



# THE FIGHT TO SAVE AMTRAK

## BLET Members Rally Across the Nation

# Journal

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN

VOLUME 124 | No. 2 | SUMMER-WINTER 2020

WWW.BLE-T.ORG

## SOUTHWEST CHIEF

AMTRAK'S SOUTHWEST CHIEF splits the 783 blades as it heads westbound near Ojita, New Mexico.  
Photo: Cory Rusch, BLET Division 659



### Also inside:

Last Runs  
BLET Auxiliary Update  
Legislative & Regulatory Update  
Brotherhood News

Farewell  
Brother Tolman

Verna new  
BLET VP&NLR

Scholarship  
Update

60 BLET families  
win Hoffa awards



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## JOHN TOLMAN RETIRES

After a distinguished railroad career that began nearly 50 years ago, BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman has retired. Read his heartfelt farewell message to BLET members.

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### 10 Rally to Save Amtrak

The BLET and other rail labor unions organized a day of protest on September 30, 2020, in response to Amtrak's plan to slash service and furlough thousands of workers. Rallies were held in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City.

### 14 BLET Web Store

Get geared up with union-made BLET merchandise

# Journal

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International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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## BLET Advisory Board

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Dennis R. Pierce**  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT  
National Division  
E [PIERCE@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:PIERCE@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

**E. Lee Pruitt**  
FIRST VP & ALTERNATE PRESIDENT  
National Division  
E [PRUITT@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:PRUITT@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

**Stephen J. Bruno**  
NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER  
National Division  
E [BRUNO@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:BRUNO@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

### VICE PRESIDENTS

**Vincent G. Verna**  
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE  
25 Louisiana Ave. N.W., 7th Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
E [VERNA@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:VERNA@BLE-T.ORG) P (202) 624-8776

**Marcus J. Ruef**  
125 E. Lake St., Suite 302  
Bloomington, IL 60108-1118  
E [MRJUEF@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:MRJUEF@BLE-T.ORG)

**Michael D. Twombly**  
70 High St., Andover, MA 01810  
E [TWOMBLY@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:TWOMBLY@BLE-T.ORG)

**Michael D. Priester**  
247 Opera House St.  
Henderson, NV 89012  
E [PRIESTER@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:PRIESTER@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 212-2309

**Rick Gibbons**  
7061 East Pleasant Valley Rd.  
Independence, OH 44131  
E [GIBBONS@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:GIBBONS@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 372-6263

**James P. Louis**  
257 Forbes Ave., Tonawanda, NY 14150  
E [LOUIS@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:LOUIS@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

**Mark L. Wallace**  
7061 East Pleasant Valley Rd.  
Independence, OH 44131  
E [WALLACE@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:WALLACE@BLE-T.ORG) P (828) 216-8043

**J. Alan Holdcraft**  
7061 East Pleasant Valley Rd.  
Independence, OH 44131  
E [HOLDCRAFT@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:HOLDCRAFT@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

### TRUSTEES

**David P. Estes**  
13120 136th St., Anderson Island, WA 98303  
E [ESTES@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:ESTES@BLE-T.ORG)

**William P. Lyons**  
1538 The Greens Way, Suite 103  
Jacksonville Beach, FL 32250  
E [LYONS@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:LYONS@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

**Richard E. (Dick) Crow**  
501 N. 2nd St., Suite 2, Clinton, IA 52732  
E [CROW@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:CROW@BLE-T.ORG) P (216) 241-2630

**John Bentley Jr.**  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & EDITOR  
E [BENTLEY@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:BENTLEY@BLE-T.ORG)

**Bill Joyce**  
ART DIRECTOR & ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
E [JOYCE@BLE-T.ORG](mailto:JOYCE@BLE-T.ORG)

**National Division**  
7061 East Pleasant Valley Road  
Independence, Ohio 44131

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## 60 BLET families awarded Hoffa scholarships for 2020 and 2021 school years

Sixty BLET families have been awarded scholarships by the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund over the past two years — 34 winners in 2020 and 26 winners in 2021. A total of 10 families — five each school year — were awarded \$10,000 scholarships, which are the highest honor bestowed by the Hoffa Scholarship Fund.

### 2020 WINNERS

There were five scholarships awarded in the 2020 \$10,000 category:

- **SERENITY M. ENGEL**, daughter of **Ryan Engel** of BLET Division 213 (Edgemont, S.D.), a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) locomotive engineer;
- **NATALIE O. KING-SHAW**, daughter of **James Forrest King-Shaw** of BLET Division 158 (Sparks, Nevada), a Union Pacific (UP) locomotive engineer.
- **SOPHIA McCOMB**, daughter of **Gary Hopkins** of BLET Division 32 (Aurora, Ill.), a BNSF engineer;
- **JAMES B. MCPHERSON**, son of **Kevin T. McPherson** of BLET Division 190 (Huntington, W.Va.), a CSX engineer; and
- **MORGAN B. WHITED**, daughter of **Charles S. Whited** of BLET Division 672 (Memphis, Tenn.), a BNSF engineer.

There were 22 scholarships awarded in the 2020 \$1,000 category:

- **NOAH J. CHANEY**, son of **Brian W. Chaney** of BLET Division 95 (Cincinnati, Ohio), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **EIN J. CLARK**, son of **Timothy R. Clark** of BLET Division 934 (Cumberland, Md.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **CASSADY L. CUNDARI**, daughter of **Chris Cundari** of BLET Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.), an Indiana Harbor Belt locomotive engineer;
- **HALEY N. DAHL**, daughter of **Michael Dahl** of BLET Division 404 (Chicago, Ill.), a UP locomotive engineer;

- **ZACHARY C. FIELDS**, son of **Robert L. Fields** of BLET Division 489 (Covington, Ky.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **KRISTYN B. FRASHER**, daughter of **Scott M. Frasher** of BLET Division 698 (Ashland, Ky.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **GRANT J. GARRISON**, son of **Clifton E. Garrison** of BLET Division 238 (Tacoma, Wash.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **JULIANNA O. HERFF**, daughter of **Michael T. Herff** of BLET Division 387 (Camden, N.J.), a Conrail locomotive engineer;
- **PARRIS L. HUNT**, son of **Robert Lee Hunt Jr.** of BLET Division 561 (Richmond, Va.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **LAUREN E. LAFFERTY**, daughter of **Mark A. Lafferty** of BLET Division 124 (Mullens, W.Va.), a Norfolk Southern (NS) locomotive engineer;
- **AYANNA J. MILLNER**, daughter of **Sean Millner** of BLET Division 38 (Clifton Forge, Va.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **ANDREA M. MONCADA**, daughter of **Alberto Moncada** of BLET Division 32 (Aurora, Ill.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **KYLIE N. PETER**, daughter of **Darren C. Vogel** of BLET Division 135 (Beardstown, Ill.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **MAEVE K. ROSITZKE**, daughter of **William Rositzke** of BLET Division 46 (Albany, N.Y.), a CSX locomotive engineer;
- **BRYCE SELMAN**, son of **John B. Sel-**

**man** of BLET Division 391 (Ft. Madison, Iowa), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

- **MACKENZIE N. SMITH**, daughter of **Nevada S. Smith** of BLET Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;
- **KARINA A. TERRAZAS**, daughter of **Jesus Terrazas Jr.** of BLET Division 566 (Del Rio, Texas), a UP locomotive engineer;
- **HANNA P. WILKERSON**, daughter of **Larry T. Wilkerson** of BLET Division 592 (Dalhart, Texas), a UP locomotive engineer;
- **EMMA E. WILKINS**, granddaughter of **John L. Holecz** of BLET Division 100 (Danville, Ill.), a retired CSX locomotive engineer;
- **TANYAH M. WRIGHT**, daughter of **Tyree A. Wright** of BLET Division 646 (Savannah, Ga.), a NS locomotive engineer;
- **AUSTIN R. YEARY**, son of **Dennis R. Yeary Jr.** of BLET Division 167 (Andover, Va.), a NS locomotive engineer; and
- **ELIZABETH G. ZIEGLER**, daughter of **Eugene J. Ziegler** of BLET Division 173 (Fond du Lac, Wisc.), a Canadian National-Wisconsin Central (CN-WC) locomotive engineer.

There also were seven 2020 vocational scholarships awarded, ranging up to \$2,000:

- **ANGELIA N. DOSS**, daughter of **Travis O. Spalding** of BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.), a UP locomotive engineer;
- **LAURA E. HARDWICK**, daughter of



**Randall C. Hardwick** of BLET Division 194 (Houston, Texas), a UP locomotive engineer;

• **WILLIAM A. HOOGENDOORN**, son of **William S. Hoogendoorn** of BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.), a UP locomotive engineer;

• **EMILY R. HUERTA**, daughter of **Philip Huerta** of BLET Division 692 (Tracy, Calif.), a UP locomotive engineer;

• **FALCON L. IMMORMINO**, daughter of **Kevin B. Immormino** of BLET Division 174 (Steens Point, Wisc.), a CN-WC locomotive engineer;

• **ALEXANDRIA D. LOUNSBURY**, daughter of **Deven K. Ferre** of BLET Division 349 (Salt Lake City, Utah), a UP conductor; and

• **HYETTE N. RUSTERMIER**, daughter of **Steven M. Rustermier** of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.), a BNSF locomotive engineer.

## 2021 WINNERS

**There were five scholarships awarded in the 2021 \$10,000 category:**

• **KAEDON D. TUOMELA**, son of **Chad R. Tuomela** of BLET Division 94 (Gillette, Wyo.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

• **MEADOW S. TORRES**, daughter of **Paul J. Torres** of BLET Division 180 (Glendive, Mont.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

• **AUSTIN J. BRIDENBAUGH**, son of **Grant D. Bridenbaugh** of BLET Division 287 (Altoona, Pa.), a Norfolk Southern (NS) locomotive engineer;

• **EILEY E. KUHLMLEY**, daughter of **Scott A. Kuhlmeier** of BLET Division 290 (Superior, Wisc.), a BNSF brakeman; and

• **JORDAN R. DUDAS**, daughter of **Carl V. Schmidt** of BLET Division 521 (Hawthorne, N.J.), a Connecticut Southern locomotive engineer.

**There were 18 scholarships awarded in the 2021 \$1,000 category:**

• **DANIEL R. BRAILE**, son of **Hugo D. Braile** of BLET Division 11 (New York, N.Y.), an Amtrak locomotive engineer;

• **ANDREW P. CARDONE**, son of **Peter Cardone** of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.), a Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) locomotive engineer;

• **PHYLICIA CHILDS**, daughter of **Elaine J. Childs** of BLET Division 482 (Washington, D.C.), an Amtrak locomotive engineer;

• **JAIME A. DiCHIARA**, daughter of **D. DiChiara** of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.), a LIRR locomotive engineer;

• **JARED A. GOBIN**, son of **Gregory A. Gobin** of BLET Division 246 (Evansville, Ind.), a CSX locomotive engineer;

• **BETHANY C. GUERRA**, daughter of **Frank J. Guerra** of BLET Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas), a Union Pacific (UP) locomotive engineer;

• **MADELYN E. HARRIS**, daughter of **Mark R. Harris** of BLET Division 4 (Toledo, Ohio), a NS locomotive engineer;

• **EMMANUEL A. HAYES**, son of **Carlos A. Hayes** of BLET Division 156 (Birmingham, Ala.), a CSX locomotive engineer;

• **DYLAN C. HISER**, son of **Evan C. Hiser** of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

• **HUNTER D. HOATSON**, son of **Shawn D. Hoatson** of BLET Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.), a UP locomotive engineer;

• **OLIVIA M. KING**, daughter of **Richard E. King** of BLET Division 392 (Havre, Mont.), a BNSF/MRL locomotive engineer;

• **ISABELLA M. KUDYBA**, daughter of **Kevin A. Kudyba** of BLET Division 335 (Elrama, Pa.), a NS locomotive engineer;

- **CASIMIRA M. LOPEZ**, daughter of **Gerald V. Lopez** of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.), a LIRR locomotive engineer;

- **J'CEE FAITH PETTY**, daughter of **J. C. Petty** of BLET Division 592 (Dalhart, Texas), a UP locomotive engineer;

- **OLIVIA PROPECK**, daughter of **Michael J. Propeck** of BLET Division 202 (Dilworth, Minn.), a BNSF locomotive engineer;

- **SAGE A. STEVENS**, daughter of **Warren Stevens** of BLET Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas), a UP locomotive engineer;

- **DACEY L. TURNER**, daughter of **Timothy E. Whitworth** of BLET Division 178 (Carthage, Mo.), a Missouri & Northern Arkansas locomotive engineer; and

- **JOSHUA M. YOUNG**, son of **Troy M. Young** of BLET Division 587 (Salina, Kan.), a UP locomotive engineer.

**There also were three 2021 vocational scholarships awarded, ranging up to \$2,000:**

- **MALORIE BARKMAN**, daughter of **Darren T. Barkman** of BLET Division 303 (Morrill, Neb.), a UP locomotive engineer; and

- **TREY D. POTTER**, son of **Eric W. Potter** of BLET Division 120 (Kansas City, Mo.), a NS locomotive engineer;

- **AVA M. WALKER**, daughter of **Philip D. Walker** of BLET Division 934 (Cumberland, Md.), a CSX locomotive engineer. 📞

**ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIPS:** The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund offers college and vocational scholarships to the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members (including the BLET, BM-WED, GCC and TCRC). Academic scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for high school seniors who plan to attend a four-year college or university. The training/vocational program provides awards of up to \$2,000 for use at community colleges and trade schools. The application process for 2021 will begin in November 2020, and the deadline each year is typically in early March. For more information, please visit the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund website, [www.jrhmsf.org](http://www.jrhmsf.org).

# BLET family members awarded 2020 Union Plus scholarships

In early 2020, Union Plus awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to 215 students representing 43 unions — including four winners representing the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 38 states. The four BLET winners are:

**ANDREW  
CARDONE**  
Levittown, New York

Cardone, whose father, **Peter Cardone**, is a retired Long Island Rail Road locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.), has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship

**LOGAN  
COGDILL**  
Taylorsville, Kentucky

Cogdill, whose father, **Michael Cogdill**, is a CSX locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 78 (Louisville, Ky.), has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship

**DYLAN  
HISER**  
Seward, Nebraska

Hiser, whose father, **Evan Hiser**, is a BNSF locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.), has been awarded a \$4,000 scholarship

**JOSHUA  
YOUNG**  
Abilene, Kansas

Young, whose father, **Troy Young**, is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 587 (Salina, Kan.), has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

## Meet the 2020 BLET Winners

### ANDREW CARDONE

Island Trees High School (ITHS),  
Levittown, New York (2020)

Andrew plans to major in engineering in college and hopes to become an electrical engineer specializing in robotics. He was born in Latvia and abandoned at age 8, then became a ward of a Latvian Orphan Court before being adopted by his American father in 2016. "I know what it is like to be hungry and homeless," Andrew said. "In Latvia, I ate donated food and wore donated clothing. I want to give back to needy people as people gave to me when I was a kid."

Andrew has volunteered with Hope for the Future Ministries (HFTF) since



2016. HFTF founder Rev. Diane Dunne said Andrew is a hardworking self-starter. "He has been faithful each Friday evening, helping us load vans and stock food for the poor while others his age are out having a good time," Dunne said. "He doesn't volunteer in order to receive special or extra credit at school but simply to help the downtrodden."

**ACTIVITIES AND HONORS:** National Honor Society; ITHS FIRST Robotics Club (RoboDawgs); ITHS Student of the Month (October 2019); Carson Scholar; HFTF Volunteer of the Year

**VOLUNTEERISM:** HFTF community outreach, fundraisers

### LOGAN COGDILL

Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC), Louisville, Kentucky and Spencer County High School (SCHS), Taylorsville, Kentucky (2018)

Logan is in the medical laboratory technician program at JCTC and ex-

pects to complete his associate degree in June 2021. He wants to help make



the world a better place by conducting cancer research, inspired by members of his family who have been affected by the disease. Logan worked toward phlebotomy and EKG

technician certifications while at SCHS, where he was part of the school's nursing program.

Logan is thankful for his father's BLET membership and said the union provides job protection and better wages for its members. "In an ever-increasingly fickle job market, unions are the last stronghold against unfair layoff or termination," Logan said. "Most jobs in our state don't provide nearly the protection and benefits that a union job provides. BLET has provided a solid middle-class way of life for my family."

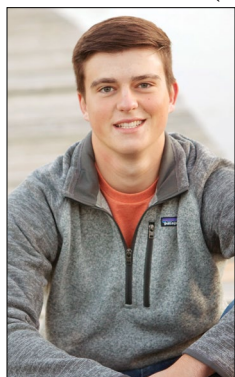
**ACTIVITIES, HONORS, AND EMPLOYMENT:** National Honor Society; Beta Club; SCHS Book Club; HOSA-Future Health Professionals; HOSA Biomedical Debate state winner; HOSA Sophomore of the Year; Spencer County Library summer internship

**VOLUNTEERISM:** Jewish Hospital Shelbyville radiology department; animal shelter; blood drives

## DYLAN HISER

Seward (Nebraska) High School (2020)

Dylan will attend the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) as a pre-med



biochemistry major and a member of the University Honors Program. He hopes to become a family practice physician. Dylan was among the top students in his SHS graduating class. When his

aunt and uncle became foster parents to three children, Dylan was inspired to create Foster Friends, a nonprofit organization that accepts donations of clothes, toys, and supplies for foster children. The organization was overwhelmed by the community's generosity and partnered with the Lincoln People's City Mission to distribute the donations.

Dylan is thankful for his father's BLET membership and said the union is a true brotherhood. "When my dad had a life-changing injury, BLET was there to protect him and his job," Dylan said. "The union allows my dad to stand shoulder to shoulder with his co-workers on an even playing field, giving him opportunities in his workplace. BLET gives the voice of a single employee the power of thousands."

**ACTIVITIES AND HONORS:** Boy Scouts of America (Eagle Scout, Order of the Arrow); National Honor Society; Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA); SHS marching, concert bands; SHS varsity football, baseball; UNL Regents Scholarship

**VOLUNTEERISM:** Foster Friends; community outreach events

## JOSHUA YOUNG

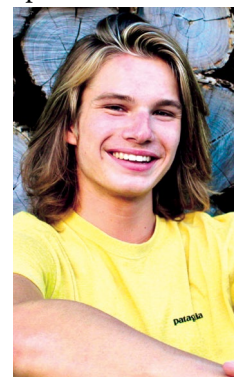
Abilene (Kansas) High School (2020)

Josh will attend the University of Kansas as a biochemistry and Spanish double major. He hopes to attend medical school, become a general practitioner, and provide medical care in impoverished communities in Latin Amer-

"When my dad had a life-changing injury, the BLET was there to protect him and his job. The union allows my dad to stand shoulder to shoulder with his co-workers on an even playing field, giving him opportunities in his workplace. BLET gives the voice of a single employee the power of thousands."

— Dylan Hiser, son of BLET Division 98 Member Evan Hiser

ica. Josh graduated at the top of his class and completed more than 20 college credits via courses at a local technical college. He is an accomplished alto saxophonist and earned a Superior I rating at the Kansas Solo and Ensemble Festival.



ing at the Kansas Solo and Ensemble Festival.

Marc Riegel, an associate pastor at Emmanuel Church in Abilene, led Josh and other church members on a 2017 mission trip to Guatemala

where they served at Eagle's Nest Orphanage. "Josh is the kind of person who leads by example and is always willing to do the work that others don't want to do," Riegel said. "He has a gift of mercy and comforting that allows him to come alongside those who are in need of care and concern."

**ACTIVITIES, HONORS, AND EMPLOYMENT:** National Honor Society (NHS); AHS band; AHS varsity track; Fellowship of Christian Athletes; AHS Principal's Honor Roll; Gold Seal of Bilingual (Spanish); Abilene Municipal Pool

**VOLUNTEERISM:** NHS community liaison

## ABOUT THE UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 29th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. Since 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$4.8 million in educational funding to more than 3,200 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 in 2020 over 6,300 applications were received from 68 unions and all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, two U.S. territories, and six Canadian provinces. The deadline to apply is usually January 31 each year. Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship) for applications and benefit eligibility. 📄

## Stephen Shawn Miskimens, Div. 78, 1969-2020



**THE BLET MOURNS THE LOSS OF BROTHER STEPHEN SHAWN MISKIMENS**, who passed away on October 12, 2020, from complications related to COVID-19. He was 51 years old. Brother Miskimens was a CSX locomotive engineer and had 25 years of railroad seniority. He has been member of BLET Division 78 in Louisville, Kentucky, since December 1, 2015. He came from a large railroad family, including his father and brother, and was a

hardworking and professional locomotive engineer. He leaves to cherish his memory his wife, Sabrina, five children and four grandchildren. He also leaves his father, Steven and brother, Michael (Angela) and several aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews. Brother Miskimens will be deeply missed by his family as well as his railroad family. Our Brotherhood extends deepest sympathies to the family of Brother Miskimens. ☞

## BROTHERHOOD OBITUARIES:

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

### AS OF FEBRUARY 29, 2020

54 — Steve Lasota  
71 — William P. Mullen  
88 — R. L. Young  
131 — Johnnie M. Phelan  
153 — Leighton B. Calloway  
190 — Billy J. Arbaugh  
190 — Richard P. Edmonds  
190 — Thomas E. Hackworth  
190 — B. L. Hendricks  
190 — J. K. Thompson  
285 — Michael L. Coker  
370 — Michael J. Halerz  
497 — W. Flaherty  
497 — J. F. Tinney

### AS OF MARCH 31, 2020

26 — Terry D. Tyson  
34 — Henry L. Green  
37 — Marty W. Street  
100 — C. C. Whites  
101 — J. B. Ashley  
269 — John H. Gilson  
328 — Jerry Smith  
337 — R. G. Thompson  
388 — Tad A. Wright  
421 — E. C. Nichols  
523 — Jerry D. Cloke  
696 — Jermaine D. Hunt  
754 — Michael R. Harting  
779 — Timothy E. Clark  
914 — W. J. Carr

### AS OF APRIL 30, 2020

94 — Thomas L. Walker  
131 — Calvert C. Pitchford  
131 — Al J. Prutsman  
174 — Jason L. Girven  
190 — H. K. Rhodes  
194 — D. H. Kruse  
216 — Doug D. Ure  
269 — Matthew E. Martin  
283 — L. Schuyler  
284 — R. L. Phillips  
332 — Dennis M. Carmichael

332 — John W. Mitchell  
421 — S. Scinta  
446 — Marvin P. Glidewell  
447 — L. E. Cloud  
482 — Anthony M. Saunders  
496 — C. E. Gentry  
497 — D. J. Vogt  
526 — Charles A. Shreve  
742 — R. R. Steckler  
779 — Kenneth W. Arnold  
779 — Donald A. Jones  
779 — Willie F. Patterson  
830 — R. Young  
858 — Michael L. Lyons  
934 — H. J. Foreback

### AS OF MAY 31, 2020

26 — Neal G. Adams  
26 — Kenneth W. Brown  
48 — M. D. Massie  
69 — David C. Godke  
88 — N. J. Boyd  
182 — Dan J. Koehler  
195 — Florian Norton  
239 — Stanley E. Mainor  
273 — W. J. Powell  
309 — Danny D. Spell  
483 — John P. Durborow  
620 — Cecil L. Jackson  
632 — T. G. Holliday  
858 — D. R. Poore

### AS OF JUNE 30, 2020

10 — D. L. Lindsey  
14 — Mark B. Woodburn  
39 — Philip W. Clary  
88 — R. E. Forrester  
130 — A. D. Mount  
140 — H. L. Byrd  
183 — D. M. O'Connor  
197 — James M. Bird  
209 — Kenneth Lestrud  
239 — J. W. Sitton  
259 — C. B. Rodgers  
272 — George Carlin

348 — C. R. Shell  
386 — A. A. Bunn  
392 — Bruce J. James  
404 — J. R. Pinion  
421 — J. F. Michel  
448 — D. B. Clendenin  
448 — T. McCoy  
646 — A. J. Usher  
894 — Mark E. Shroyer  
899 — R. Collins  
919 — Edsel R. Carpenter

### AS OF JULY 31, 2020

1 — Gary L. Locklin  
110 — G. M. Chard  
165 — R. L. Perkins  
165 — C. E. Stidham  
183 — E. W. Jeffres  
190 — W. H. Adkins  
194 — John Goebel  
253 — R. S. Wagner  
269 — George A. Ginocchio  
269 — Tom. J. Gleason  
269 — C. J. Kellett  
269 — Peter J. Riley  
391 — Don E. Dredge  
444 — C. K. Buffington  
45 — G. L. Lowry  
511 — J. L. Jeffries  
526 — K. J. Krichbaum  
565 — M. S. McCabe  
574 — Lewis L. Owens  
592 — Colley S. Ellsworth  
621 — Robert E. Dittoe  
623 — John E. Scheidt  
730 — Richard C. Logue  
778 — T. D. Bretthauer

### AS OF AUGUST 31, 2020

13 — John N. Lodoen  
14 — William E. Brown  
60 — Thomas Evans  
62 — D. C. Battle  
74 — Luke A. Kenny  
106 — John L. Bonvillian

133 — Gary D. Isabell  
158 — Kenneth D. Willis  
197 — A. J. Gangluff  
198 — R. Monger  
206 — F. D. Madden  
269 — S. J. Bove  
269 — A. J. Green  
269 — Edward A. Pettersen  
269 — J. J. Zwerle  
409 — James W. Vaught  
494 — W. A. Emerson  
495 — J. G. Weaver  
502 — James W. Tolbert  
518 — D. E. Kurtz  
547 — James E. Black  
575 — Ralph Sweat  
620 — D. L. Pattison

### AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

2 — R. K. Smith  
16 — K. L. Stoll  
39 — K. M. Bailey  
48 — Jeffery M. Moeckli  
56 — J. E. Wilson  
60 — Aaron B. Rowe  
169 — R. D. Greco  
221 — Arnie J. Armbrust  
221 — Stu A. Turner  
269 — R. L. Laffman  
269 — Terence J. McCauley  
269 — F. Miller  
269 — M. J. Moskowitz  
269 — E. G. Schleyer  
269 — V. J. Senerchia  
269 — R. C. Shelley  
301 — J. R. Jonas  
364 — Jeffrey T. Mundhenke  
383 — Michael T. Ellis  
489 — Jerry L. Wyatt  
524 — Donald Gentry  
547 — Samuel R. Lane  
567 — J. D. Armstrong  
592 — Patrick S. Saavedra  
791 — J. C. Dowley



## Economic Struggle is Real for Millions of Americans

Some in power might want to point to recent unemployment numbers as a sign that a stronger economy is just around the corner. But it is clear this country is still facing a serious jobs problem that is disproportionately hitting those who need help the most.

Nearly eight months into this coronavirus-induced recession, the U.S. is still 11.5 million jobs below where it stood earlier this year. The brunt of that is being felt by women, Black and Latino

workers. And with the recovery seen as slowing (as job gains decrease), the pain is going to continue.

As it stands, some 30 million Americans are receiving unemployment benefits. Of course, those benefits are much less generous since a \$600 weekly bonus paid for by the federal government came to an end in July. And with no congressional agreement expected on enhanced benefits anytime soon, low-income workers and their families will continue to suffer.

One area where real gains could come from government intervention is in the public sector. The Teamsters and others have called on federal policymakers to step up and provide more fiscal relief to state and local governments. That way, they can continue to provide necessary services and prevent unnecessary cuts to their budgets as their revenue falls in the face of the historically large shutdown in economic activity.

In short, work needs to

be done to help those at the bottom of the pay scale who were doing all they could to support themselves and their loved ones before COVID-19 hit. Hardworking Americans deserve to have a government that works for them.

Fraternally,

**JAMES P. HOFFA**  
TEAMSTERS GENERAL  
PRESIDENT

## Pressuring the Rail Carriers to Protect Rail Workers

During this ongoing COVID crisis, when much of the nation is shut down — businesses closed, restaurants shuttered, and many working from home — you, as railroad workers, are the essential workers out there on the frontline keeping our fragile economy moving forward, despite the risks. Successful economies demand an efficient and effective transportation system, and you are the key drivers of that system.

Unfortunately, you and your fellow essential workers are not getting the recognition and benefits you deserve. Instead, a record numbers of rail workers in both the freight and passenger systems have been furloughed as traffic and ridership has dropped. Compounding this is the systemically flawed “precision scheduled railroading” job killing scheme in which the carriers have abandoned their responsibilities as common carriers and put

profits over serving their customers. Today, despite the fact the traffic is again growing, the recalls of furloughed workers have been insufficient to meet the increasing demand.

Currently, there are two bills in the Senate that we encourage you to reach out to your Senators to support: S.3884 - Essential Transportation Employee Safety Act of 2020; and S. 3677 - COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act of 2020. In May 2020, the House passed

the Heroes Act which would provide relief for the various rail systems and their workers, if the Senate would take it up. Please help us urge the Senate to pass these bills to help keep passenger and commuter trains rolling and safe.

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.

# RALLY TO SAVE AMTRAK

The BLET and other rail labor unions organized a day of protest on September 30, 2020, in response to Amtrak's plan to slash service and furlough thousands of workers. Rallies were held in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City.

## WASHINGTON D.C.

Union members rally with members of Congress in front of U.S. Capitol Building

**AT A RALLY IN FRONT OF THE U.S. CAPITOL ON SEPTEMBER 30**, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a division of the Teamsters Rail Conference, joined members of the SMART-TD and Transportation Communications Union (TCU) to urge Congress to vote in favor of nearly \$3 billion in funding for Amtrak.

"We need to protect all the brothers and sisters at Amtrak," said **Vince Verna**, the BLET's Director of Regulatory Affairs. "Legislators need to demand that there are no furloughs. This pandemic will end and we want to have a first-class American passenger rail system. We are going to fight and we are going to get the funding for Amtrak!"

Approximately 200 rank-and-file members of Amtrak unions converged on Washington, D.C., in order to make sure that Congress, especially Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, saw and heard that unions are fighting to get the funds necessary for Amtrak's survival passed.

"Our Amtrak workers have shown up and done their jobs every single day," said U.S. Rep. **Tim Ryan** from Ohio. "We need to take care of our rail workers as they



Vince Verna, BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs, addresses the rally

have and continue to take care of us."

A bipartisan group of legislators from the U.S. House of Representatives spoke at the rally, including: Rep. **Stephen Lynch** (D-MA); Rep. **Brendan Boyle** (D-PA); Rep. **Brian Fitzpatrick** (R-PA); and Donald Norcross (D-NJ).

In addition to Brother Verna, additional speakers from organized labor included: **Joe Sellars**, SMART-TD General President; **Larry Willis**, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department; and **William DeCarlo**, TCU Vice-President and National Legislative Director.

Union Presidents **Jeremy Ferguson** (SMART-TD), **Dennis Pierce** (BLET) and **Arthur Maratea** (TCU) said: "We recognize that the coronavirus has profoundly affected the national rail network with a major reduction in ridership, which is especially unfortu-



Sean Simon, BLET New Jersey State Legislative Board Chairman holds a "Save America's Railroad" sign.

nate when considering that Amtrak had set passenger service records in recent years. However, placing the burden of the pandemic's effects on all of these essential workers who faithfully kept the service running during this ongoing national emergency is absolutely wrong. Job cuts are not the cure."



Organized labor was out in force at Capitol Hill to urge Congress to extend emergency funding for Amtrak.



Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA)



Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH)



The late Larry Willis, former President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department



Rep. Stephen Lynch (D-MA)



Joe Sellers, SMART-TD General President



Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)

## LOS ANGELES

# Workers and families will suffer from furloughs

### THE AMTRAK RALLY IN LOS ANGELES

took place in front of Union Station and was well attended by numerous union members and passenger rail supporters.

The three primary speakers were:

- **Jack Dinsdale**, TCU Vice President;

- **Louie Costa** SMART-TD California State Legislative Director; and

- **Jerry Padilla Jr.**, Legislative Representative of BLET Division 660.

“Amtrak workers were essential workers through this whole pandemic,” Brother Padilla said. “The public uses Amtrak on a daily basis whether it be for business or leisure and massive furloughs and service reductions would limit travel options. Before this pandemic, there was a year-over-year increase of 800,000 passengers. If Amtrak’s funding is cut, then there will be 2,000 furloughs. Good paying jobs would be lost, and those who were laid off would suffer as well as their families.”

Brother Padilla concluded his remarks by encouraging everyone at the rally to contact their member of Congress and their Senators in support of proper funding for Amtrak.



**BLET members at the Amtrak rally in Los Angeles on September 30, from left:**

Damon Allen (BNSF), Legislative Representative of Division 662;  
John Mobley (BNSF), Legislative Representative of BLET Division 398;  
Ulises Flotte (Amtrak), Legislative Representative of BLET Division 20;  
Jerry Padilla Jr. (UP), Legislative Representative of BLET Division 660;  
and Stefan Alexis (UP), Legislative Representative of BLET Division 56.



## CHICAGO

### "Let's get to work!"

**THE AMTRAK FUNDING RALLY IN CHICAGO** had a great turn out with incredible support from organized labor throughout the state of Illinois. In addition to BLET, SMART, and TCU, unions such as UNITE HERE, the Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL), and representatives from other organized labor unions came together to support Amtrak's workers.

The rally was held in front of Union State on South Canal St. Speakers included:

- **Jeremy R. Ferguson**, SMART-TD President;
- **Chris Falaney**, BLET Illinois State Legislative Board Chairman;
- **Brian Shanahan**, TCU National Representative; and
- **Don Villar**, CFL Secretary-Treasurer.

During his remarks, Brother Falaney touched upon several key elements regarding the necessity to provide Amtrak with the vital additional funding, including:



A throng of union members including members of BLET, SMART, TCU, UNITE HERE and the Chicago Federation of Labor.



Representing the BLET's Illinois SLB at the rally in Chicago were: Chairman Chris Falaney and 1st VC Rick Leschina.

- The importance of Amtrak to national, regional and state economies;
- The need to preserve the almost 2,000 jobs that will be lost to service reductions;
- The loyalty and commitment of rail union members who continue to provide this essential service at great risk to their personal safety and the safety of



Chairman Falaney at the microphone.

their families during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

- A call to action to immediately call on our legislators to include or pass emergency funding for Amtrak.

Brother Falaney concluded his speech by saying, "This is not a time for indecision. We must bring this to action — not in a week, not in a day — right now! Today! Will you join me? Let's get to work!"

## NEW YORK

### Unions rally at Penn Station

**MEMBERS OF THE BLET, SMART-TD AND TCU** — along with other rail union members and supporters — rallied in New York City on September 30 to call upon Congress to provide emergency funding to prevent significant job cuts at Amtrak.

Without additional funding from the federal government, Amtrak has announced it will furlough approximately 2,000 union members effective October 1, 2020.



BLET's Bill Fleischmann

Amtrak also announced plans to reduce service, which would hit long-distance and state-run routes that serve rural



From left: Anthony Simon, SMART-TD GC, LIRR; Kevin Sexton, BLET GC, LIRR; Charles Jackson, TCU NR; Scott Carey, SMART-TD LR from Local 95 (Albany, N.Y.); and Bill Fleischmann, BLET New York SLBC.

areas especially hard. According to Amtrak internal documents, 1,950 unionized workers are targeted by these cuts. Of those, 1,225 are members of the BLET, SMART-TD or the TCU.

The rally in New York City took place in front of Penn Station at 8th Avenue by the Farley Post Office. Speakers there included: **Kevin Sexton**, BLET General Chairman, LIRR; **Bill Fleischmann**, BLET New York State Legislative Board Chairman; **Anthony Simon**, SMART-TD

General Chairman, LIRR; **Charles Jackson**, TCU National Representative; and **Scott Carey**, SMART-TD Legislative Representative from Local 95 (Albany, N.Y.). In addition, U.S. Rep. **Carolyn B. Maloney** (D-12) had a representative on hand — **Taylor M. Abbruzzese** — to listen to union member concerns.

Thank you to all speakers, supporters, and members who turned out in force today for an impressive show of solidarity for our Amtrak Brothers and Sisters. 🇺🇸

## 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)



### Plaid Placket Polo Shirt — BLT-0245

Classic black polo shirt with aqua dry wicking material with just the right contrast in the placket. This polo looks great with dress pants or jeans. The BLET logo is embroidered in complimentary colors to the plaid placket. A must have for your BLET wardrobe!

Available in black sizes medium thru 3XL

Med-XL \$40.00, 2XL \$42.00, 3XL \$44.00



### Short Sleeve Moisture Tec Tee — BLT-0247

Our new t-shirt features a great new full back screen printed design with the BLET logo complementing the front left chest to complete the look. Cool and comfortable moisture wicking fabric in navy blue.

Available in navy blue sizes small thru 4XL

Small-XL \$18.00, 2XL \$19.50, 3XL \$21.00, 4XL \$22.50



### 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.

Available in blue and gray sizes small thru 4XL

Small-XL, \$46.00, 2XL \$48.00, 3XL \$50.00, 4XL \$52.00



### Rosewood Clock — BLT-0117

This clock features your BLET logo in 18kt. gold plating with polished highlights and museum quality rosewood. The movement is made in America, and uses AA battery. Hand-crafted and assembled by a union work force, your clock will be a lasting memento for years to come.

Engraving available.

Clock \$129.00

Engraving \$10.00



### BLET Woven Beanie — BLT-0233

You will have to have this woven-in beanie for your union apparel collection.

Available in one size.

Beanie \$15.00



### Oxford Dress Shirt (multiple colors) — BLT-0230

Oxford long sleeve dress shirt with embroidered BLET logo above pocket on the left chest. 60/40 blend with traditional dress shirt styling.

Available in colors Black, French Blue and Gray and in sizes Medium thru 3XL  
Med-XL \$60.00, 2XL \$62.00, 3XL \$64.00

### Jersey Full Zip Jacket — BLT-0221

This is must have addition to your



BLET wardrobe. Bonded jersey material that is water resistant and breathable. Full zip with cinch waist band.

Available in black sizes small thru 4XL  
Small-XL \$62.00, 2XL \$64.00, 3XL \$66.00, 4XL \$68.00

### New Cool Watch — BLT-0222



The newest addition to our watch family is our sleek high polished black bracelet style band with classic roman numerals and a gold BLET logo.

Engraving is available.

Watch \$99.00

Engraving \$10.00

### Bamboo Polo Shirt — BLT-0246

A luxurious fabric that feels so good



to wear! This polo is silver with a contrasting stripe in the collar and a touch of that contrasting color

on the cuff to really make this shirt stand out from all the rest. We have embroidered it with our classic BLET logo.

Available in silver sizes medium thru 3XL  
Med thru XL \$39.00, 2XL \$41.00, 3XL \$43.00





# *A big thank you to all my Brothers, Sisters, staff, and families*



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

*John Tolman retired on November 4, 2020, after serving the past 14 years as Vice President and National Legislative Representative of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and nearly 50 years in the railroad industry.*

**I**n 1971, in the shadows of Boston and my dad, who had a successful career a General Chairman for the UTU, I got a job as a hostler in Beacon Park Yard at 18 years old. I was fresh out of high school and I knew what to expect, or so I thought. My plan was to work on the railroad during the day, and attend school to earn my MBA at night. I had this vision I would get my degree and, soon after, leave the railroad industry. “Soon after” has turned into nearly 50 years.

For 25 years I operated trains out of Boston, Massachusetts, and I truly loved it. I ran mostly passenger trains, but also freight, up and down the East Coast and beyond. I was a second generation railroader and the ride took me places I couldn't have imagined.

While the railroad was my career, I was also passionate about my local community. I served as a local Alderman of Melrose, Massachusetts, a Democratic City Chairman and, in 1992, I was elected the first Chairman of the Massachusetts State Legislative Board. Shortly after Clarence V. Monin was elected BLE



2006 Convention

International President in 1996, I was offered the opportunity of a lifetime as a Special Representative of the BLE International Division, to serve our union from Cleveland, Ohio. I was tasked with helping with research, education, and training. My wife and I made the decision to move to Ohio along with our three young children.

My first assignment as special representative was organizing the Wisconsin Central Railroad. While it took us months, the membership was successful and they formed a union. My job took me many places around our country, from the tracks in Wisconsin to an election protest on New Jersey Transit in Hoboken. As Chief of Staff for the BLE, under President Don M. Hahs from 2002–2006 I did double duty, serving as the Legislative and Political Director and Chief of Staff for the latter two years. This was when the Advisory Board proposed a merger with the IBT to the mem-



2018 Convention

bership. This decision has had such a tremendous positive difference for our Brotherhood and in the support of our Brothers and Sisters.

My most difficult and impactful assignment was my role on the Safety Task Force, assisting with NTSB investigations on major rail accidents. The horror of a major accident is indescribable and heart-breaking. What I experienced being in the forefront of the investigation of these traumatic events helped shape



Seeling

my career. I never wanted to see another Brother or Sister not come home to their loved ones after a day on the railroad. I long kept a picture of Brother Chris Seeling, who was killed in a tragic accident on January 6, 2005, in Graniteville, South Carolina. Chris's parents came to Washington, D.C. to tell the story of the loss of their son to our Congressional leaders, and helped



1997 BLE rally with his kids Caroline and Jeff



President Barack Obama



Supporting striking Verizon workers



The late Rep. John Lewis



The late Rep. Jim Oberstar



Rep. Tim Ryan

the Brotherhood in our efforts to make our jobs safer for all.

Rail safety has been a personal passion and my professional priority. In 2006, I ran and was elected by the Delegates at the BLET's First National Convention. It was during this campaign that I learned that a thick skin is required in union politics. As Vice President and National Legislative Representative since 2006, I've had the privilege to serve in a position where I can make a difference for our Brothers and Sisters. After improving protections for whistleblowers in 2007, with the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 our fight led to passage of the first federal rail safety legislation in over a decade. While I was always just part of a greater team, providing testimony on behalf of our Brothers and Sisters to our country's leaders has been the honor of a lifetime.

Together we have helped provide our rail workers with whistleblower protections, mandated the implementation of Positive Train Control, and advanced our agenda in the rail industry at all levels of

government across the country.

The past 14 years representing the Brotherhood in Washington, D.C. has been the greatest honor in my long career. It's been a special privilege to work alongside and have the support of our Teamster Brothers and Sisters, including General President James Hoffa, a true icon of the American labor movement.

I have worked under seven BLE/BLET presidents, none longer than National President Dennis R. Pierce, and I've had the pleasure of being surrounded throughout my career by intelligent, caring, and dedicated people. We have accomplished great things and I am privileged to help move the BLET train off the side track and onto the mainline in our Nation's capital.

A big thank you to all who have supported me and have been involved in this great Brotherhood. You have all made a difference in my journey, and I truly appreciate all the Presidents, Vice Presidents, Legislative Chairmen, General Chairmen, BLET Auxiliary, the D.C. staff, the Cleveland staff, families, and the entire mem-

bership. I appreciate everyone who made the phone calls, wrote the letters, and came to D.C. to educate Congress on things that matter to BLET members and their families.

But we must remember that every day brings a new fight. As the great Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Now is not the time to remain silent on things that matter." Stay active and stay involved. There will be many obstacles in our tracks, but stay the course and we will persevere. There is no such thing as complacency when it comes to rail safety and labor protections, especially in our changing world. The work will never be done.

But it's time for me to pass the torch to a new generation of leaders. I want to thank my family for supporting me all the way, my wife Chris and our kids Caroline, Jeff, and Johanna. I cannot begin to thank them enough for allowing me to give my calling and passion to this Brotherhood. And I am proud to have been able to fight to make things better for them, and for all BLET families.

It has been a privilege to serve. 🇺🇸



# OMB, not “deep state” but definitely an opaque one



BY VINCENT G. VERNA  
DIRECTOR OF  
REGULATORY AFFAIRS

In my prior articles I have explained to my BLET Brothers and Sisters some of the complications faced by a union officer or staffer working in the nation’s capital. I have tried to connect some of the dots where politics, legislation and regulations intersect with the working lives we lead as locomotive engineers and trainmen. It is a big challenge trying to turn D.C. complexities into simple, easy to understand concepts. There is just so much.

This article was originally going to be titled OMB, OMG, WTF because most of the time I have read anything, encountered anything or had to talk about anything related to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), this has been the thought that crossed my mind. OMG and What the ####? Many BLET members do not get to hear much about the OMB. It operates mostly behind the scenes and will rarely let anyone peek behind its curtain.

We have very few meetings with OMB and when we have had them, they really do not talk to us. They will typically listen, say thank you and leave the meeting. It has to be experienced to gain an appreciation for how mysterious meeting with OMB staff can feel. This is not a conclusion drawn from large amount of data, but from the few experiences the BLET has actually been permitted to interact with OMB. OMB’s internal documents that are used to make decisions are not made public, and they are not easy to gain access to during an administration. They are

“As far as “draining the swamp” — at the OMB the swamp does not get drained.

It does, however, get *exchanged*. Every presidential administration has its own set of political appointees who run the managerial side of the OMB.”

usually in archives long before someone sees them.

As far as “draining the swamp” — at the OMB the swamp does not get drained. It does, however, get *exchanged*. Every presidential administration has its own set of political appointees who run the managerial side of the OMB.

This is all located in the Eisenhower Old Executive Office Building and across Pennsylvania Avenue in the New Executive Office Building, both of which are within walking distance of the White House. This physical separation within OMB produces a conceptual tug-of-war between stability and instability or, put another way, between continuity and disruption. This is not inherently a bad push-pull. Seeking to disrupt the same old thing that does not get results by trying new things is admirable. But a certain command of historical knowledge is required in order to determine whether or not an idea really is a new one.

It is not only possible, but it is likely, that a “new idea” often is an old idea that has been discarded because it already had been tried by a previous Administration and failed. As Shelley Lynne Tomkin points out in her book *Inside OMB: Politics and Process in the President’s Budget*

*Office*, “the OMB is part of the Executive Office of the President (EOP) this houses OMB, along with the White House staff, the Office of the Vice President, the National Security Council, the Council of Economic Advisors and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, among others. OMB has an annual budget of \$56 million and a 518 person staff. It is the largest of any one office of in the EOP.”

If it seems OMB occupies a huge portion of EOP, you’re right. One problem is that even though it occupies such a large footprint at EOP, the 518 people staffing the OMB can in no way possess all the expertise necessary to complete its mission. In addition to managing and budgeting, OMB also serves as the final filter for Executive Branch agency regulatory actions, such as regulations promulgated by the FRA or the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Thus, it is not unreasonable to ask how OMB also can have the staff with the requisite and expansive subject matter expertise to understand topics from basic railroad operations, PTC or Railroad Retirement and occupational disability? And keep in mind that OMB is not just looking at FRA and RRB. It is responsible for *all the federal agencies under control of the Executive Branch*.

The OMB was created in 1970, as the successor agency to the Bureau of the Budget, which was established in 1921 as a part of the Department of the Treasury. For purposes of our focus, OMB has been the final filter through which government regulations must pass for the past four decades. It also is used as the office of support for the Executive Branch’s budget proposals to Congress. The OMB is responsible for developing budgets for the Executive Branch agencies — and the rules and regulations these agencies promulgate — and then



presenting this budget in the President's annual budget to Congress.

OMB is officially tasked with the following:

*"Budget development and execution. Management, including oversight of agency performance, human capital, Federal procurement, financial management, and information technology. Regulatory policy, including coordination and review of all significant Federal regulations by executive agencies. Legislative clearance and coordination."*  
— From [www.whitehouse.gov/omb/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/)

The current Director of OMB is Russell Vought. Prior to serving in the Trump Administration, Director Vought spent over 20 years working in Washington, D.C. with grassroots and public policy organizations. Before joining the Administration, he worked for seven years as Vice President of Heritage Action for America. Prior to this, he worked on Capitol Hill, serving as

the Policy Director for the House Republican Conference, under then-Chairman (and now Vice President) Mike Pence, as the Executive Director of the Republican Study Committee (RSC), and as a legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Phil Gramm. He is the third Director since 2016.

As citizens, we are touched by everything on the list above. As locomotive engineers and trainmen, our main focus is on the "regulatory policy, including coordination and review of all significant Federal regulations by executive agencies."

The purpose of this article is not to make us experts on OMB. We certainly are not. However, we have a clear understanding that the OMB represents a complex and opaque office within the Executive Branch. The President appoints all of the management of OMB, plus the Secretary of Transportation, the Administrator of the FRA, along with all other

senior- and policy-level appointments within the Executive Branch.

These are not things we need to concern ourselves with at the controls of the locomotive. We all know that we must be ever vigilant to the task at hand when running the engine. However, these are items that we need to be concerned with as far as how the table is set in Washington when we get a chance to have a seat at the table. Because of the complex and obscure nature of the OMB, our strategies must be proportioned to tackle problems legislatively and with the FRA (not that they are the most transparent either). It is critical to know that the OMB is one of the last hurdles to passing safety regulations that can and do benefit our members. Anyone working in D.C. who does not know who OMB is or how it operates goes to their job with one hand tied behind their back, and is not set up to succeed. 🚂

## BLET's John Tolman retires; Vince Verna is new Vice President & National Legislative Representative

**A**fter a distinguished railroad career that began nearly 50 years ago, BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman retired on November 4, 2020. His alternate, Vincent G. Verna, succeeded to his place on the BLET Advisory Board effective November 5, 2020.

"It would be trite to merely state that John Tolman's retirement will leave big shoes to fill," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I think it is much more accurate to say that his unique style cannot be duplicated. However, Brother Vince Verna has had many years to learn the territory under Brother Tolman's mentorship, and I am confident that Brother Verna will continue the BLET's high level of legislative leadership that has

been established during John Tolman's remarkable tenure as Vice President and National Legislative Representative."

The BLET Bylaws dictate the order of succession in filling vacancies on the Advisory Board, including when a National Division Officer retires. Having won election by acclamation to the office of First Alternate Vice President & National Legislative Representative at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018, Brother Verna will automatically fill the office vacated by Brother Tolman's retirement. Verna has worked out of the BLET's National Legislative office for the past nine years, having served as Director of Regulatory Affairs since August 1, 2011.

Brother Verna was twice elected by acclamation to the office of First Alternate VP&NLR: first at the BLET's Third National Conven-

tion in 2014 and again at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018. His railroad career began in 1994 when he hired out as a brakeman for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Los Angeles, Calif. He transferred to engine service in March of 1995 in Tucson, Ariz., and joined BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.) on November 17, 1995. Verna became actively involved in the Brotherhood almost immediately, serving as Alternate Legislative Representative of Division 28 in 1995, and as Vice Local Chairman in 1999. Brother Vince continued in both positions until becoming Division 28's Legislative Representative in 2006 and full-time Local Chairman in 2008. Brother Verna also began serving as Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board in 2008, a position he was reelected to in 2009.

Brother Verna began working full time for the BLET National Division on August 1, 2011, when he was appointed to the position of Director of Regulatory Affairs by President Pierce. In his role as Director of Regulatory Affairs, Verna represented the BLET in regulatory matters before the Department of Transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board the Transportation Security Administration, and the Transportation Research Board, among others agencies and organizations.

Brother Verna a proud third generation railroader. His father Fred retired as a conductor from UP in 2010 after 48 years of service. Also, his great uncle was a conductor for the Penn Central and the Southern Pacific, and his brother Tony is a BLET member and locomotive engineer working at Union Pacific. 🚂



## *BLET President's Message*

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

# Tribute to an extraordinary lawyer and friend

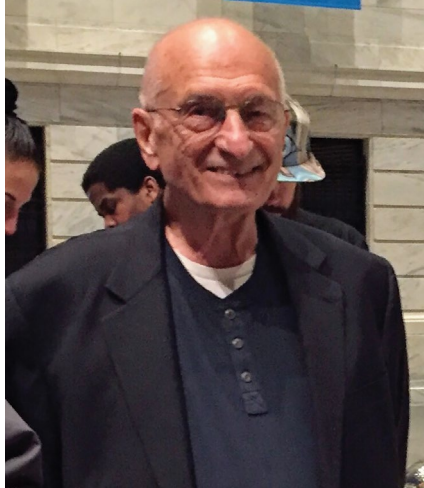
Our Brotherhood lost one of its greatest friends in November when retired General Counsel Harold A. Ross passed away at the age of 89. He served our union as General Counsel from 1967-2011, and during that time made a profoundly positive and lasting impact that still benefits our members to this day.

After graduating from high school in 1948, Brother Harold worked at a steel mill during summers to pay for his college education. He graduated from the Western Reserve College in 1953 and from Harvard Law School in 1956, passing the bar exam that same year. Like many young men of his generation, he served in the U.S. Army from 1956-58.

As a graduate of Harvard Law, Brother Harold was more than qualified to begin practicing law at any number of prestigious institutions. So to me, it really says something about the content of Harold's character that he chose to begin his career by working for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1958 (the year that I was born). He probably could have earned a much bigger paycheck by working for a Class I railroad or one of their outside counsel law firms, but I believe Brother Harold selected his path because it was more important to him to defend the rights of working Americans against the abuses of employers.

The Railway Labor Act (RLA) is the law that governs labor relations in the railroad industry, and it became Brother Harold's area of expertise. The law was passed in 1926 and amended in 1934, 1936 and 1951, so it was relatively new by today's standards when Brother Harold began working for the Brotherhood in 1958.

The railroad industry of that era was very different than it is at the present time. There were over 125 Class I carriers in the 1950s, compared to just seven today. There was no Federal Railroad



Brother Harold Ross served as General Counsel for our Brotherhood for 44 years until he retired in 2011.

Administration; railroad safety was regulated on a very limited basis by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). Union shop agreements had been authorized by the RLA for only seven years, and there were five unions representing operating employees.

Nonetheless, Brother Ross was a pioneer who quickly became one of the nation's foremost authorities on the RLA. Brother Harold commanded respect from both sides of the courtroom, where he spoke as a gentleman with unmistakable confidence. He performed extraordinarily well in the most difficult of cases.

In more than four decades of distinguished legal service to the BLE and BLET, Brother Harold twice argued before the Supreme Court of the United States. The first case he argued was ICC v. Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1987. The second time was when he prevailed in *Landers v. Amtrak* and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1988.

In ICC v. BLE, the ICC had issued an order in 1982 granting Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Co. and another railroad the right to conduct operations using the

tracks of a third, newly consolidated carrier. The following year, Brother Harold filed a Petition for Clarification on behalf of the BLE asking the ICC to declare that the earlier order did not authorize the tenant railroads to use their own crews on routes they had not previously served, which the ICC denied. BLE and the UTU then filed timely petitions for reconsideration of the ICC order, which the ICC also denied. The unions petitioned for review by the Court of Appeals, which vacated the ICC and ruled for the unions on the merits. A 5-justice majority of the Supreme Court reversed the Court of Appeals, ruling that federal agency decisions denying petitions for reopening based on "material error" are not subject to judicial review, even if the denial is arbitrary or contrary to law.

In the *Landers* case, *Landers* was a passenger engineer employed by Amtrak, who belonged to the UTU. His request to be represented by that union at a company-level disciplinary investigation was denied, because the BLE was the recognized collective bargaining representative of all passenger engineers. *Landers* then filed suit in Federal District Court seeking declaratory and injunctive relief against Amtrak and the BLE on the ground that their refusal to allow his representation by the UTU at the hearing violated his rights under the RLA. The court dismissed the complaint after a bench trial, and the Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal. A unanimous Supreme Court held that the RLA does not entitle a railroad employee to be represented at company-level grievance or disciplinary proceedings by a union other than his collective bargaining representative, which is the union entitled to provide "exclusive representation" on the property. Although it came at a time when our relationships with other Unions were much different, it is thanks to

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# Paul Piekarski served as Chairman of Illinois State Legislative Board, NASLBC

**B**rother Paul S. Piekarski, who has been a member of the BLET for over 46 years — including over a decade of service as Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board — retired effective February 7, 2020.

Brother Piekarski's railroad career began 47 years ago. He hired out on September 17, 1973, as a clerk/passenger ticket agent with the Chicago and NorthWestern Railroad (CNW) in Chicago. He went firing in February of 1974 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in April of 1975. Brother Piekarski has been a proud member of BLET Division 683 (Chicago) since 1974.

Much of Brother Piekarski's railroad career was spent in dedicated service to the BLET and its membership. He served Division 683 as President from 1998-2010, and as Legislative Representative from 1998-2011.

In 2004, Brother Piekarski became 1st Vice Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board and was elected by acclamation to that position at the Board's 2006 quadrennial meeting. He was promoted to the Chairman's position following the retirement of C. Edward Way on May 31, 2010. Brother Piekarski was then reelected as Chairman at the Board's 2010, 2014 and 2018 quadrennial meetings.

During his tenure as Chairman, Brother Piekarski successfully lobbied Illinois legislators to pass one of the few two-person crew laws in the United States. On August 9, 2019, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker signed Senate Bill 24, or the Two Person Freight Train Act, into law. The law requires two certified employees in the cab of certain trains. Brother Piekarski — along with fellow BLET officers — spent months lobbying for passage of the bill. As Chairman, Brother Piekarski delivered



Paul Piekarski served the BLET as Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board from 2006 until his retirement in 2020.



Piekarski in Washington D.C. with John Tolman, BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative.

key testimony before major hearings of the Illinois House Transportation, Roads and Bridges Committee. His testimony helped convince a majority of members of the committee to pass the much-needed safety legislation.

In 2013, Brother Piekarski helped

to launch the Illinois State Legislative Board's annual scholarship program. Known as the Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, the program provides financial assistance to the children of BLET members who are in good standing with a BLET Local Division represented by the Illinois State Legislative Board. Over the past seven years, numerous BLET families have benefitting from the generosity of Brother Piekarski and others thanks to the Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund.

During his career of service to the BLET, Brother Piekarski also served on the Hazmat Identification RSAC Committee, represented the Teamsters Rail Conference at the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Conference from 2010-2020, and represented the BLET at the annual National Conference of State Legislators from 2010-2019.

Brother Piekarski served as an influential leader of the BLET's National Association of State Legislative Board

Chairmen. He held various elected offices with the NASLBC over the years, including First Vice Chairman (2013-2017) and Chairman (2017-2020).

Brother Piekarski and his wife Joyce Ann were married on May 5, 1979. They have two children, Jennifer and Brandon, and two granddaughters, Lillian and London.

During his free time, Brother Piekarski enjoys boating and can be found fishing and cruising on the Great Lakes. He is a life time member of the Boys & Girls Club of America and a member of the DuPage Rail Safety Council.

Upon his retirement, Brother Piekarski received a proclamation from both the Illinois State Senate and the Illinois House of Representatives. The Senate proclamation, presented by Senator Michael E. Hastings on February 4, 2020, reads in part: "Paul Piekarski has tirelessly supported and fought for labor and rail safety on the local, state and federal levels... and we extend our warmest congratulations to Paul Piekarski for his exceptional 46 year tenure and do wish Paul and his family the very best for the future."

BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman, who worked hand-in-hand with Brother Piekarski for many years, offered his best wishes for a safe, happy and healthy retirement. "I would like to thank Paul for his friendship, leadership and compassion in making this Brotherhood a better place through his years of dedicated and selfless leadership as Chairman of the NASLBC and as Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board," Tolman said. "Also, I would be remiss if I didn't thank his family for allowing us his time. Best wishes to you and Joyce for many happy years together during retirement."

Brother Piekarski concluded: "While I may be retired from union leadership and the CNW/Union Pacific Railroad, I will always be a proud lifetime member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen." 🎵

## D.J. Albert retired as #1 on Amtrak seniority roster for Zone 3 engineers



D.J. Albert on the day of his Last Run

**A**fter a 42-year career with Conrail and Amtrak, BLET Division 752 (Rensselaer, N.Y.) member D.J. Albert completed his Last Run on June 25, 2020. At the time of his retirement, Brother D.J. held the distinction of being #1 on Amtrak's Zone 3 seniority roster for locomotive engineers.

In 1978, Brother D.J. hired out with Conrail as a tower operator in Ashtabula, Ohio. He went firing in April of 1979 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in February of 1980. Brother D.J. initiated into the Brotherhood on March 1, 1980, and has been a member of Division 752 since 1983. In May of 1986, Brother D.J. made the transition from Conrail to Amtrak, and has worked as an Amtrak locomotive engineer for the past 34 years. He is the proud owner of a 40-year BLET membership pin.

Brother D.J.'s Last Run was on June 25, 2020. He worked as a locomotive engineer for Amtrak and operated a P-42 locomotive between Buffalo and Syracuse, N.Y. His retirement became effective on June 28, 2020.

Brother D.J. comes from a large and dedicated railroad family. His father Louis Albert was a train dispatcher in

Erie, Pa., who had 40+ years of service when he retired in Cleveland, Ohio. His brother D.L. Albert had 48 years of railroading, including 46 as a locomotive engineer, when he retired from Amtrak on November 7, 2019. Like his Brother D.J., D.L. Albert was also a member of BLET Division 752. D.L. was #6 on Amtrak's national seniority roster and was #2 in Zone 3 when he retired. His other brother Darryl had 40+ years of service. Darryl worked as a CSX locomotive engineer and was a member of BLET Division 3 in Cleveland before retiring in 2013. His nephew Matt has 20+ years of service and currently works out of the Collinwood Yard in Cleveland, and his other nephew Chad also has 20+ years of railroading. Chad is a long time member of Division 3 (Cleveland) who works a traveling switcher in Erie, Pa.

Brother D.J. and his wife Linda were married on July 26, 2008. He has five children and seven grandchildren. During his free time, Brother D.J. enjoys golf, woodworking, and working on model trains and cars. He plans to spend more time sleeping at home in his own bed during retirement. 🎵

# Metra's John Appel retires after 52 years of service

Possibly the last Milwaukee Road engineer working in the U.S.

In 1968 when he was 17 years old, John Appel cared more about dating than he did about trains. But two weeks after graduating high school, these unrelated interests became curiously entangled.

"I had never been on a train before in my life," Appel said. "A girl I was dating, her father was an engineer and he said, 'If you're gonna date my daughter, you gotta get a job.' So that's how I started."

And he never stopped. On June 29, Appel retired after 52 years of service. The Metra engineer began his railroad career on July 5, 1968 as a fireman with the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad — better known as the Milwaukee Road. His retirement marks the end of an era not only for him, but for his craft. Appel is the last engineer to have joined the ranks when Metra acquired the Milwaukee Road's commuter lines in 1987, and possibly the last Milwaukee Road engineer working in the country.

"Went by in a hurry, believe it or not, as long as it's been," Appel said on one of his recent inbound runs from Fox Lake. "Went by in a hurry. It's unbelievable how fast life goes by, so enjoy it, which I do."

He spent the first 41 years of his career on the Fox Lake subdivision — the predecessor of today's Milwaukee District North Line — 10½ on the North Central Service and will now end his career on the Fox Lake sub where it all started. Ask Appel if he's considered the significance of his retirement to the railroad and he'll take the humble route.

"There's nothing special about me," Appel contended. "I'm just another guy retiring."

But if you ask his colleagues, Appel's retirement is an immeasurable loss for the railroad. He's trained generations of engineers and conductors, and



John Appel at the throttle during his Last Run

worked with care, respect, knowledge, and candor that's unrivaled.

"John raised us," said Metra conductor Ryan Dempsey, who's worked with Appel for 20 years. "I was just a kid when I started. He picked on us a lot over the years, but he taught us it's serious out there and to never be complacent. We're running million-dollar equipment with thousands of lives. I'm ecstatic for him, but he's going to be truly missed."

## THE BEGINNING

For the first five years of his career, Appel was a fireman on the Milwaukee Road's freight trains running on the Fox Lake subdivision. In the steam engine days, a fireman was responsible for stoking the fire to maintain steam pressure in the boiler. By the time John arrived, the Milwaukee Road had been dieselizeed, meaning he was responsible for assisting the engineer, gaining real life experience for when he took the engineer's seat himself.

"I was on the engine every day," Appel said. "I picked out the parts I thought were good and the parts I said 'I'll never do it that way.'"

He worked with men who had run steam engines, and some who had served in World War II. They were the kind of guys who had never heard of kid gloves and wouldn't mince words if they thought you'd done something wrong. They were also the kind to play jokes.

Appel remembered on one of his first trips as they approached a curve, the engineer told him to run back and turn a big steel wheel slightly to the right.

"And I did," Appel laughed, shaking his head.

In some ways, it's a different railroad than it was 52 years ago. Not only does his first job, fireman, no longer exist, but signal systems and rules have changed, cab cars now have radios, customers and pedestrians have distracting cell phones, and Positive Train Control (PTC) now dictates how railroad operate.

"And there's the loss of hair color," Appel said, white hair bouncing with the cadence of the rails.

Those early days were the best because everything was new. ("I can't learn anymore. The gum ball machine is broke," he joked.) He hostled freight in



John Appel standing next to Metra locomotive 405, the Milwaukee Road heritage unit, which had decals added to it to honor Appel's last run. **Photo:** Metra Coach Cleaner Mark Llanuza

Milwaukee, worked on the turbo trains, and remembers early morning jaunts to the lakefront in Madison after chugging there through the night.

## BECOMING AN ENGINEER

Appel was promoted to engineer on Dec. 12, 1973. He eventually made the switch from freight to passenger operations, a move that gave him more stability. However, stability is a relative term in the railroad. Like many engineers, he missed milestones as his five sons were growing up.

"He's been through all of it: working the midnight job, working Christmas and Thanksgiving. Your wife is having a baby and you can't be there," said his wife of 40 years, Chrissy Appel. "So, when he trains these new engineers, he totally understands how hard it is."

He was able to coach little league for a few seasons, and Chrissy understood the life, having a father and grandfather who both worked out of town when she was growing up.

"We'd celebrate when he got home," Chrissy said. "You make it work."

As he rose through the seniority roster — he retired at number one — he became involved in the union representing engineers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He served at various points as president and local chairman and vice chairman. He first joined the BLET on November 1, 1968, and has held continuous membership in Division 575 (Chicago) since May 1, 1996.

Metra conductor Don Kiesgen Jr. credits Appel for teaching him about the camaraderie and teamwork that goes into being a conductor, but also a union member.

"It's one thing reading a rule book, and it's another when you're out there," Kiesgen said. "John breaks it down so much easier. He's very knowledgeable and he's a true brother. He taught us it's what's best for everybody. It's not me, it's us."

John also trained new engineers throughout his career. He earned a reputation among engineers and conductors alike for being direct.

"He's fair. He'll give it to you straight," Kiesgen said. "He is who he is. You ei-

ther like him or you don't, and he doesn't care either way."

Appel sees himself and his fellow engineers as a small part of what it takes to run the railroad, telling his trainees to leave their egos at the door and focus on the task at hand.

"The hours we work, the concentration, the sound, some of the tragic things we go through, it wears on you," Appel said. "The key is to concentrate on what you're doing when you're doing it. That's something you have to work at."

## "I'VE STILL GOT A LOT TO DO"

Appel estimates he's traveled enough miles on trains to make four trips to the moon and back in the last 52 years. It's the sight of that moon or the sun rising over the city skyline that he'll miss most about being in the cab of an inbound train.

He'll also miss the friendships he's made over the years.

"Some of these young guys are like my kids," Appel said. "It's like walking away from your own family. It's pretty tough to do."

But it's time.



Brother Appel climbs down from the locomotive following his Last Run.

Despite the long hours, stressful days, Appel's managed to live a full life outside of work.

"I already do it all, this railroading thing is getting in the way," he quipped.

In fact, he has a reputation for being something of a renaissance man who can't sit still.

Appel reads constantly between train runs, he's also bowled several sanctioned 300 games, loves golf, fishing, hunting and anything with a motor in it, has a knack for making stained glass, and isn't above getting his nails done by his six granddaughters. Then there's his gift of gab.

"He's very outgoing. He could talk to a wall for hours," said his middle son, Jeremy. "Everyone loves him. Even when I was in high school, friends would want to hang out with my dad, which, when you're in high school, is the last thing you want. You realize when you're older that's a pretty cool thing."

He's looking forward to spending time with his grandchildren, sons and wife. He might travel or take some more fishing trips.

"All I know is I've still got a lot to do," he said.

Reflecting on his career, he said one of his favorite memories was running the Nickel Plate 765 steam engine on June 12, 2016. A fitting assignment for a man whose first railroad job has its roots in the railroad's steam era.

"I was picking cinders out of my hair for a week," he said.

As for what his favorite modern Metra locomotive is, it's simple.

"Whatever one is the last one." 📻

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## Former CN-WC General Chairman John Reynolds retires

Brother John W. Reynolds, who served for nearly two decades as General Chairman of the Canadian National/Wisconsin Central General Committee of Adjustment (GCA), has retired after a 42-year railroad career.

Brother Reynolds began serving the Wisconsin Central GCA as General Chairman in early 2003, and over the next 17 years, he was reelected five times — all by acclamation. Most recently, he was reelected at the GCA's 2016 quadrennial meeting and retired at the GCA's 2020 quadrennial meeting, which was held on April 21, 2020.

Brother Reynolds hired out on the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad (Frisco) in 1978. He is a member of BLET Division 209 (Green Bay) and has held continuous membership since September 1, 1997. On February 24, 2003, he was elevated to the office of General Chairman of the CN-WC GCA, then reelected by acclamation in 2004, 2007, 2011, 2012 and 2016. In 2012, the GCA held a special meeting after the WC GCA merged with the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range and the Two Harbors GCAs.

Brother Reynolds also served as Vice Chairman of the BLET's Western General Chairmen's Association for several years during his career. In 2009, Brother Reynolds served as Chairman of the BLET's 69th annual International Western Convention (IWC), hosting the meeting in Green Bay, Wisc. Brother Reynolds also served the Brotherhood as a member of the Work Committee at the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce congratulated Brother Reynolds upon his retirement in a letter dated April 23, 2020.

"Brother John, please accept my



John W. Reynolds retired after a 42 year railroad career.

most sincere congratulations upon your retirement as General Chairman, and upon completing an illustrious career as an officer of our Brotherhood. Your dedication and perseverance provide a model for all BLET officers to aspire to. It has been my personal honor and privilege to work with you and I deeply appreciate your friendship and support over these many years. In our time working together as General Chairmen, and most certainly in the time that I served as the BLET National Vice President assigned to your General Committee, I saw first-hand your personal devotion to your membership and to our great Brotherhood... [H]aving served the Brotherhood honorably for all these years, you have now bid on the best job you can hold," President Pierce wrote. 📻

# Division 3's Abraham returned to trains after NCAA football career

**B**rother Steve R. (Abe) Abraham of BLET Division 3 (Cleveland, Ohio) safely completed his Last Run for CSX on November 20, 2019.

Brother Abraham originally hired out with the Penn Central (PC) Railroad in June of 1974, but he never went to work for the PC. Instead, he attend college and played Division I football for Michigan State University. NCAA rules prohibited student athletes from working and accepting money if they had full scholarships — which Brother Abraham had — so he delayed the start of his railroad career to focus on college and football.

At Michigan State, Brother Abraham studied a variety of courses, including health and physical education, business, and hotel and restaurant management. He played tight end for the Spartans and had two teammates who would go on to achieve national fame: Kirk Gibson, who would become an All-Star Major League Baseball player for the Detroit Tigers and Los Angeles Dodgers; and Tyrone Willingham, who would become head football coach for Stanford University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Washington.

Brother Abraham's return to the railroad industry came in September of 1994 when he was hired by Conrail as a conductor/engineer in Ashtabula, Ohio. He first earned promotion to locomotive engineer in September of 1995, but bounced back to the conductor craft for the next several months. He was promoted again in the summer of 1996, working the rest of his career as a locomotive engineer. In the year 2000, Brother Abraham chose to work for CSX following the purchase and split of Conrail by CSX and Norfolk Southern.

Brother Abraham worked at a variety of locations over the years. In the early days of his career, he worked from Ashtabula to locations such as Conway, Mingo Junction, Cleveland, and Whis-



Brother Abraham accepts a retirement plaque from Division 3 Local Chairman Erin Patterson.

key Island. After the Conrail split, he worked from Cleveland to Buffalo. He eventually started working out of Buffalo and worked to Willard and Crestline. Near the end of his career, he worked several local jobs in the Ashtabula area and finished his career on a local job in Ashtabula.

During his career, Brother Abraham served the membership of the BLET as an elected union officer. In the late 1990s, he served as Local Chairman of BLET Division 260 in Ashtabula, Ohio. He later served Division 3 in Cleveland, Ohio as Vice Local Chairman and President from 2007-2010.

Brother Abraham and his wife Camille celebrated their 32nd wedding anniversary in August 2020. They have one daughter, Alexis. His wife's father, Cosmo R. Fish, worked as a conductor for Conrail for about 20 years. With the initials C.R., Fish earned the apt nickname "Conrail Fish."

Brother Abraham enjoys playing golf in his free time and to this day remains

a proud Michigan State fan. Brother Abraham reports that he used to have a standing bet with BLET Conrail General Chairman Pat Driscoll every time Michigan State played Notre Dame in football. Brother Driscoll is a big Notre Dame fan.

The members of BLET Division 3 hosted a retirement party for Brother Abraham at their regular monthly meeting in Cleveland on February 10, 2020. He was presented with a plaque by Division 3 Local Chairman Erin Patterson. Retired conductor Jerry Lambert helped to organize the event, while retired Division 3 engineer Doug Berg took plenty of photos to document the occasion.

"I had a nice career and met a lot of good people," Brother Abraham said. "Serving the union was a good learning experience. You learned how to make peace between the parties... you have to give a little and take a little to keep things running smoothly. I also learned that in the railroad industry, the union is a necessity, in my opinion." 🍷

# Lund retires after distinguished career of service to BLET members

**B**rother Gregory W. Lund, a member of BLET Division 421 (Buffalo, N.Y.), completed his Last Run for CSX Transportation on June 30, 2020.

Brother Lund started his railroad career in March of 1979 as a Tower Operator, and eventually as Train Dispatcher, on Conrail at Buffalo, N.Y., and New York, N.Y. He moved into engine service in 1989 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer for Conrail later that same year. He first joined the Brotherhood on February 1, 1991.

Brother Lund has been actively involved in the Brotherhood since 1993, serving as Vice President and President of Division 421, while also handling claims for his Division throughout the years. Brother Lund served as Legislative Representative of Division 421, Secretary-Treasurer of the CSX-Northern District/Conrail SAA General Committee of Adjustment, and as Secretary-Treasurer of the New York State Legislative Board. He also served on the Arrangements Committee during BLET National Conventions in 2006, 2010 and 2014.

Brother Lund worked as a Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineers, certifying the skills performance of other locomotive engineers, in 2005, and has been involved with Critical Incident Response Teams for 15 years. He was an Operation Red Block Team Captain for 10 years and has been a member of a joint CSX/BLET/UTU program to clarify Carrier operating rules and was appointed to the Federal Railroad Administration's "SOFA" (Switching Operations Fatality Analysis) Working Group, and to a Railroad Safety Advisory Committee Working Group studying electronic device distraction until those programs were discontinued by the Carrier and FRA.

Beginning in March of 2012, Brother Lund was appointed by National President Dennis R. Pierce to serve the Na-



For his Last Run, Brother Lund worked a yard job in Niagara Falls, N.Y., on June 30, 2020.

tional Division as Director of Research and Assistant to the Office Administrator. In that role, he provided assistance on collective bargaining matters, and assisted in administration and in oversight of the day-to-day operations of the National Division office. He held this position for a short while before deciding to return home to Buffalo to be with his family and to resume running trains.

Brother Lund also helped to organize the Western New York & Pennsylvania railroad, and helped to negotiate their first-ever union contract. In 2018, Brother Lund served as a member of the Salaries Committee during the BLET's Fourth National Convention.

His last road assignment was on train Q008-26 on June 26th, 2020 between Willard/Crestline, Ohio and Buffalo, N.Y. and his last official assignment was on train Y123-30 in Niagara Falls, N.Y. on June 30, 2020. His retirement was effective July 1, 2020. At the joint union meeting of Division 421 and Division

382 on August 17, 2020, BLET Vice President James P. Louis presented a brass bell to Brother Lund on behalf of the combined membership. Vice President Louis is a member of Division 421.

Brother Lund and his wife, Margaret, have three children (Michele, Madeline, and Zachary) and three grandchildren (Sofia, Ezekiel, and Isaiah).

In a letter congratulating Brother Lund on his retirement, President Pierce wrote: "On the one hand, I am very happy that your 41-year railroad career will end safely and profitably. On the other, my staff and I will very much miss what you have brought to National Division operations over the past decade, and all members will miss the contributions you have made during your 20-plus years of service to our great Brotherhood. Your service to the National Division during my Presidency has been remarkable. No matter whether the task was big or small, simple or complex, financial or

## Division 83's Tom Klepper retires with 46 years of BLET membership



**From left:** BLET Vice President Jim Louis presents a commemorative brass bell to Brother Lund following his Last Run.

Bylaws-related, you answered every bell and completed your assignment with professionalism and promptly. For that, all of us are in your debt. Brother Greg, I wish you a long, healthy and happy retirement.”

Upon retirement, Brother Lund expressed appreciation for the BLET and its ongoing work to provide good wages, benefits, job security and union protection to its members. “When you start your career, you don’t always understand the importance of a union in the workplace or the long term benefits of having union representation. At the end of your career however, you realize all too well how important that union was and is in your maintaining and hopefully gaining that goal of retirement. Benefits, representation and decent pay while working, and a retirement benefit that is terrific didn’t come by happenstance or the kindness of the Carriers, those benefits were negotiated and maintained by your union. A Union isn’t a perfect thing, nothing in life is, but having a Union represent you provides a voice, a collective voice for you the union member, and you make that voice strong by participating in that union. I cannot imagine a workplace without that voice, and words cannot express my gratitude to the BLET and the many union officers everywhere for providing and maintaining that voice in the workplace.”

**A**fter 49 years of railroading — including 46 years of membership in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen — Brother Tom G. Klepper of BLET Division 83 (Springfield, Mo.) safely completed his Last Run for the BNSF Railway on June 1, 2020.

Brother Klepper began his railroad career on May 23, 1971, when he hired out as a fireman for the Frisco Railroad in Springfield, Mo.. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer in August of 1973 and joined BLET Division 83 on February 1, 1974. Brother Klepper is a college graduate with a double-major in business administration and economics. He graduated from Drury College in Springfield, Mo., in 1972.

During the early 1990s, Brother Klepper served for a few years as Local Chairman of Division 83. He was friends with Frisco’s General Chairman at the time: William C. Walpert, who would eventually become National Secretary-Treasurer with the BLET National Division. Brother Walpert served as NST from 2001 until his retirement effective December 31, 2014.

Brother Klepper and his wife, Danja, were married on May 23, 2003, which is also the anniversary of when he hired out on the railroad. He has one son, Don, and two grandchildren. Brother Klepper’s grandfather, J.S. Webb, was a machinist helper for the Frisco.

The members of Division 83, along with many co-workers from other crafts, attended a retirement party in honor of Brother Klepper on the evening on June 18. The members of Division 83 presented him with a commemorative watch at the event.



Tom Klepper receives a BLET wristwatch upon his retirement

He estimates that 30-40 people were in attendance.

“We have a lot of championship young men in this union,” Brother Klepper said. “I will miss my co-workers, but I won’t miss running a train.”

During retirement, Brother Klepper plans to play golf while continuing to sell cars, operating and managing a car lot that he has owned since 1992.

“This will be the first time since I was 19-years-old that I will have a normal job,” Klepper said. “I’ll have to get my sleep pattern figured out.”

When asked if the carrier recognized his retirement in any way, Brother Klepper said: “They were just glad to see me go.”

Reflecting on the decision to retire after such a long railroad career, Brother Klepper concluded: “I thought 70 years old and 49 years of service was enough.”

# Larry Stokes retires from NS with 42-years of injury-free service

**B**rother R.L. (Larry) Stokes of BLET Division 59 (Valdosta, Ga.) retired with 42-years of injury-free service when he completed his Last Run for Norfolk Southern on June 30, 2020. Brother Stokes is a third generation railroader who followed in the footsteps of his father Robert Casey Stokes, a switchman who retired from the Southern Railway with 42 years of injury-free service (1950-1992), and his grandfather William Hester Stokes, a blacksmith who also worked 42-years injury-free for the Southern during the steam era.

Nicknamed "Safety Man" by his wife Kim, Brother Stokes was Norfolk Southern's Harold F. Hammond Award rail safety winner in 2011, and also was nominated for the award in 1997 and 1998. The Hammond Award was the railroad industry's top safety award until the program was retired in 2012. In 2011, he represented NS at the Hammond Award ceremony in Washington, D.C. Brother Stokes also received a Superintendent Safety Award from NS and served on the railroad's safety committee for 20 years. In that role, Brother Stokes made many posters to promote safety and was a facilitator at many safety workshops. He was also the editor of the safety newsletter in Jacksonville, Fla. Brother Stokes taught at the Norfolk Southern training center as an LET instructor. A certified Operation Lifesaver presenter, Brother Stokes has delivered important messages about railroad safety to countless school children in his home state of Georgia.

"I have enjoyed teaching the importance of safety around trains and railroad crossings with Operation Lifesaver for 15 years," Brother Stokes said. "I love spreading railroad safety to first responders, drivers education classes, and especially my wife's Pre-k class."



Brother Stokes on the day of his Last Run.



Larry, grandson Maverick, wife Kim, sister-in-law Jennifer, and daughter Caley.

Brother Stokes began his railroad career in 1978 when he hired out as a switchman for the Southern Railway in Jacksonville, Fla. He earned promotion to locomotive in 1992, and initiated into BLET Division 59 on September 1, 2004.

Brother Stokes comes from a large railroad family. In addition to his father Bobby and grandfather William, Brother Stokes also has two uncles — Gene Stokes (clerk) and Ernest Stokes (conductor) — who also worked for the Southern Railway. His father-in-law,

Charlie Ivey, retired from the mechanical department at CSX.

He and his wife Kimberly Ivey Stokes were married on November 16, 1979. The couple has two children, Robert Casey Stokes and Caley Dionne Stokes, and one grandson, Maverick Edwards. During his free time, Brother Stokes helps with a special needs group called Young Adult Club in Valdosta, Ga. His sister in law Jennifer Ivey is in the group. During retirement, Brother Stokes plans to do more work with his church and spend more time at his family farm in Kentucky. "I plan to enjoy more time with my grandson Maverick," Brother Stokes said. "He's five years old and he calls me Choo Choo."

On June 30, 2020, Brother Stokes safely completed his Last Run on train G68, operating a SD60 locomotive from Valdosta to Adel, Ga. His retirement became effective July 1, 2020.

Reflecting his 42-year career of injury-free service, Brother Stokes had this advice for today's young engineers: "Come to work with a good attitude and keep safety first in all that you do." 🚂

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

Brother Harold that the Brotherhood was able to secure this major legal victory.

A good lawyer requires many skills, none more important than the ability to communicate. Brother Ross was able to listen carefully with empathy and found common ground to establish a personal bond with whomever he spoke. From Grand Chief Engineer Guy Brown in 1958 to me in 2011, Brother Harold forged those personal bonds with 15 different Brotherhood presidents. And, through our Brotherhood's chief executives, his counsel guided hundreds of national officers and more than a thousand general chairmen.

I have never forgotten the first lessons that Brother Harold taught me as a young Vice General Chairman many years ago, or the ones that followed during my time as an officer. Even though Brother Harold announced his well-deserved retirement in 2004, he continued to take calls and provide counsel to BLET National Presidents — including me — until 2011. He did finally ask me in early 2011, “You do

**“A good lawyer requires many skills, none more important than the ability to communicate. Brother Ross was able to listen carefully with empathy and found common ground to establish a personal bond with whomever he spoke.”**

know that I am retired, don't you?” Even after that, Brother Harold joined us at our annual Employee Christmas luncheon almost every year. I think that I can speak for all of us at the National Division when I say that Brother Harold's presence in our lives will be missed.

In recognition of his illustrious career, Brother Harold was named an honorary member of the Union in 2004 when he first attempted to retire, a rare honor bestowed upon fewer than 20 individuals in the Union's 157-year history.

More than a gifted lawyer, Brother Harold was also a loving father and husband. He and his wife Elaine were married in 1961 and together they raised three

children: Leslie, Gregory and Jonathan. Elaine passed away in 2016. Greg has worked with distinction for the Brotherhood for over 20 years and currently serves the BLET National Division as Director of Communications, Director of Legal Affairs, and Assistant to the Office Administrator.

They say that a good lawyer is hard to find. I know our Brotherhood was lucky to find an excellent lawyer in 1958, and we were fortunate that Brother Harold stayed with us for more than a half century, 44 years of which were as General Counsel. It is difficult to find the right words to express our appreciation to Brother Harold, but I hope this humble tribute will provide comfort to his family. Tens of thousands of our members have benefited from his hard work, dedication and skill, and our Brotherhood is a stronger, more effective Union because of him. On behalf of our Advisory Board and all men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, I am proud to salute Harold A. Ross and extend our deepest and most heartfelt sympathies to the Ross family. 🕊

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# BLET Auxiliary awards 7 scholarships for the 2020-2021 school year

**C**ongratulations to the 7 scholarship recipients for the 2020-2021 academic school year! The Auxiliary is proud to be able to provide this funding to students who are children of BLET and BLET Auxiliary members.

Established in 1991, the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program provides \$1,000 scholarships to qualifying students who wish to pursue higher education. The Auxiliary also offers two \$2,500 scholarships annually in collaboration with Locomotive Engineers and Conductors Mutual Protective Association (LECMCA). The two \$2,500 scholarships are fully funded by LECMPA.

To apply for an Auxiliary Scholarship award, the applicant must be a son, daughter, stepson, or stepdaughter of a BLET Auxiliary member and a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer and Trainmen member (living or deceased), with each being a member at least one year. An exception has been made for those children of single-parent BLET members with at least one year of membership in the BLET and at least one year of membership as a BLET Auxiliary Associate Member. To qualify for the LECMPA-funded scholarships, the BLET member in the family must also be a member of LECMPA for no less than one year. Children of an unmarried BLET member who has been an Associate Member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year are also eligible.

In addition, applicants must be accepted for admis-

sion by an accredited university, college, trade school, or institute of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement.

For high school seniors entering an institute of higher learning for the first time, a copy of ACT or SAT scores and a current copy of cumulative grade point average (GPA) must accompany the application. For graduate students or students returning to an institute of higher learning, a copy of last term's (or most current) GPA must accompany the application. Applications submitted without these documents will not be considered.

The LECMPA-funded scholarships will be awarded to the two applicants who score the highest amongst those who qualify (by having one parent who is an Auxiliary member for at least one year, and one parent who is a BLET member and LECMPA member for at least one year). If an applicant meets the eligibility

requirements for the LECMPA-funded scholarships but is not selected for one of the two \$2,500 scholarships, he/she will still be eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship.

The application deadline is typically April 1. Applications received after that date will not be considered.

Applications, instructions for scholarships, and mailing address for submission may be found on the Auxiliary website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net).



**APPLICATIONS, INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, AND MAILING ADDRESS FOR SUBMISSION MAY BE FOUND ON THE AUXILIARY WEBSITE AT [WWW.BLETAUXILIARY.NET/SCHOLARSHIPS](http://WWW.BLETAUXILIARY.NET/SCHOLARSHIPS).**

## 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.

# 2020 - 2021 BLET AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

## LECMPA SCHOLARSHIP (\$2,500)



### CAMI PRICE

Cami will be attending Lake Erie College. Her father Timothy Price is a member of BLET Division 607 (Cleveland, Ohio) and is an LECMPA member. Her mother Tetianna is an Auxiliary Member at Large.

## LECMPA SCHOLARSHIP (\$2,500)



### DANIELLE FINCHMAN

Danielle will be attending the University of Nebraska. Her father Fredrick Fincham is a member of BLET Division 224 (Marysville, Kan.) and is an LECMPA member. Her mother Nancy Fincham is an Auxiliary Member at Large.

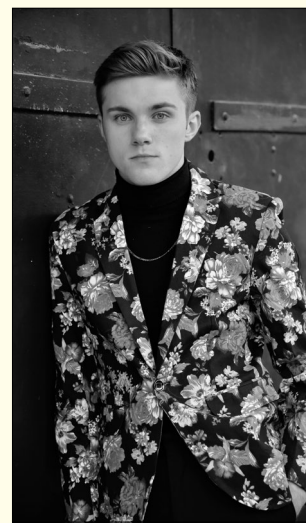
## NATIONAL AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)



### LILLY HYDE

Lilly will be attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her father Christopher Hyde is a member of BLET Division 314 (Rocky Mount, N.C.) and her mother Brandy Hyde is an Auxiliary Member at Large.

## LEONA A. LOUIS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)



### JARED BISBIKIS

Jared will be attending the University of San Francisco. His father is Jason Bisbikis, a member of BLET Division 839 (Richmond, Calif.) and his mother, Kathleen Bisbikis, is a member of Auxiliary 39 (Stockton, Calif.).

## NATIONAL AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)



### HILLARY SANCHEZ

Hillary will be attending San Francisco State University. Her father Mike Altman is a member of BLET Division 839 (Richmond, Calif.) and her mother Lynette is a member of Auxiliary 39 (Stockton, Calif.).

## NATIONAL AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)



### RACHEL STRUBE

Rachel will be attending Minnesota State University. Her late father John Strube was a member of BLET Division 27 (St. Cloud, Minn.) and her mother Rachael is an Auxiliary Member at Large.

## NATIONAL AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP (\$1,000)



### MAYSA WATTERS,

Maysa will be attending the University of New Mexico. Her father Russell Waters is a member of BLET Division 232 (Laurel, Mont.) and her mother Terri is an Auxiliary Member at Large.

## ABOUT THE AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The BLET Auxiliary offers \$1,000 scholarships annually to help the children of BLET and Auxiliary members reach their goals in life.

Applicants must have one parent who has been a member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year, and the other parent must be a member of the BLET for at least one year. Children of unmarried BLET members with at least one year of membership in the BLET and at least one year of membership as an associate member of the BLET Auxiliary are also eligible.

Applicants must be accepted or enrolled in an accredited university, college, or institution of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement. If the applicant is a graduate student or returning to college as a sophomore, junior, or senior, he or she must have a 3.0 grade point average or better to be considered.

The deadline for scholarship applications is usually April 1 each year. Application forms with detailed instructions attached are available for download at: [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net). Applicants must carefully follow all instructions in order to ensure that the application will qualify for acceptance and consideration by the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Committee.

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# Education is a Lifelong Journey



## The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

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Vocational Program Scholarships

*Application process opens on November 30, 2020 for  
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sons, daughters and financial dependents from the  
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*Deadline:*

**March 1, 2021**

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*For more information, visit [www.jrhmsf.org](http://www.jrhmsf.org) or scan the QR with your smartphone's camera or QR reader.*

For the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members. Academic scholarship awards range from \$1,000 to \$10,000 for high school seniors planning to attend a four-year college or university and training/vocational program awards range from \$500 to \$2,000 for use at community college or trade schools. See [www.jrhmsf.org](http://www.jrhmsf.org) for more information.