President Barack Obama appointed Walter A. Barrows as Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board in 2011. The Senate confirmed his appointment on September 26, and he was sworn into office on October 7, 2011. Brother Barrows' appointment was unanimously supported by 12 different international and national unions, which represent employees in the rail industry. After more than seven years as Labor Member, Brother Barrows retired in late 2018.

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Brother Barrows was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen. He was elected to that office in 1999, and reelected in 2002, 2006 and 2010. Before being elected Secretary-Treasurer, Brother Barrows served the union in a variety of local and national offices, including General Chairman for the Norfolk Southern General Committee and Grand Lodge Trustee.

A native of Ohio, Brother Barrows started his railroad career with the Norfolk & Western Railroad in 1974, holding numerous positions within the railroad's signal department.

Since 1974, the railroad industry has been my working life. Starting as summer help in the Maintenance of Way Department and then transferring to the Signal Department for the Norfolk & Western in Cleveland, I worked for 16 years on the railroad before I became a fulltime union official with the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen. For the last 7 years I've served as Labor Member of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). As I look back now that I'm retired, I appreciate the BLET allowing me this opportunity to share a few observations from these past 45 years.

My first real sense of the impact of the railroad retirement system can be traced back to my grandparents. My grandfather spent his career cleaning rail cars for the New York Central Railroad. He became disabled in 1943 before disability benefits were available and he died penniless in 1945. At the time of his death, my grandmother was only entitled to a lump-sum death benefit of \$311.02 from the RRB for his lifetime of rail service. When she reached retire-

ment age herself in 1957, she went to what was then the BLE to see if they could help get her a newly enacted monthly widow's annuity. The Railroad Retirement Act had been amended in 1946 to provide for survivor annuities, and she was hoping something could be done on her behalf. The BLE wasn't even my grandfather's union, but they went to work on her case. Ultimately she paid the RRB back that lump sum and was awarded a widow's benefit of \$37.85 per month. That certainly wasn't much, but it helped her live out her life with a sense of economic security and dignity.

That story has always stuck with me because it is not only a perfect example of union leadership standing up for those who otherwise wouldn't have a voice, but it also demonstrates what the railroad retirement system is all about. It was there for my grandmother when she needed it most, it is here for all of you and your families now, and it will still be there at the close of your careers.

I've been fortunate enough to meet many railroad workers

during my time at the RRB, and I'm regularly asked, particularly by younger workers, if the railroad retirement program is worth it. "Is it worth the extra taxes I pay? Couldn't I do better investing that money myself and managing my own retirement fund?"

For those of you asking those same questions, consider that a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute found that the median retirement savings for all working-age families in America is \$5,000, and in a recent survey 78 percent of Americans said they are concerned they won't have enough savings in retirement. Then, know that the average career railroader, who is married, and retired in 2017 under the 60/30 provisions of railroad retirement will together draw over \$2 million in railroad retirement benefits. That same couple, retiring under social security would draw less than half that amount. Without a doubt, railroad retirement is a pretty good investment.

You should also know that from the inception of the Railroad Retirement Act through September 2017, railroad retire-

"After a lifetime of work, a railroader has earned everything railroad retirement will pay. The sacrifices you and your family made for the railroad industry, the contributions from your pay check and even the contributions the industry made to railroad retirement came from capital earned through your sweat, your blood, and your sacrifice."



ment benefits of \$375 billion have been paid by the RRB to over 5.6 million retired employees, spouses and survivors.

Unquestionably the most impactful railroad retirement legislative development in recent years was the enactment of the Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act of 2001. This measure not only reinstated full benefit payments without age reduction to employees age 60 with 30 years of service, it also established the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust.

The Trust is authorized to invest the assets of the railroad retirement account in a diversified investment portfolio in the same manner as those of private sector retirement plans. It is led by a seven-member Board, with three selected by rail labor, three by rail management, and one independent mem-

ber selected by the six rail trustees. Before my appointment to the RRB I had the pleasure of serving on the Trust for several years.

It is significant to note that the railroad retirement system assets have seen their return on investment double under the 2001 changes. Assets managed by the Trust and reserves held in Treasury accounts, grew from \$20.7 billion in 2002 to \$27.8 billion as of the end of fiscal year 2017, after net transfers for benefit payments of about \$21.1 billion over that same time frame.

Also, our latest actuarial valuation, which was submitted to Congress in 2018, concluded that, barring a sudden, unanticipated, large decrease in railroad employment, the railroad retirement system will experience no cash-flow problems in the foreseeable future.

But getting to this point,

where the railroad retirement system is in its best financial position ever, has not been easy. This is a program grown out of the economic turmoil of the 1930s, and it has been challenged regularly since day one. From rail management, to the courts, to Congress, to Presidents, there have been regular calls to either cut your benefits, privatize the system, or eliminate the program entirely. Each and every time rail labor has come together as one to fight these threats, and railroad retirement has emerged even stronger.

The future of our benefits will always be dependent on strong labor unions and member activism. Undermine the labor movement, like so many in our country are doing, and our ability to protect our benefits, like railroad retirement, is weakened. The 84 year success story of Railroad Retirement

was built on workers standing together.

If I could leave you with one thought, it would be to remind you that railroad retirement benefits are not gifts. After a lifetime of work, a railroader has earned everything railroad retirement will pay. The sacrifices you and your family made for the railroad industry, the contributions from your pay check and even the contributions the industry made to railroad retirement came from capital earned through your sweat, your blood, and your sacrifice. Generations have fought hard to preserve and improve your railroad retirement program, and you and future generations will be called upon to do the same.

It has been my honor to serve as an advocate for rail labor, and I wish all BLET membership the very best in your working and retirement years ahead. 🇺🇸



# BLET, New York & Atlantic honor three employees for heroic actions



BLET members Rommel Primus, William Bagley and Connor Ray, who are employed by the New York & Atlantic, were honored for heroism at 51st annual Dinner Dance hosted by BLET Division 269 and the Long Island Rail Road General Committee of Adjustment. From left: Gilman Lang, Second Vice Chairman; Eric Martin, First Vice Chairman; Rick Jordan, Secretary Treasurer; Kevin Sexton, General Chairman; Dennis Pierce, BLET National President; Rommel Primus, NYA Conductor; William Bagley, NYA Locomotive Engineer; Connor Ray, NYA Brakeman; Karl Bischoff, Division 269 Vice President; and John Kavanaugh, Division 269 President.

**T**hree employees of the New York & Atlantic Railway (NYA) were honored as heroes for their quick actions in September 2018 when they saved the life of a woman lying on the track in a Brooklyn railway tunnel.

The honorees — conductor Rommel Primus, brakeman Connor Ray, and engineer William Bagley — received awards from BLET Division 269 and the NYA Railway at the BLET's 51st annual Retirement Dinner Dance on November 10, 2018.

"These men are 100 percent true professionals," said Kevin Sexton, Division 269 Local Chairman and Long Island Rail Road General Chairman.


"They responded to the situation selflessly and their actions were heroic. All three played key roles in making this happen."

While switching a train on the night of September 5 at the Bay Ridge Interchange Yard in Brooklyn, Primus and Ray were riding on the rear car as it backed into the tunnel beneath 4th Avenue. In the darkness, the crew suddenly spotted the woman lying on the track and not moving.

Primus called out to engineer Bagley to stop the train and Ray, riding on the same side of the car as the woman, jumped to the ground and ran to pull her out of the way. However, the train severed her right foot.

Primus, a U.S. Army veteran with medical training, used a tourniquet to stop the woman's bleeding while Ray ran to summon aid at the nearby New York Police Department station at 63rd Street and 2nd Avenue. The victim, who is 80 years old, later was taken to Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan.

Engineer Bagley has been a NYA employee since 2004. Primus and Ray both have been with the railroad since 2016.

"We're very proud of our crew and the courageous way they prevented a real tragedy," says Marlon Taylor, NYA vice president. "Their actions are symbolic of the way our railway works to promote a safe culture for employees and the public." 



**We're very proud of our crew and the courageous way they prevented a real tragedy. Their actions are symbolic of the way our railway works to promote a safe culture for employees and the public. – Marlon Taylor, NYA vice president**



# National Division honors Gore, Davis at retirement dinner

**O**n November 28, 2018, the BLET National Division hosted a dinner reception to celebrate the retirements of BLET Vice Presidents Gil Gore and Cole Davis. These brothers represented a combined 95 years of railroad experience when their retirements became effective December 31, 2018.

Brother Gore hired out with the Texas & Pacific Railroad in 1973 and worked his way up throughout his career to attain the level of National Vice President on December 17, 2009. Brother Davis hired out with the Norfolk & Western in 1968 and was




Brother Gore (left) and Brother Davis at the retirement dinner held in their honor on November 28, 2019.

elected BLET National Vice President in 2010.

In attendance during the dinner reception were the various General Chairmen

that Brother Gore and Brother Davis worked with as part of their assignments as National Vice President. Also in attendance were addition-

al members of the BLET Advisory Board, National Division staff, Special Representatives and several other special guests. Brother Gore and Brother Davis were each presented with a commemorative brass bell as a token of thanks for their years of dedication to the BLET.

"On behalf of our entire organization, I am proud to congratulate Gil Gore and Cole Davis on their retirements," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I thank them for their many years of service to our Brotherhood and I wish them each a long, happy and healthy retirement." 





## Get your union-made gear from the BLET web store!

You Can Also Shop For BLET Merchandise Online. Go to [www.bletmerchandise.com](http://www.bletmerchandise.com)

### CHECK OUT OUR NEWEST ITEMS



**Raglan Hoodie** — BLT-0225  
Soft and cozy is how you will describe our new pullover hoodie. Navy blue and heather gray give it a stylish look and the left chest embroidered logo finishes it off in our classic red, white and blue BLET logo.

Available in sizes Small thru 4XL  
Small-XL \$46.00, 2XL \$48.00, 3XL \$50.00, 4XL \$52.00 each



### Aqua Dry Polo-Rust

— BLT-0227  
Moisture wicking polo features no-curl collar and clean, smooth fabric that wears well. Snag and wrinkle resistant. Rust colored polo with a light colored BLET logo.

Available in sizes Large thru 3XL  
L-XL \$38.00, 2XL \$40.00, 3XL \$42.00 each

### Aqua Dry Polo-Olive

— BLT-0228  
Moisture wicking polo features no-curl collar and clean, smooth fabric



that wears well. Snag and wrinkle resistant. Olive colored polo with a three-color BLET logo.

Available in sizes Large thru 3XL  
L-XL \$38.00, 2XL \$40.00, 3XL \$42.00 each



### Retractable Pens

— BLT-0214  
An inexpensive giveaway for your next Union meeting. Wide body retractable pen in gold and black. Sold in bundles of 25.

\$13.75

### BLET Clock — BLT-0117

This clock features our BLET logo in 18 kt. gold plating with polished highlights and museum quality rosewood. The movement is made in



America, and uses one AA battery. Hand crafted and assembled by a union work force, your clock will be a lasting momento for years to come. Clock engraving is available for an additional \$10.00. You can engrave up to four lines of text on a brass plate for your clock. Please note: All engraving is done in CAPITAL LETTERS for optimal viewing.

**Clock: \$129.00**  
**Engraving: \$10.00**

### MEMBER FAVORITES



### Embossed Plaid Pique Polo

— BLT-0219  
Stylish and sleek embossed graph-check pattern on the body makes this polo stand out from the rest. Moisture wicking fabric keeps you comfy and cool. Decorated with our classic embroidered BLET logo.

Available in black in sizes medium thru 4X  
Med-XL \$38.00, 2X \$40.00, 3X \$42.00, 4X \$44.00 each



### Drop Needle Checked Polo

— BLT-0220  
This polo is super lightweight dry wicking material with a checked texture that gives it a retail look. Its decorated with an embroidered BLET logo and is available in burgundy in sizes Medium to 4X.

Med-XL \$36.00, 2X \$38.00, 3X \$40.00, 4X \$42.00

### Bonded Jersey Full Zip Jacket

— BLT-0221  
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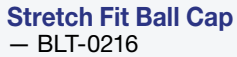
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# *Stress, war stories, safety regulations and the law*

A typical day for a locomotive engineer



**BY JOHN P. TOLMAN**  
VICE PRESIDENT & U.S.  
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE  
REPRESENTATIVE

One of the most horrible situations we will encounter as a locomotive engineer or trainman is to be involved in a fatality on the right of way. This may never be discussed with you in the hiring process, or if it was, it was probably glossed over.

I was totally unprepared for my first fatality. I started to head back and the engineer stopped me. My second critical incident occurred when I was running 79 mph in an Amtrak train and I had an engineer trainee with me, who was a former policeman. We struck a child crossing the double track carrying his moped. When the train came to a stop, the trainee was out the door running back to see if he could help. I contacted the train dispatcher, ran back carrying the hand held radio from the conductor and stopped cold in my tracks when I saw two sneakers in the middle of the track. (When I later relayed this to the former policeman, he said he started to take his belt off thinking he would have to apply a tourniquet.) After a couple of seconds, I continued running until I came to the child. He was 14 years old and had a fractured leg. We were all very lucky that day. I am sure everyone who reads this can tell each other every single second of



“One of the things I learned from these incidents is that you have to be prepared for the worst. That means knowing what the law says regarding critical incidents.”

what happened in their atrocious incident. We all need to support one another and be considerate when speaking about them.

One of the things I learned from these incidents is that you have to be prepared for the worst. That means knowing what the law says regarding critical incidents. Looking up all the rail regulations can be daunting and for good reason. They

are convoluted, confusing, complex, complicated, long-winded, and tortuous, but they are the law. Sure, we know how to read our rule book, a message from the dispatcher, or a slow order relating to our train. But reading the law books of our industry can leave your head spinning. So I want to share some of my reading with you. Specifically, I’m talking about those portions of the Code of Fed-



National Transportation Safety Board member Jennifer Homendy with Vice President Tolman (left) and Director of Regulatory Affairs Verna (right) at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018.

eral Regulations that govern how the railroads are required to treat those of us in Rail Labor who are forced to endure actionable incidents that cause us stress and pain — incidents that keep us from performing our duties in a safe manner and can jeopardize our health.

### So what does the law say?

Our union fought hard for more than a decade to make a process available for our members involved in a critical incident. Rail safety has been a key objective for our Brotherhood in protecting our members' health and welfare, and our safety as well. The rulemaking responds to the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, which mandates that the Secretary of Transportation must establish regulations to define the phrase "critical incident" and to require certain railroads to develop and implement critical incident stress plans. This part of the Act wasn't finalized until 2014, and the regulations can be found at 49 C.F.R. Part 272.

The term "critical incident" means either (1) an accident/incident reportable to FRA under 49 C.F.R. Part 225 that results in a fatality, loss of limb, or a similarly serious bodily injury; or (2) a catastrophic accident/incident report-

able to FRA under Part 225 that could be reasonably expected to impair a directly-involved employee's ability to perform his or her job duties safely.

The purpose of FRA's regulation is to promote the safety of railroad operations and the health and safety of railroad employees, especially those who are directly involved in a critical incident, by requiring that the employing railroad offers and provides appropriate support services, including appropriate relief, to the directly-involved employees following that critical incident. Railroads also are allowed to implement a Critical Incident Stress Plan (CISP) that contains additional provisions beyond those specified in the regulation, so long as there is no conflict with FRA's requirements.

So what do we do if we are involved in a serious critical incident?

1. Perform duties assigned by protocol to secure the train.

2. Directly involved employees should be presented with an option for immediate relief from duty upon request for the remainder of a shift or tour of duty and for transportation to the home terminal. They must be advised that they can request recovery leave at a later time.

3. If further recovery leave is required


or requested, the case will be held in conjunction with the medical department. If additional time is needed, the case can be reopened by employee.

4. Screening for possible Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression should be conducted prior to return to duty if additional time is granted.

5. Positive screening by a professionally trained practitioner for any indication of PTSD or depression.

6. If a clinical diagnosis is needed, the employee will be referred to an appropriate specialist. If no other services are indicated, the process terminates.

All railroads are required to have a Critical Incident Stress Program on file with the FRA, and you can access it through your supervisor.

As locomotive engineers or trainmen we share our stress and we share our war stories. Sometimes sharing those war stories helps to reduce the stress, as it's helpful to talk with someone who has been there. But knowing the law and the regulations that govern critical incidents is an important part of the process. The BLET and all of Rail Labor fought for these regulations to benefit our members, and they are here to protect you and to help you recover from these horrible incidents. 





# *Locomotive Engineers, Trainmen and Technology*



**BY VINCENT G. VERNA**  
DIRECTOR OF  
REGULATORY AFFAIRS

**I**t is time for some tech talk. Technology as a simplifier is a great thing. At its best it answers many of life's and work's most complex challenges. At its worst it simply adds layers of complexity because – although designed to save resources or perform complex computations quickly – it becomes awkward by introducing the end user to problems he or she has never had to face.

This is the working reality for Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen in 2019. And, sometimes, “technologies” must be used in quotes because at this juncture those apparatuses cannot be said to automatically carry the positive connotation that the word technology generally denotes. Nevertheless, technological advances are generally seen in a positive light. The BLET has remained consistent in its support of PTC implementation so our fellow members can benefit from a life-saving technology.

However, it is quickly apparent that the devices and hardware being installed in locomotive cabs and foisted on the added list of duties of train crews is leading to task overload.

PTC implementation, Trip Optimiz-



Vince Verna addressing the Wyoming State Legislative Board during its triennial meeting in Cheyenne, Wyo., on February 5, 2019.

er (or other forms of software designed to tailor locomotive operations so that fuel is burned at a slower rate), in-cab mounted cameras that record engineers non-operational movements (as opposed to event recorders which monitor locomotive operation) are all taking tolls on the work-lives of BLET members.

I have had the opportunity to speak with Brothers and Sisters in many places around the country. At regional meetings, town hall meetings, General Committee and State Legislative Board Meetings, we hear our members report

about the problem of task overload inside the locomotive cab.

When it comes to interacting with newly introduced hardware in the locomotive cab, locomotive engineers face a steep learning curve and new risks for failure that are being introduced into the system for the first time. Although we do not have hard data regarding human factors, the oral history that is developing on the subject should be enough to concern anyone who cares about safety.

Our members' reports need to be taken seriously by anyone who cares about the safety of rail workers and the public. Our members have no incentive to spin yarns about a system behaving in an unsafe manner. Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen spend their working lives on the point of the spear. BLET members are the first ones to be injured or lose their lives in rail accidents. This is not to be critical of the importance of gathering and interpreting data as it develops. However, at the initial stages of implementation of different types of automation, significant amounts of data either do not exist or are not classified in a way that establishes a clear picture.

It is during these initial stages where our attention to detail and reporting are essential. Right now, it is mostly heard in crew ready rooms across the country and at union meetings. While these types of conversations are neces-

“When it comes to interacting with newly introduced hardware in the locomotive cab, locomotive engineers face a steep learning curve and new risks for failure that are being introduced into the system for the first time.”



2018 BLET National Convention Legislative Committee, from left: M.D. Frank, B.J. Farkas, D.K. Brown (Chairman), P.S. Pfeifer, and V.G. Verna (Liaison)

sary, we must be the ones who begin to document in writing the safety problems we experience with newly installed and implemented technology. Reports such as this become the data that can be used to track, define and remedy existing problems. We cannot allow the safety of our Brothers and Sisters to take a back seat to an ever increasing standard of proof.

Yet this is exactly what happened with regards to the subject of fatigue and PTC. Congress used collected data from the National Transportation Safety Board to mandate the changes contained in the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA). However, railroads put their heads in the sand and dragged their feet at every opportunity. Congress changed hands in 2010 and the railroads placed a bet that the Presidency would change hands in 2012. When it did not, the 2015 deadline was too close at hand to try to gamble with a strategy of inaction.

The railroads then began working on PTC in a purposeful way, while still threatening Congress that if they did not move the deadline out from December of 2015, they would shut down the railroads and, with it, the nation's economy. Here we are – over ten years

after the RSIA – and PTC is active in some areas but it remains far from comprehensive. The railroads have pushed out the deadline through 2020, as they have met the conditions of the PTC Extension Act of 2015. But we still do not have Emergency Escape Breathing Apparatus that was mandated by Congress in 2008 and there has been no Final Rule for Fatigue Mitigation or Risk Reduction.

I mention these failures to point out that data-driven changes are great, but they are not always implemented when the data points to something the railroads would prefer to not have to spend money on. The railroads will say they have spent billions on PTC. They have. However, from most reports things are not starting out smoothly at locations where PTC is coming online.

The railroads and our members need to have time to adjust to the new system during the period from when PTC is implemented until full functionality is achieved. This is in order to learn and become comfortable with a new way of operating that comes with the installation and adoption of new systems. And it is necessary if system design problems are to be rectified without victimizing our members.

Most importantly, in this time where a different technology is being introduced for the first time, our members must know that the systems they are using and/or testing, fail safely.

The concept of equipment that is fail-safe is an important one in human factors and industrial engineering. It is familiar to railroaders in our daily duties. In most cases, railroad signals, air-brakes and certain operating rules are designed to maintain safety in our industry by failing safe. A signal failure is designed to light the signal red or keep it dark (treated as a red). The apparatus performs in a way that is backed up by operating rules that tell the train crew they must stop.

With a steady stream of changes in the industry happening all the time, and with the implementation of different hardware, software and operating rules, some of the concepts of a system that fails safe have been lost. Reports from the field have been varied about how PTC is being utilized, its interoperability from one railroad to the next, and how proprietary hardware from different manufacturers works (or doesn't work) with PTC.

All of these issues can lead to a work life for a locomotive engineer or a conductor in the cab to become outright confusing on how to act in a given scenario, or even slow reaction time when its time for the engineer to override the technology. There needs to be more standardization so that when it comes to train operations, there is no confusion and no loss of reaction time.

Railroads and the Federal Government demand that we provide our undivided attention to the task at hand. They should demand it and so should we. In addition to that, we have every right to expect that we be given the safest tools and the best training on the proper use of these new tools. We can take it from there, just as we always have. We are highly skilled professionals and have earned the right to be proud of the service we have provided to the railroads and the public over the course of our union's 156-year history. 📺



# UP-WL General Chairman Bill Hannah retires



Brother Hannah served as Chairman of the Credentials Committee at the BLET's First National Convention in 2006.

**T**he BLET National Division extends best wishes to General Chairman D.W. (Bill) Hannah, Union Pacific-Western Lines GCA, who retired effective October 1, 2017.

Brother Hannah hired out with the Southern Pacific in May of 1971 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1978. He joined the Brotherhood as a member of Division 5 (Los Angeles) on February 1, 1979, and he has held continuous membership ever since. In 1981, he became a charter member of BLET Division 56 (West Colton, Calif.), where he maintains membership today.

His service to the Brotherhood began in 1985 when he began serving Division 56 as Local Chairman. Brother Hannah held that position continuously until 2001.

In 2001, Brother Hannah began serving the Union Pacific-Western Lines GCA as General Chairman fol-



Brian Carr, left, takes over as General Chairman of the UP-Western Lines GCA following the retirement of Bill Hannah, right.


lowing the election of former General Chairman E. Lee Pruitt to the office of National Vice President. Brother Hannah was subsequently reelected to the office of General Chairman four times, each by acclamation.

In 2008, the UP-WL GCA took on the work of representing members at the Pacific Harbor Lines (PHL). A

new contract in 2013 was overwhelmingly ratified by the PHL membership, and the members have enjoyed higher wages and increased profit sharing during Brother Hannah's tenure as General Chairman.

Over the years, countless BLET members at the UP and PHL have benefitted from Brother Hannah's skilled leadership in on-property negotiations and arbitration proceedings involving discipline claims.

Brother Hannah enjoys spending time with his friends, family and grandchildren. He also enjoys passing the time in Las Vegas.

"This brief article does not begin to touch on half of what Brother Hannah has accomplished in his 46 years of railroading," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "On behalf of the BLET Advisory Board, I am happy to extend best wishes to Brother Hannah for a long, happy and healthy retirement." 

# Steve Christian was Division 524's Legislative Representative for 33 years

**B**rother Steve L. Christian of BLET Division 524 (Van Buren, Arkansas) proudly spent 36 years as a union officer during his 42-year railroad career. Following his Last Run on October 13, 2016, his Division Brothers presented him with a plaque for a lifetime of dedication and service to Division 524.

Brother Christian hired out as a brakeman for the Missouri Pacific at Van Buren, Ark., in June of 1974. Brother Christian's dear uncle Arch Lee Christian, who was a MoPac locomotive engineer for 35 years, introduced him to the trainmaster who hired him. Brother Christian went firing on April 1, 1976 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer for the MoPac on October 1, 1976. His first cousin Larry Christian (Uncle Arch's son) was a promoted locomotive engineer at the time and the two men worked together briefly.

Brother Christian has 41 years of union membership, having initiated into BLET Division 524 on July 1, 1977. He immediately began serving the membership that year and served continuously for the next 36 years, finally stepping down from office in 2013.

He began by serving on Division 524's audit committee (1977-1979). He then served as Division Legislative Representative for 33 years (1980-2013), also serving as Division President (1987-1989) and as Local Chairman for two terms (1987-1991 and 1997-2003). Brother Christian also served the Brotherhood as an officer of the Arkansas State Legislative Board for 20 years, initially as First Vice Chairman (1993-2001) and later as Secretary-Treasurer (2002-2013). He also served as First Vice General Chairman of the Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjustment (1998-2000).

From 2003-2004, Brother Christian served on the BLE International Office's Finance Committee, which was one of the exploratory committees that laid the



Brother Christian with a vintage Union Pacific E-9 streamliner.



Steve and Trefana Christian at the 2013 BLET regional meeting in New Orleans, La.

groundwork for a merger between the BLE and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The committee's work eventually led to the creation of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Brother Christian worked as a UP locomotive engineer for his Last Run, operating a loaded coal train between Parsons, Kan., and Van Buren, Ark., on October 13, 2016. He operated train CCDWB9-11 and the engine was a SD-90MAC. His retirement became effective October 31, 2016.

Brother Christian was presented with a plaque for Outstanding Service by

former BLE General Chairman M.L. Royal following the merger of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (MKT) with the Missouri Pacific, which became effective on August 12, 1988.

Brother Christian and his wife Trefana have been married since May 22, 1976. The couple has two children (Jessica Christian Mendenhall and Stephen (Chip) Christian Jr.) and one grandchild.

During retirement, Brother Christian plans to travel with his wife and family. He is pursuing the art of fly fishing and continues to do a little waterfowl hunting with family and friends, especially BLET Brothers Larry Christian and Scott Garvin. Brother Christian is an active member of the Wesley United Methodist Church, the Methodist Men's Club, and the Wesleyan Group. He is also actively involved at the Fort Smith First Tee and the Men's Golf Association at Fianna Hills Country Club in Fort Smith.

Looking back on his 42-year railroad career, Brother Christian said: "I loved it all, and the good always nullified what little bad there was. Our place in labor remains strong due to our Brotherhood!"



# Brian Kelley fought for BLET members and workers' rights in Missouri

**A**fter nearly 24 years of BLET membership, including the last 12 as Chairman of the Missouri State Legislative Board, Brother Brian P. Kelley of BLET Division 502 (Kansas City, Mo.) retired effective June 1, 2018.

Brother Kelley's 42-year railroad career began in 1976 when hired out as a track laborer with the Burlington Northern Railroad at Creston, Iowa. He transferred to engine service in May of 1977. After more than 17 years of working as a brakeman/conductor, earned promotion to locomotive engineer in October of 1992. He initiated into BLET Division 502 on November 1, 1994.

Brother Kelley served the Brotherhood continuously as an elected officer from 1997 until his retirement in 2018. He served as Division 502's Legislative Representative from 1997-2009 and as Chairman of the Missouri State Legislative Board from 2006-2018. From 2015-2018, Brother Kelley represented the BLET on the Rail Safety Advisory Committee's (RSAC) working group for remote control operations.

During his tenure as Chairman of the Missouri State Legislative Board, Brother Kelley was frequently engaged in the battle to prevent "right-to-work" from becoming the law of the land in the Show Me State. One of his final acts as chairman was working as part of a coalition that collected more than 310,000 signatures to force a referendum vote to halt the state's right-to-work law. The final victory played out after Brother Kelley's retirement as Missouri citizens overwhelmingly voted down the law on August 7, 2018.

Brother Kelley's Last Run came on May 27, 2018, when he worked as a locomotive engineer of BNSF locomotive #4462 between North Kansas City, Mo., to Argentine, Kan.

Brother Kelley is last in a large family of railroaders. His retirement after 42 years on the job marked the end of over 160 years of railroad employment



Brother Kelley at the time of his Last Run on May 27, 2018.



Brother Kelley with his wife Pam.



Brother Kelley with his daughters Brianne and Sheena.

in his immediate family. His father, Paul Kelley, was a BNSF conductor for 43 years; his brother Kevin Kelley was a BNSF machine operator for 38 years; and his brother Shaun Kelley was a locomotive engineer for 43 years. His grandfather and two of his uncles also worked for the railroad.



The Kelley brothers  
**From left:** Shaun Kelley, Brian Kelley, Kevin Kelley, and Paul Kelley.

Brother Kelley and his wife Pam were married on June 25, 1978. To celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, they spent two weeks in Niagara Falls in June 2018. The couple has two daughters, Brianne Tyrrell and Sheena Kelley, and four grandchildren. During retirement, Brother Kelley plans to spend more time with his family and grandchildren and to visit all 50 states. His hobbies include woodworking, art, landscaping and community service.

"I am the last member of a legacy railroad family (160 plus years in my immediate one)," Brother Kelley said. "I was honored to serve over 20 years as a union officer." 📺

# Whitchurch served 25 years as a Brotherhood officer

**B**rother Mark D. Whitchurch of BLET Division 24 (Centralia, Ill.) retired in 2017 after a long and interesting railroad career. He spent 25 years as a Brotherhood officer, and in that role had the unique honor of serving as his General Committee of Adjustment's first webmaster, building its first web page. He also wound up pictured on the cover of the BLET's magazine.

Brother Whitchurch safely completed his Last Run on September 16, 2017, ending a railroad career that spanned 41 years. He hired out as a brakeman with the Illinois Central at Memphis, Tenn., in 1976. He went firing on April 1, 1980, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on February 5, 1981. After spending time as a member and officer of the UTU-E, Brother Whitchurch initiated into BLET Division 24 effective March 1, 1992.

Brother Whitchurch served the Brotherhood continuously as an elected officer from 1992 until his retirement in 2017—a period of 25 years. In 1992, he began serving Division 24 as Secretary-Treasurer. In 1996, he represented his Division as a delegate to the BLE's International Convention in Detroit, Mich., where he was seated next to current BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, who was serving as his Division's delegate. Both then participated in a huge solidarity rally with Detroit newspaper strikers while in attendance at the BLE convention.

Also in 1996, Brother Whitchurch began serving Division 24 as Local



Brother Whitchurch at his Last Run.

Chairman in addition to maintaining his duties as Secretary-Treasurer.

In 1998, Brother Whitchurch was elected to serve the BLE's Illinois State Legislative Board as Alternate Secretary-Treasurer, a position he was re-elected to in 2002.

In 1999, he attended the BLE's "Save Our Craft" rally in Washington, D.C. A photograph from the rally featuring Brother Whitchurch, his wife and youngest daughter was featured on the front cover of the Summer 1999 issue of the Locomotive Engineers Journal. "My family has always supported me fully and our great organization to the fullest extent," he said.

Brother Whitchurch's union leadership continued to grow in 2000 when he was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois Central General Committee of Adjustment (GCA). One year later, he became its first webmaster and created the GCA's original website. In 2004, he was elected 1st Vice General Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer, positions he would be reelected to in 2008. Brother Whitchurch served as

General Chairman of the Illinois Central GCA from 2011-2012.

As with 1996, Brother Whitchurch again represented his Division as delegate in 2001, this time to the BLE International Convention in Miami, Fla. Travel to Miami was difficult as the convention was held just weeks after the 9/11 terrorist attack.

In 2006, Brother Whitchurch served as a convention delegate for a third time, this time at the BLET's First National Convention in Las Vegas. He was also appointed to serve as a member of the National Division's Salary Committee at that same convention. At the BLET's Second National Convention in 2010, he served his Division as delegate for the fourth time and also served on the Salary Committee for the second time. In 2011, Brother Whitchurch was one of the BLET's delegates who attended the Teamsters 28th International Convention.

He concluded his service to the Brotherhood serving his Division as Vice Local Chairman, Local Chairman, Legislative Representative and Secretary-Treasurer from 2013-2017.

Brother Whitchurch is a third generation railroader. His grandfather Earl Jones worked as a car technician for the Illinois Central and Illinois Central Gulf from July 27, 1946 to March 30, 1980. His father David Whitchurch worked as a fireman, engineer and traveling engineer for the Illinois Central, Illinois Central Gulf, and Canadian National/Illinois Central for over 45 years (November 20, 1951 to July 8, 1997).

Brother Whitchurch and his wife Brenda were married in 1996. He has two children, Amber Dennis and Kaylee Heinzmann, and four grandchildren (Adam, Ethan, Brooks and Clay). His hobbies include sporting clays, bicycling and spending time with his family. During retirement he is simply enjoying life. 🍷



## Cat Garcia served on BLE National Mobilization Team, helped organize Tex Mex



Brother Cat Garcia at the throttle at his Last Run.

**B**rother Catarino A. (Cat) Garcia safely completed his Last Run for the Union Pacific Railroad on October 30, 2017, safely concluding a railroad career that spanned nearly 40 years.

Brother Cat hired out as a switchman/brakeman on the Southern Pacific at San Antonio, Texas, on December 1, 1978. He earned promotion to Locomotive Engineer on April 2, 1980. He has held continuous membership in BLET Division 556 (Del Rio, Texas) since January 1, 1990. His entire career has been with the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific Railroad, with the exception of two months spent working as a locomotive engineer for the Texas-Mexican Railway (Novem-

ber and December 1997).

Over the years, Brother Cat has been an active and involved leader in the Brotherhood. He has served Division 556 as delegate to four BLE International and BLET National Division conventions, including a stint as a member of the Arrangements Committee at the 2001 convention in Miami. In 2003, he was elected 1st Vice Chairman of the Texas State Legislative Board, a position he held continuously through 2015. He stepped down and began serving the Texas SLB as 2nd Vice Chairman in 2015 due to his pending retirement.

He served Division 556 as Legislative Representative on a continuous basis from 1997 through December of 2016,



A collection of patches, stickers, and other memorabilia Brother Cat amassed during his rail career.

and has been one of his Division's top BLET-PAC contributors over the years.

Brother Cat began serving as a member of the BLE's National Mobilization Team in 1997 and helped spearhead the union's organizing drive at the Texas-Mexican Railway. Over the years, he was an active participant in multiple railroad safety rallies in Washington, D.C., Texas, and other locations throughout the United States. He was also an active participant in numerous BLET regional meetings throughout the years.

His Last Run came on October 30, 2017, when he worked as locomotive engineer of Union Pacific train AML-SJR-28 on a round trip between Del Rio and Alpine, Texas. His retirement became effective that same day.

Brother Cat has one daughter, Renee Garcia Fernandez, and two grandchildren: Ben and Gabe. He followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Marcos Vela, who worked in the Southern Pacific locomotive shop from 1901-1925.



Brother Cat's last run

Brother Cat is a member of the Saint Joseph Catholic Church, Rotary Club and the Del Rio Chamber of Commerce. His hobbies include boating, water skiing, jet skiing, snow skiing, dancing, art, and antique collecting. He is also the member of a bowling

team. During retirement, he plans to sell his mini-storage businesses and travel more on a monthly basis.

"My railroad career and union membership and involvement seem to have been a sweet and sour experience for me," Brother Garcia said. ☐

**The BLET publishes Last Runs for members who have retired**, and recognizes members with 40 years or more of membership in Honor Roll articles. If you are planning to retire soon, please let us know! For details, contact: John Bentley, Editor, Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal, Email: Bentley@ble-t.org, 7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131

## PRESIDENT PIERCE MESSAGE

CONTINUED FROM  
PAGE 2 <◀▶

Adobe Connect virtual collaboration tools, and eventually will be accessible across different platforms and devices. Training can be done at the user's own pace during their free time. Using the same technology, we plan to develop even more online training modules that can be accessed by even more officers and members at any time. This will help us move toward the goal of offering more frequent training to our membership, which will give us the most educated and best trained membership in all of organized labor.

As valuable as this new opportunity may be, online

**"Our investment in the Education and Training Department is an investment in our Brotherhood's future. I am excited about that future as we continue to train and prepare the union leaders of tomorrow."**

classes will not replace the actual classes that the Education & Training Department will still offer during the year. The online training can never replace the face-to-face interactions and discussions, and the fellowship enjoyed by our Brothers and Sisters while attending a training class. Rather, the online training will assist newly elected officers in the field get started on the right foot and act as an enhancement to the regularly scheduled

in-class training sessions.

Many great minds went into the development of the new online training program, and I would like to thank: Jim Louis, BLET National Vice President and Head of the Education and Training Department; Jason Wright, Special Representative and Director of Education and Training; Walt Schmidt, Director of Online Services; Doug Davidson, Director of the Arbitration Department; Megan Mead, Director of the

Compliance Department; and Mike Hager, Director of the IT Department. Without their help and expertise, this would have been a much more difficult venture.

Our investment in the Education and Training Department is an investment in our Brotherhood's future. I am excited about that future as we continue to train and prepare the union leaders of tomorrow. I am confident that this is exactly the type of forward thinking that our Delegates had in mind when they approved a dedicated funding stream for our Education and Training Department at the 2010 Convention, and I am sure they will join me in applauding our latest milestone. ☐





# Two new Auxiliaries organized in the state of Oregon

THE BLET NATIONAL AUXILIARY IS VERY PROUD TO ANNOUNCE  
THE ADDITION OF TWO NEW AUXILIARIES IN THE STATE OF OREGON.

## EASTERN OREGON AUXILIARY 367

On January 11, 2019, the Eastern Oregon Auxiliary 367 was organized in La Grande, Oregon. In attendance were several members from BLET Division 362, their spouses, General Chairman Steve Leyshon of the Union Pacific-Western Region General Committee of Adjustment, and his wife Pat Leyshon. The new Auxiliary was organized by Sereena Hogan, Past National Auxiliary President, and Jodi Wallace, our new National 1st Vice President and Eastern Oregon Auxiliary 367 member.

Sister Hogan spoke about the importance of the National Auxiliary and Sister Wallace talked about the importance of the Local Auxiliaries and what they can accomplish.

The group introduced and inducted the members of their elected counsel: President Jodi Wallace, Vice President Jaymi George, Secretary Chris Baldwin, Treasurer Erin Ahner, Chaplin Nicole Wallace, Legislative Representative Stephanie Pfaff, and Mobilization Organizer Helen Willis.

The members were very fortunate to receive a donation from the Oregon State Legislative Board to help them get started as well as raising additional monies with a 50/50 raffle held that evening. The Eastern Oregon Auxiliary has already planned their first official meeting and the officers and members several ideas and plans for their future. We wish them the best of luck and look forward to sharing their accomplishments with everyone.

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST AUXILIARY 503

January 13, 2019 served as the day that the Pacific Northwest Auxiliary 503 would be installed and become our second Auxiliary in the beautiful state



**Auxiliary members and guests at the installation ceremony of Pacific Northwest Auxiliary 503 on January 13, 2019 (from left):** Casie Campbell, Matt Campbell, Becky Kreins, Steven Kreins, Sarah Corbin, Paul Bovarnick, Samantha Furlow, Steve Leyshon, Mariah Burrola, Matthew Furlow, Jessica Keene, Jan Zweerts, Rae Zeeerts, April Ferris, Kinzie Corbin, Matt Keene, Scott Palmer, Christine Palmer, Jodi Wallace, Pat Leyshon, Will Wallace and Sereena Hogan.

of Oregon. We are grateful to Mr. Paul Bovarnick of Rose, Senders, and Bovarnick for his generosity and support of both of our new Oregon Auxiliaries.

Several speakers shared valuable information with our newest members, including: Steve Leyshon, General Chairman of the BLET's UP-WR GCA; Sister Hogan, Past National President of the BLET Auxiliary; Chris Malm, Oregon Department of Transportation; Scott Palmer, BLET Oregon State Legislative Board Chairman; and Arthur Towers, Political Director of the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association.

All officer positions were filled, and voted in were: President Jessica Keene, Vice President Mariah Burrola, Secretary-Treasurer April Ferris, Legislative Representative Christine Palmer, Mobilization Coordinator Kinzie Corbin, and Chaplain Samantha Furlow. We also welcomed Rae Zweerts as our Alternate Legislative Representative.

Jodi Wallace did a wonderful job speaking to the group with knowledge and enthusiasm. She also helped the Auxiliary get a jump on fundraising by helping sell tickets for a 50/50 raffle. They were also very fortunate to have received a donation from the Oregon State Legislative Board. Jessica Keene and the members of the Pacific Northwest Auxiliary are currently working very closely with Legislative Board Chairman Scott Palmer in lobbying for the Oregon state two-person crew bill, H.B. 2970. 📞

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

We currently have 3 auxiliaries in formation in the states of Ohio, Nevada, and Missouri. If you would like more information about becoming a member or starting an auxiliary in your area, please contact 1st Vice President/ Outreach Coordinator Jodi Wallace at (541) 663-6966 or Jodi\_wallace@bletauxiliary.net. You can also visit our website: [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net).

# Sisterhood...

BY HEATHER BARTO

MEMBER, NOR CAL 39  
AUXILIARY STOCKTON, CALIF.

**A**s women, some of us have learned that other women are both our competitors and our co-conspirators. Therein lies our conflict. Not every woman will be your best friend, but every woman is deserving of your respect and support. Sisterhood should know no boundary, no race, no class or geography. Sisterhood should transcend and transform us for the better. True sisterhood cannot be forced. It has to be developed with interest, patience, experiences and over a period of time. There will be times of challenges within your sisterhood. There will be times of laughter, tears, arguments, disagreements and moments that will inspire you. Within your sisterhood you may find those close and amazing friendships, maybe even a second family and that's ok.

## SO HOW CAN WE BUILD A STRONGER SISTERHOOD?

**BE REALISTIC WITH YOUR EXPECTATIONS** — This can be tricky given the fact that everyone's definition of "realistic" varies. So let's go with what we should expect from our sisterhood. Encourage each other, not slander one

another, forgive when needed, and hold each other accountable. We have a responsibility to set an example of what it means to be a "sister" and to actually "keep" your sister even when we disagree.

**BE RESPECTFUL AND KIND** — This should be the foundation of any sisterhood. Respect and kindness can build trust and make everyone feel welcomed. We might not always see eye to eye and that's ok, but being harsh to your sisters can break the trust and drive a wedge between each other. We all instinctively know how we should conduct ourselves.

**BE PATIENT** — There are numerous reasons you may lose patience, time and again with one of your sisters. Always remember, treat other women as you want to be treated, not as you may have been treated by others.

**BE AVAILABLE** — Listen to each other's ideas and thoughts. Be there in their time of happiness and their moments of sorrow. While it is important that there be unity among all sisters, you want to be careful not ostracizing others by creating cliques. Cliques can be detrimental to morale and can cause sisters on the outside to feel less important, alone we can do so little, together we can move mountains.

**ENGAGE OTHERS** — Engage your sisters to participate in meetings,

activities, and events. Your ability to relate, discuss, share, and engage other women will absolutely impact how successful your sisterhood will be. By keeping our sisters engaged, we can be a stronger and a more unified voice.

**COMMUNICATE** — Talk, talk, talk, and talk some more. Keeping members informed and up to date is a way to involve all your sisters. Not everyone uses the same platform to receive information (email, Facebook, texting) and many of them can cause misunderstandings. Disagreements are inevitable. We are not always going to get along. Resolve them quickly and communicate what you need woman to woman.

Our sisterhood is our tribe and each of us is gifted with something unique, our own arsenal of knowledge, skills, and weapons (not literally). I don't have Sisterhood all figured out (not even remotely close). I'm not saying to go out and makes friends with every woman in your auxiliary, because heck we are women and that's just not realistic. What I am saying is listen to your sisters without judgment, and respect them.

It's time for us to put the "sister" back into the word "sisterhood." It starts with you and with me, right here and right now. 🍷

**"Not every woman will be your best friend, but every woman is deserving of your respect and support. Sisterhood should know no boundary, no race, no class or geography. Sisterhood should transcend and transform us for the better."**

## ABOUT THE AUXILIARY:

The BLET Auxiliary exists to support the interest and welfare of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) Auxiliary and railroad families, especially the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the organizations of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference, our members and their families throughout the United States. Learn more about joining the Auxiliary at: [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)

## PURPOSE:

The overall purpose of the Auxiliary shall be to provide support and promote issues that effect the health, safety, welfare and quality of life of railroaders and their families, to promote higher education with the families of its full members, to give assistance to widows, widowers, sisters and brothers, when needed, especially during times of duress, and to render assistance whenever and wherever needed to further our mission.



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# BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

Photos: St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission



## ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

JUNE 24-28, 2019

HILTON ST. LOUIS AT THE BALLPARK



## CLEARWATER BEACH, FLORIDA

JULY 22-26, 2019

HILTON CLEARWATER BEACH RESORT

Mark your calendars and plan to attend one or both of the  
BLET's 2019 regional meetings! Details coming soon.

For more information visit us online at: [bletregionals.org](http://bletregionals.org)