

Journal

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN

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Essential Employees

ART BLAKEY PROUD TO REPRESENT BLET AT HERO'S PARADE IN NEW YORK CITY

How the Railway Labor Act works

Precision Scheduled Railroading: Can we be honest here?

Also inside:

- Last Runs
- Brotherhood News
- Legislative Update
- Brotherhood Obituaries





BLET President's Message

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The Fight for Two-Person Crews

I recently attended a Town Hall meeting with the membership of Division 28 in Tucson, Arizona where the membership at the meeting made it perfectly clear how dissatisfied they are with Union Pacific's treatment of its employees. They made it even clearer that it is past time for the employees to see a victory in our fight with the Nation's rail carriers to improve employees' rates of pay, working conditions and general quality of life.

I totally agree; in fact, we are in the middle of one of the biggest fights of our lifetime right now. That is the fight to preserve two-person crews on the Nation's freight carriers. As we also discussed at the meeting, it will take BLET and SMART-TD working together to be successful in that fight. On most Class 1 carriers, each Union represents half of the two-person road crew, BLET representing the Engineers and SMART-TD representing the Conductors. Although each of these two crafts works under its own contract, I am convinced that our best chance to preserve both positions is through mutual efforts on all fronts in this fight.

In broad terms, there are three primary fronts in this battle, and they all play an equally integral role in our effort. The first is the regulatory front. As you are all aware, the Federal Railroad Administration started a rule making supported by both Unions on crew size several years ago, with the rail carriers fighting it at every turn. When one of their former carrier CEO's was later named FRA Administrator, they convinced him to end that regulatory effort. But that is not where their CEO Administrator stopped.

He jumped into the second front in the crew size battle, the legislative front, by attempting to strike down 7 state laws requiring two-person crews. It is worth



President Pierce (at the lectern, top photo) at a Town Hall Meeting hosted by BLET Division 28 in Tucson, Arizona, in late February 2022.

noting that during the CEO Administrator's time, BLET and SMART-TD filed more lawsuits against FRA than in the past several decades combined. But as a result of those joint efforts by our two Unions, we did secure a victory. The attempt by the CEO Administrator to "negatively-preempt" state laws was struck down by a federal court. Even more important is that with a new Administration in the White House comes a new FRA Administrator (the carrier CEO is gone) and that new Administrator did not appeal the court's decision in this case. As a result, the majority of those two-person crew State laws remain on the books as law.

Going forward on the regulatory front, the new FRA Administrator has announced that he will again start the rule making process on crew size. He has also restored the Rail Safety Advisory Committee to its previous position in that

process, where our Unions will both have a voice in the process.

Also on the legislative front, the Invest Act passed by the Democrat controlled United States House of Representatives in 2021 included several important pieces of legislation for railroad employees. One of those was a two-person crew law that was supported by both BLET and SMART-TD. Unfortunately, while the Democrats may have a simple majority in the Senate when the Vice President's tie breaking vote is included, they do not have the 60-vote majority necessary to overcome the filibuster rule. As a result, the Republican side of the aisle has continued to block passage of this legislation that is vital to a safe workplace. It is important to note, this is the furthest any two-person crew law has ever made it through Congress. In fact, two-person crew legislation had never even been voted out of a committee.

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Photos: courtesy Brian Carr

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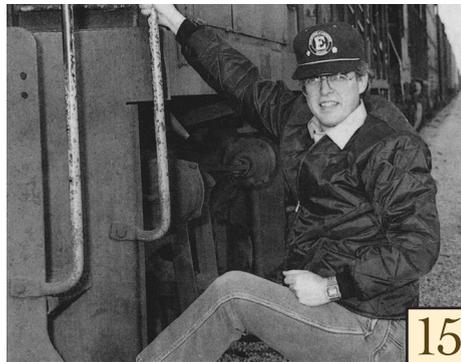
WELCOME ABOARD!

In October 2021, BLET Brothers **Brendan Sullivan** (left) and **Eric Gabaldon** were appointed to full-time positions with the BLET National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. Sullivan now serves as the BLET's Director of Political Affairs, and Gabaldon serves as Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs.

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Journal

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Honoring essential workers

BLET MEMBER AMONG THOSE HONORED DURING NYC TICKER TAPE PARADE

To thank the essential workers who helped pull the city through the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City hosted a ticker tape parade on July 7, 2021, called “The Hometown Heroes Parade.” Transportation workers were among the honorees at the event, and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) was represented by Brother Art Blakey.

A member of Division 497 (Jersey City, N.J.), Brother Blakey serves the Brotherhood as General Chairman of the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) General Committee of Adjustment (GCA). With professional and highly-skilled BLET members at the throttle, PATH trains safely move thousands of riders each day between Manhattan and New Jersey.

The parade consisted of 14 floats representing 260 different groups of essential workers, including hospital workers, first responders, educators, and transportation workers, just to name a few. Thankful New Yorkers showed up to honor these essential workers and cheer their inspiring courage and commitment. Brother Blakey rode on the transportation workers float, and said it was an honor to represent the BLET and its dedicated members.

“Having been born and raised in New York City, I feel that a ticker-tape parade through the Canyon of Heroes is one of the biggest honors the City can bestow on someone,” Blakey said.

The parade route — along Broadway in Lower Manhattan — is called the Canyon of Heroes and is the same route followed by ticker tape parades in New York City for the past 125 years. It’s called a “Canyon” because most of the route is lined with skyscrapers and tall office buildings, making the street feel like the



Photo: courtesy Art Blakey

Brother Art Blakey, PATH General Chairman, proudly displays a BLET banner during a ticker tape parade on July 7, 2021.

bottom of a canyon. “Heroes” refers to the men and women celebrated with ticker tape parades.

In spite of the festivities, Brother Blakey said that his enthusiasm was tempered by the somber reality of the pandemic.

“I might have been just one person being showered in confetti, but I was thinking of the other 177 members on my roster and how they earned this by never missing a trip no matter how many were sick or quarantined due to COVID-19,” Blakey said. “And I was thinking of Brother Anthony Panariello who lost his life in November of 2020 and how this was meant to honor

him and all the others who passed away as well.”

Panariello, 49, passed away from complications related to COVID-19 on November 13, 2020. He had been a member of BLET Division 497 for 19 years, and left behind a wife and four children.

Brother Blakey said the PATH GCA and its members have faced many challenges during the past 16 months — both professional and personal.

“From March of last year till just recently, it’s been all COVID, all the time,” he said. “As General Chairman, I had to ensure my members had access to Personal Protective Equipment, make sure protocols were put in place to protect us



Brother Blakey on the float honoring transportation workers.



PATH employee Prescott Miller (left) and Brother Blakey

on the trains and around the property and make sure that they were up to date on how quarantine, recovery and access to vaccines was being handled. All the while, like all Engineers, I had to keep on showing up to work while other people worked from home and agonized over whether the cost of working overtime to provide for my family was worth increasing my exposure to the coronavirus and infecting them in the process."

Brother Blakey said only two representatives were selected from PATH's Transportation Division — himself and a conductor to represent the SMART-TD.

Brother Blakey hired out at PATH in July of 2005 and started training as a locomotive engineer in June of 2006. He elevated from First Vice General Chairman to General Chairman of the PATH GCA in mid-February of 2020. "I've done my best to represent my members with great assistance and support from the rest of my GCA and our Local President and Vice President," he said. "Being an Engineer isn't a job, it's a lifestyle. The amount of sacrifice required is great, not just from us, but from our families and friends. We need to make sure that not only Carriers and agencies recognize this, but that new hires respect the job and all it entails when they come in." 🗣️

PIERCE APPOINTS LUKE MYERS TO PRESIDENT'S STAFF

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce announced that Division 727 Local Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer Luke W. Myers has been appointed to a position of the President's Staff, effective January 1, 2022.

A native of Colorado, Brother Myers will serve the National Division as Director of Bylaws Administration out of the union's headquarters in Independence, Ohio. Brother Myers hired out as a trainman with the BNSF, on January 7, 2002, and earned

promotion to locomotive engineer on October 8, 2005.

Brother Myers has been an active union officer since he joined the BLET as a member of Division 727 in Sterling, Colorado, on April 1, 2006. He currently serves as Secretary-Treasurer of the BNSF/MRL General Committee of Adjustment, having been elected to that office on July 10, 2019. He also served Division 727 as Secretary-Treasurer from 2007 to January 1, 2022, and as Local Chairman from July 1, 2018 to January 1, 2022.

Brother Myers comes from a large railroad family. His father, Rick L. Myers, is a member of Division 727 who hired out on August 16, 2010, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer from the BNSF on March 14, 2014. His father-in-law, James (Jim) B. Meeker, is a retired member of Division 727 who has belonged to the Brotherhood since September 1, 1978. Brother Meeker hired out on January 12, 1974 at Curtis, Nebraska. Meeker's father, Raymond B. Meeker, and grandfather William B. Meeker both worked as agent/operators at Bertrand, Nebraska, and



PRESIDENT PIERCE (LEFT) WELCOMES BROTHER MYERS TO THE NATIONAL DIV:

"In accepting my new role as Director of Bylaws Administration, I look forward to serving the membership. I will work hard every day to do my best to further my Brothers and Sisters and the Organization. Thank you."

various other locations on the former Colorado, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.

Brother Myers and his wife Angie were married in 2003. They have two children.

"I am honored and humbled to join the National Division office as part of the President's Staff," Brother Myers said. "In accepting my new role as Director of Bylaws Administration, I look forward to serving the membership. I will work hard every day to do my best to further my Brothers and Sisters and the Organization. Thank you."

President Pierce welcomed Brother Myers to the National Division staff. "Luke Myers brings years of first-hand railroad and union knowledge to the table. I have every confidence in his ability to do the utmost for the BLET and its members in his new job as Director of Bylaws Administration. He will be a valuable asset to our Brotherhood for years to come." 🗣️

Photos: Amanda Kwan / PANYNJ

How The Railway Labor Act Works

National collective bargaining between rail labor and management is governed by a specific federal law, the Railway Labor Act of 1926. The RLA and its amendments spell out the process of bargaining that eventually leads to each new contract.

Negotiations can take months or years because of the many steps (some of which have time limits while others do not) available to both parties. This flowchart illustrates how rail labor and management reach agreement on rates of pay and work rules.



Photo: stockphoto mania - stock.adobe.com

STEP 1: Notice is served under Section 6 of the Railway Labor Act by either party (usually called "Section 6 Notices").

STEP 2: reply required within 10 days setting time, date of initial conference, which must be held within 30 days.

STEP 3: Negotiations begin. No time limit.

STEP 4: Agreement reached through negotiations. If not, go to Step 5.

STEP 5: Within 10 days after conferences end either party may request National Mediation Board (NMB) mediation or NMB may proffer mediation.

STEP 6: If mediation not requested or proffered within 10 days, then parties

may exercise self-help (strike by labor or lockout by management).

STEP 7: Agreement reached through mediation. If not, go to Step 8.

STEP 8: NMB proffer of binding arbitration is made by NMB.

STEP 9: Agreement reached through accepting binding arbitration. If not, go to Step 10.

STEP 10: Self-help (strike or lockout) can begin following 30-day "cooling off period" after NMB notifies both parties that proffer of arbitration was refused.

STEP 11: NMB may notify President that it believes dispute will interrupt interstate commerce.

STEP 12: President may appoint an emergency board if he/she agrees with NMB.

STEP 13: Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) conducts hearings and issues recommendations to President within 30 days.

STEP 14: Agreement reached based on PEB report. If not, go to Step 15.

STEP 15: Indefinite strike or lockout permitted after second cooling off period concludes 30 days after PEB issues recommendations. Agreement may be reached.

STEP 16: If no agreement, then settlement can be legislated by Congress.

BLET welcomes Amit Bose as new Administrator of FRA

On Jan. 12, 2022, the U.S. Senate confirmed Amit Bose to serve as Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). He was nominated by President Joe Biden to the Administrator's position on April 23, 2021. Dennis R. Pierce, National President of the BLET, issued the following statement:

"On behalf of the BLET, I congratulate Amit Bose on his confirmation by the Senate and have every confidence that his leadership will benefit the men and women who work in the railroad industry. Administrator Bose recognizes the important contributions that railroad workers make each and every day to the freight and passenger/commuter rail in-



dustries, and he has displayed respect for the vital role that railroad unions play as a voice for the rights of our members and the safety of our industry. I look forward to working with Administrator Bose and the FRA on issues of critical importance to the BLET and its members."

Bose began serving the FRA as Acting Administrator in 2021. Previously, Bose

worked at HNTB, an architectural and engineering firm, where he also served as board chair of the Coalition for the Northeast Corridor and on the New Jersey Restart and Recovery Advisory Council. He has previously served at the FRA during the Obama-Biden Administration as Deputy Administrator, Chief Counsel, Senior Advisor and Director of Governmental Affairs and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) as Associate General Counsel and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs. In those positions, he worked on safety, policy, regulatory, and governmental affairs matters, and provided legal counsel, guidance and advice to the Office of the Secretary and DOT's operating administrations. Before

joining DOT, Bose also worked for New Jersey Transit, the New Jersey Department of Transportation and as a transportation staffer in the U.S. Congress.

Bose's involvement in rail and transportation prior to joining the Executive Branch includes: securing the full funding grant agreement for the Hudson Bergen Light Rail, Newark Light Rail and Congressional authorization for the 50-foot deepening of New York Harbor. In addition, he was in private practice in Georgia, focused on land use, environmental, and municipal law.

Bose has an AB from Columbia College, a MIA from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and a JD from the University of Georgia. 🗣️

BLET, Teamsters applaud confirmation of Deirdre Hamilton to serve on NMB

The BLET and the Teamsters Union applauded the December 7, 2021, confirmation of Deirdre Hamilton to serve as a member of the National Mediation Board (NMB) by the U.S. Senate. Hamilton brings more than 20 years of experience representing workers before federal courts and the NMB on a wide range of legal issues.

Hamilton has served as the staff attorney for the Teamsters Airline Division for the past six years and at the Association of Flight Attendants for the previous 12



years. In these roles, she has expertly represented the union and its members in NMB elections and mediations and advised bargaining committees for various crafts or classes of airline employ-

ees at multiple carriers.

"Thanks to today's confirmation, workers across the country in our rail and airline industries have a true champion serving on the board," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "I have no doubt that Ms. Hamilton will uplift workers' rights and improve labor-management relations as a member of the NMB."

Created by Congress through the Railway Labor Act (RLA), the NMB plays an essential role in the facilitation of labor-management relations in the aviation and rail

industries. Tens of thousands of Teamsters work in these industries as mechanics, pilots, flight attendants, engineers, and maintenance of way employees, among other critical roles.

"Ms. Hamilton will be an outstanding member of NMB," said Teamsters Rail Conference Director and Vice President At-Large John Murphy. "She has consistently demonstrated her commitment to putting workers first throughout her career and I am confident she will continue to do so as a member of the board." 🗣️

BLET members discuss Los Angeles train break ins, long trains with FRA's Bose

Members of the BLET who work in the Los Angeles-Long Beach area held a meeting with FRA Administrator Amit Bose in Los Angeles on December 8, 2021.

The BLET Brothers sounded an early alarm regarding train looting in the Los Angeles area, which became national news in mid-January 2022. BLET members expressed concern regarding their personal safety and the potential for violence in light of the overwhelming number of train break ins. Viral images shocked the nation just a few weeks later, showing Union Pacific tracks in the heart of Los Angeles buried in mounds of debris left behind as thieves broke into cargo containers on idle trains.

The BLET also informed Administrator Bose about the dangers train crews face when operating extremely long trains, including communication problems, excessive time spent making up and breaking down long trains, and infrastructure limitations. Long trains have become more prevalent during the age of so-called "Precision Scheduled Railroading."

The BLET Brothers rounded out the hour-long meeting with a discussion of Southern California operations (including unused coastline), poor management, and the ongoing resignations from highly-skilled veterans in the workforce.

Representing the BLET at the December 8 meeting was: Ryan Snow, California State Legislative Board Chairman;



BLET and SMART-TD representatives with FRA Administrator Amit Bose

Robby Cunningham, General Chairman of the BNSF (former AT&SF) General Committee of Adjustment; Jose Covarrubias, Local Chairman of Division 214 in Long Beach, California (representing the Pacific Harbor Line); and Eddie Ferrall, Local Chairman of BLET Division 662 in Los Angeles.

Also in attendance were representatives of the SMART Transportation Division, in-

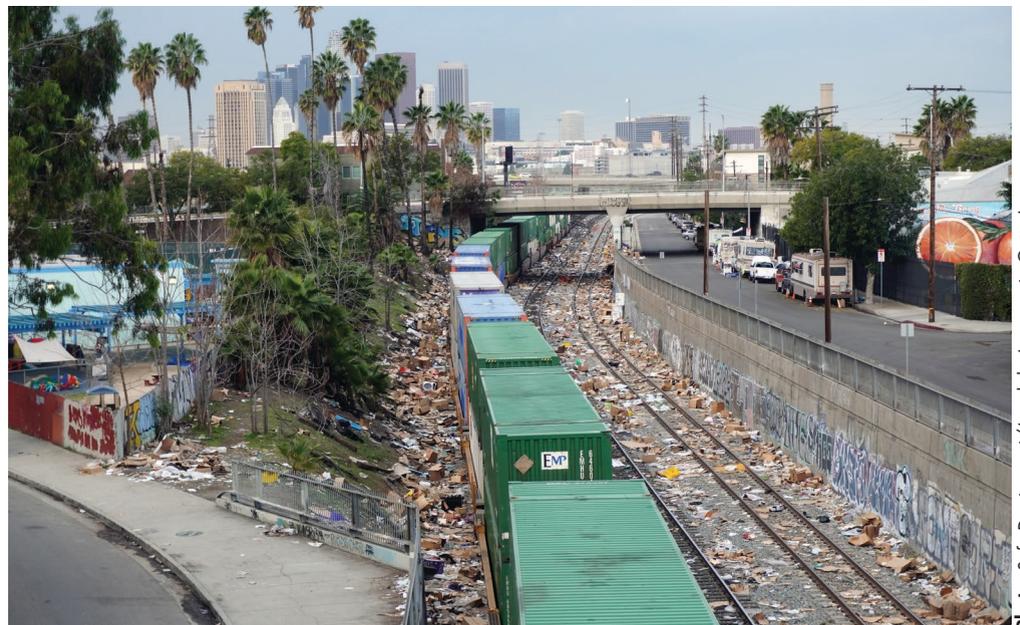
cluding: Gary Crest, UP General Chairperson; Danny Young, BNSF General Chairperson; and Louie Costa, Director of the California State Legislative Board.

In addition to Administrator Bose, FRA representatives included: David Evans, FRA District 7; and Isaac McKeithen, FRA District 7. At the time of the meeting, Bose was serving as Acting FRA Administrator. He would be con-

firmed by the Senate about a month later, on Jan. 12, 2022.

On the evening of December 7, Chairman Snow and several BLET members from California held a roundtable meeting to discuss what issues they believed were relevant to discuss with FRA. Joining Brother Snow at the meeting were the following Division Legislative Representatives: John Mobley, Division 398 (San Bernardino); Jose Vargas, Division 214 (Long Beach); Damon Allen, Division 662 (Los Angeles); and Jerry Padilla Jr., Division 660 (Los Angeles).

"It was a great meeting and could easily have gone longer than an hour," Chairman Snow said. "It is refreshing to work with an FRA Administrator who appreciates the viewpoints of locomotive engineers, trainmen, and all railroaders who work on the front lines".



Mounds of debris left behind after thieves targeted cargo containers on idle intermodal trains on UP tracks in Los Angeles. Images such as this one shocked the nation in mid-January 2022.

Photo: Seta Degimenci/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



Job gains, strong economy show U.S. is on the right track

One year into the Biden administration, and this country is looking at an economy that is growing at a healthy pace and creating jobs thanks to policy decisions coming out of the White House.

New statistics show a 5.7 percent growth in the gross domestic product, the highest in nearly 40 years, which led to a record-setting number of new jobs created. Thanks to President Biden and a pro-worker Congress, the U.S.

manufacturing base in being rebuilt and supply chains are being strengthened. That, in turn, leads to higher pay for workers.

During the last year, we've also seen what happens when elected officials decide to invest in their fellow Americans. Thanks to the enactment of the American Rescue Plan, for example, job creation went up while unemployment went down. That allowed millions of Americans to support themselves and their families.

And those gains are only more likely to grow due to the passage of a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill last November that will create millions of jobs to build and rebuild roads, rails and other infrastructure while paying middle-class wages.

Better jobs means a better life for hardworking Americans. But that won't continue unless a pro-worker majority remains on Capitol Hill. That's why this year's congressional elections are so impor-

tant. There have been so many gains made this year. The middle class can't afford to let them go by not voting their interests.

Corporate America votes with its wallet time and again. It's time for working Americans to do the same.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

"During the last year, we've also seen what happens when elected officials decide to invest in their fellow Americans. Thanks to the enactment of the American Rescue Plan, for example, job creation went up while unemployment went down. That allowed millions of Americans to support themselves and their families."

Thank you to my Rail Conference Brothers and Sisters

Brothers and Sisters, March 2022 draws to a close out my 18 years as Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference. It has been an honor working with all of you on the rail issues that affect our more than 70,000 rail employees in the United States who work as locomotive engineers, trainmen, and maintenance of way workers on the major freight railroads, Amtrak and numerous commuter rail systems and short lines. The Confer-

ence was formed in early 2004 after the merger of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and added to in 2005 when the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees also merged with the Teamsters.

There have been many highlights in the past two decades — in the beginning with our two High Alert reports. First, in 2005, we released High Alert 1, the results of the first known worker-generated study of day-to-day security measures

in place on U.S. railroads. Four years later, in 2009, we released High Alert 2, another survey of America's rail workers that revealed the top U.S. rail carriers have failed to close the security gaps that put at stake the safety of rail workers and communities across the country.

And our most recent accomplishment, a historic \$66 billion funding for rail in the bipartisan infrastructure bill that President Biden signed into law last year. The Rail Conference's participation

in the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition was instrumental in bringing that historic bill to fruition.

I has been my honor to serve you, and while I will no longer be the Conference's Director, I'm not disappearing. I'll be around.

Fraternally,

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

About the Authors:



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



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



Guest Columnist

BY MATT PARKER
CHAIRMAN, BLET NEVADA STATE LEGISLATIVE BOARD

PSR: Can we please be honest here?



Brother Matt Parker served as chaplain during the BLET's Fourth National Convention in 2018.

About the Author:

A Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Brother Matthew B. Parker serves the BLET as Chairman of the Nevada State Legislative Board. Brother Parker has held continuous membership in Division 158 (Sparks, Nevada) since he joined the Brotherhood on May 1, 2004. He was elected to serve the Board as 1st Vice Chairman in July of 2009, and then moved up to the Chairman's office in January of 2013. He was then reelected to continue serving as Chairman at the quadrennial meetings in 2013, 2017, and 2021.

(Originally published at RailwayAge.com on July 26, 2021. Reprinted with permission)

An October 3, 2018, article in The Daily Aztec was titled "Honesty is a Virtue That is Slowly Fading from Society." Nowhere might that ring truer than in the rail industry, particularly with regard to its treatment of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). In support of this statement, I offer the following observations from the field in the region where I live and work.

FOCUS ON MOVING CARS: FUZZY, AT BEST

A favorite claim of the industry regarding PSR is that it shifts the focus from moving trains to moving cars. When looking at how cars are actually being handled in the field, whether any element of truth within that claim exists is unclear.

To wit, one of the practices most common where I am located is the arrival of trains bringing into satellite yards blocks of cars that then sit in those yards for hours waiting to be picked up by a following train. This lengthens the fol-

lowing train to the 11,000-plus-foot range, which the industry views as favorable.

Another practice frequently observed is the combining of two trains into one very long train. This does not typically happen as the result of circumstance. Rather, I frequently see cars on a train sitting for hours in a terminal waiting for the arrival of the train with which they are being combined. Add in the delay in the time it takes to actually make these two trains into one, and then split them back up for final delivery.

A third practice involves the railroad's choice to not provide hours of service relief for local freight trains as a cost-cutting measure. The cars on those local trains subsequently sit out on line, sometimes for long periods, until the railroad incidentally has another crew or train available to move the cars into their next scheduled terminal. This delays the forwarding of these cars to their final destinations.

From these examples, it should be obvious to even the most oblivious that this business model is not truly focused on expediting the movement of cars to their final destinations.

Can we please be honest here?

MANPOWER

Union Pacific's rail corridor across Northern Nevada is presently in a state of shambles not experienced in recent memory, if ever. Trains are being parked out on line for extended periods. Local and yard assignments are being delayed or annulled. The primary reason? Lack of manpower.

The workforce along this corridor was already stressed, in part due to attrition that occurred when the railroad, as part of PSR initiatives to reduce the workforce, chose to ignore and not comply with manpower agreements it has with its unions. Add to this trains now being rerouted along this corridor due to track outages associated with California wildfires and a derailment in Utah apparently caused by a flash flood. The resulting crisis we are now seeing is a textbook example of what to expect when you cut resources to the point that there is zero resiliency in your network to accommodate extraordinary circumstances. This situation does not beg sympathy. Rather, it highlights a failure of management.

"The facts as presented here, I believe, beg two questions. First: When, if ever, can we expect honesty from the industry? Second: When the truth can no longer be veiled by fancy words and cherry-picked statistics, who will be held accountable?"



In contrast, when asked in a July 22 interview on CNBC if his company has sufficient workers, the initial answer from Union Pacific CEO Lance Fritz was, “Yes.” Evidently, Mr. Fritz either is not paying attention to what is happening on this part of his railroad, or the information filtering up to him from the lower echelons is less than accurate.

Can we please be honest here?

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

The industry has stated that PSR principles have improved operating efficiencies. Much of what I have seen resulting from these changes is to the contrary.

Terminal congestion along the Northern Nevada corridor has long been an issue, with regard to one terminal along the route in particular. The aforementioned reroutes have exacerbated and spread the problem, and attempting to process trains exceeding 10,000 feet through terminals where the maximum capacity of tracks is typically in the range of 9,000 feet is both unhelpful and ineffective in solving the problem. Additionally, we see occurrences where opposing trains of lengths exceeding any siding over an entire subdivision descend upon a territory at the same time. When this happens, one of those trains is going to sit until the opposing train clears the territory. In some cases, I’ve seen trains held more than 14 hours for this reason. Again, this is not facilitating expedited movements of cars to their destinations.

Can we please be honest here?

SERVICE METRICS

The industry also claims that service metrics have improved as the result of PSR. Regarding this claim, I can recall that, formerly, discussions regarding metrics such as a customer service index were always significant factors included in quarterly-results town halls. Perhaps I’m missing something, but I do not recall the inclusion of such words in recent quarterly town halls, for good reason, I believe.

This past April, I met with a consultant from the finance group that assisted the State of Nevada in updating

its federally-mandated State Rail Plan. In a discussion that lasted almost three hours, it was evident from insights this gentleman presented as well as from proposed goals contained in the updated plan that the group had spoken with many rail-served customers in the state. I stated the names of numerous rail-served customers, and he subsequently indicated that his group had spoken with them all. When I inquired if they had queried these customers with regard to the current state of the rail service they are receiving, his response was, “Oh, it’s terrible.” Not surprising when one considers that many of these customers have seen the frequency of their service unilaterally reduced and scheduled deliveries to their facilities bounced all over the clock as the railroad has combined work assignments to reduce both jobs and the need for motive power, in some cases leaving these customers without knowledge of when trains will actually arrive to service them.

Can we please be honest here?

PIVOTING TO GROWTH

A term we have heard recently from those railroads implementing PSR principles is that they are entering a phase where they are “pivoting to growth.”

Again, referring to my April meeting with the financial group consultant, a key point of discussion was a significant rail business opportunity being pursued by the state. This opportunity involves a significant amount of freight presently moving daily from a manufacturing facility in Northern Nevada to another facility in California, approximately 280 rail-miles distant. What is proposed in this opportunity is to replace the trucks (up to 52 per day) currently transporting this freight with a dedicated train providing overnight service. The specific question asked by the consultant was in regard to the possibility of providing such service by rail. My response was, “Absolutely, it’s possible, we’re already doing it.” The parties currently advocating for the movement of this business from truck to rail expect that achieving the participation

of the railroad will be difficult.

Why would a transportation company potentially walk away from such a growth opportunity? Perhaps because the business isn’t profitable? In this case, rather, it appears the railroad may be reluctant to conduct serious discussions because the business isn’t profitable *enough*. It would be a low-margin business not conducive to the railroad reaching that all-hallowed 55 operating ratio PSR focuses on.

The shunning by a railroad of such a business opportunity because it is not profitable enough (the euphemism for which, apparently, is “marketizing”) *does* equate to stifling local economic development initiatives, hampering job growth, and obstructing certain climate initiatives. It may even equate to the railroad shirking its common-carrier obligation specified in Title 49 of the U.S. Code. It most certainly *does not* equate to “pivoting to growth.”

Can we please be honest here?

CONCLUSION

When an industry seems incapable of being honest about an issue, as is the case with the rail industry’s treatment of PSR (which, let’s be honest, has nothing to do with either “precision” or “scheduling”), most likely that is because the industry knows such honesty will raise the ire of those dependent upon that industry, and perhaps policymakers as well. Raising the ire of these people is exactly what needs to happen in this case. While Nevada may, perhaps, be an outlier with regard to the circumstances of which I have spoken, I doubt that. Rather, I believe that proper examination will reveal these problems with PSR, as well as others, are endemic throughout the rail network across the nation.

The facts as presented here, I believe, beg two questions. First: When, if ever, can we expect honesty from the industry? Second: When the truth can no longer be veiled by fancy words and cherry-picked statistics, who will be held accountable? 🗣️



Guest Columnist

BY RONNIE RHODES
BLET GENERAL CHAIRMAN
UNION PACIFIC-CENTRAL REGION GCA

Anatomy of a Time Claim



About the Author:

Brother Ronnie E. Rhodes is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and a member of Division 915 (Alexandria, La.). He first joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1980. Brother Rhodes has been serving as General Chairman of the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment (GCA) since October 1, 2011. He was elected by acclamation to the General Chairman's office at quadrennial meetings in 2011, 2015 and 2019.

Why are we always told to turn in a claim when there have been clear violations of our agreements? I know when I first started on the railroad, we would hear the Local Chairman tell us to turn in a claim and immediately think a claim was not punitive enough. And when the Carrier declined the claim, the first thought was to go on strike. I have been working for 46 years in the rail industry and I have participated in three strikes, none of which lasted over three days. We were then referred to arbitration. The Railway Labor Act, as amended, and along with all the conservative judges in the past decades who have put us back to work, have made a major dispute under the Railway Labor Act rare as hen's teeth.

I am going to attempt to walk you through an \$11,000,000.00 (that's 11 million dollars) claim settlement that was negotiated by the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Ad-

justment (GCA) in the early part of 2019. This was the largest claim settlement, to date, in the rail industry for grievance time claims.

It all started with hard-fought and relentless negotiations by former General Chairman Windy Windham who negotiated a guaranteed extra board agreement that took the regulation away from the Local Chairmen and created a mathematical formula that counted the miles each extra board worked for the half.

Later, issues arose when engineers went on vacation and left the boards shorthanded. Former General Chairman Denny Penning negotiated a backfill agreement whereby the Carrier was supposed to replace the engineers on vacation with other engineers to keep the boards in balance.

Not long after the backfill agreement was signed, the Carrier started running the boards short again, not backfilling the vacation vacancies and most of the time not counting any Z miles toward the calculation of slots on the

board. Z miles are miles worked by an engineer not assigned to the extra board that would have been worked by the extra board engineer had it been manned properly.

Former General Chairman Charlie Rightnowar started pressing everyone in our General Committee to file claims for improper board regulation as well as dropping turns (due to the improper extra board manning). He even filed some himself directly to timekeeping. He also asked the Local Chairmen to file claims for their extra board engineers if the boards were not regulated properly even if they couldn't get the members to file the claims.

In 2005, former General Chairman Mark Waldemer and former General Chairman Charlie Rightnowar argued the cases before a referee at the First Division in Chicago. After sitting on the case for months, the referee just walked away from the case. We think the reason was he was afraid to issue an award with that kind of liability involved. At that

"I am going to attempt to walk you through an \$11,000,000.00 (that's 11 million dollars) claim settlement that was negotiated by the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment (GCA) in the early part of 2019. This was the largest claim settlement, to date, in the rail industry for grievance time claims."



Photo: zhengzishanchu - stock.adobe.com

point, there were a few thousand claims.

As claims were added and held in abeyance, these cases just sat in limbo until First Vice General Chairman Kyle Bagby and myself got Union Pacific Labor Relations' Alan Weed to put them on a Public Law Board and start trying to get the cases heard by another arbitrator.

All of the developments in this one case took over 30 years to this point and we still weren't any closer to a resolution. Kyle and I started talking about the cases in Federal Grievance Mediation with the Carrier and Federal Mediator Michael Kelliher. And after his promotion, we got another Federal Mediator, Eva Dur-

ham. I am sure there were times the mediators thought this was an issue that we would never settle, but with their help there was some progress.

When the logjam finally broke loose and we started talking about a monetary settlement, along with a new regulation that would include Z miles, we then started talking money. After months of negotiations we finally reached an \$11 million settlement with a new regulation agreement and a four-hour payment for an engineer who goes to work earlier than expected as a result of a job being dropped ahead of their job.

We took the \$11 million and divided it by the num-

ber of claims we had on file for each member. We had over 900 engineers identified for over 125,000 claims. We had three claimants get over \$150,000 each and it trickled down to some members not getting a dime. The guys that got the really big checks turned in claims for over 20 years and never gave up hope. Some members never turned in a claim and didn't receive a penny out of the settlement.

I have heard some of our members ask "what do I get for my Union dues?" To be blunt, you get what you put in. When we ask you to file claims, it gives us leverage that we need to settle a dispute. With that said, we aren't going to win every case

nor make a settlement of this magnitude on every issue. I am just trying to let every BLET member know that this Union only works if you take part in the process when asked.

As far as Union dues, the members that got over \$150,000 got reimbursed for every dime they have ever paid in dues — plus some.

So, to summarize, you need good agreements, you need to enforce those agreements when violated, and if it is determined to be a minor dispute, then file claims and never give up the fight. This is exactly why we say that you, the membership, are the Union. Without your help, we would never get anything accomplished. 🕒

Former BLE International President Ronald P. McLaughlin, 1929-2021

FORMER BLE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT RONALD P. MCLAUGHLIN passed away peacefully in his sleep at the age of 92 on November 12, 2021. He served in the union's highest office from 1991-1996.

President McLaughlin was a member of our Brotherhood for 71 years, having joined BLET Division 393 on January 1, 1950.

After serving in the U.S. Marine Corps in San Diego, California (1946-



McLaughlin

earned promotion to locomotive engineer on October 20, 1952.

For more than four decades — from 1955 to 1996 — Brother McLaughlin held various elected offices representing the membership. From 1955-1960, he served as his Division Secretary-Treasurer. From 1960-1980, he served his Division as Local Chairman. From 1980-1986, he served as General Chairman of the Milwaukee Road. From 1986-87, he served as BLE International Vice President, and from 1987-1991, he served as First Vice President.

Brother McLaughlin was elected to the Brotherhood's highest office on August 22, 1991, during the BLE's Fifth Quinquennial Convention. During his five-year term of office, President McLaughlin testified before Congress multiple times to advocate for improved railroad safety laws to protect the lives of BLE members. Brother McLaughlin also had several White House-level meetings during his

1948), President McLaughlin began his railroad career as a fireman on the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (The Milwaukee Road) on October 16, 1948. He



White House Honors: President McLaughlin (far right) and his wife Barbara (far left) with Bill and Hillary Clinton at the White House.

tenure as BLE Chief, and met with President Bill Clinton on more than one occasion. President McLaughlin led one round of national contract negotiations, which concluded when a new agreement was ratified in 1996. President McLaughlin retired in 1996, shortly after ratification of the national contract and following the union's Sixth Quinquennial Convention in Detroit, Michigan.

During the 1950s, President McLaughlin played semi-professional baseball as an outfielder. He received offers from the Yankees and Red Sox to join their entry-level farm teams, but declined, in part, because he did not want to give up his railroad career. He remained a good athlete throughout his life, and was a very capable and enthusiastic golfer into his 80s.

President McLaughlin followed in the footsteps of his father, J. H. McLaughlin, who served as General Chairman of the Milwaukee Road General Committee of Adjustment from 1951-1966. Both men were noted for their skill in negotiations.

President McLaughlin and his wife Barbara were married on November

11, 1954. He is survived by: wife Barbara; sons Gregory, Mark and Kevin; one sister, Joan Cole; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. His son Gregory was a Soo Line locomotive engineer for 25 years. President McLaughlin was predeceased by his parents and his son Brian.

In April of 2012, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce recognized Brother McLaughlin with a 60-year membership pin. In addition to the 60-year pin, President McLaughlin was also the proud owner of 25, 30, 40, 45 and 50-year BLE membership pins.

"On behalf of all men and women of the BLET, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to Barbara and the entire McLaughlin family," President Pierce said. "Countless members have benefitted from Brother Ron's dedication as a union officer for more than four decades. President Ron McLaughlin left a lasting impact on our Brotherhood and we are a better organization today because of his leadership.

The family hosted a private celebration of life for President McLaughlin on Saturday, November 20. 🕊

Former BLET Vice President Stephen D. Speagle, 1946-2021

STEPHEN D. SPEAGLE, FORMER NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN, passed away on May 26, 2021. He was 74 years old.

Brother Speagle began his railroad career in 1964 as a switchman on the Norfolk & Western Railroad out of Decatur, Illinois. He went firing for the Norfolk & Western in 1968 and was promoted to locomotive engineer in 1972. He joined the Brotherhood as a member of Division 155 in Decatur effective January 1, 1972.

Brother Speagle was elected to the office of International Vice President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in September of 2001, and was reelected at the BLET's First National Convention in 2006. He announced his retirement at the BLET's Second National Convention in 2010. During his retirement speech at the 2010 National Convention, Brother Speagle told the assembled delegates why he became involved in the labor movement.

"I hope each and every one of you are proud to be a union member, and even more proud to be a BLET member," Speagle said. "I went into this work because I felt that the engineers that I worked with at the local level needed a voice. And if not me, who? I felt this was a calling, and that calling has never left me, for I believe this is some of the most important work I could be doing."

During his years as a BLET member, Brother Speagle held a number of elected offices, beginning in 1975, when he served as Secretary-Treasurer of Division 155. He also held the position of Legislative Representative for his Division from 1979-1982. He twice held the position of Local Chairman for Division 155, between 1978-1979 and 1982-1995. From 1991-1996, he was a member of the BLE's Board of Appeals. In 1983, he was elected to the position of Vice General Chairman and he was in this position until 1995, when he became Chairman of the Norfolk South-



Vice President Speagle delivering his retirement speech at the BLET's Second National Convention in 2010.

ern-Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment. Speagle served as General Chairman from 1995 until his election to the Advisory Board in 2001.

Brother Speagle helped to negotiate many contracts during his tenure as a union officer, including agreements with Norfolk Southern while serving as General Chairman, and with BNSF while assigned as a National Vice President. He also helped negotiate a contract for BLET members with the Pacific Harbor Line in 2005. These agreements helped boost the rates of pay and working conditions for BLET members.

Brother Speagle knew the importance of negotiating good union contracts. He was a fierce supporter of union rights and was proud to be a part of the labor movement.

"No nation has ever been home to a middle-class majority without a sizeable labor movement," he said in his 2010 retirement speech.

In the early 2000s, Brother Speagle was one of the Advisory Board members who helped to negotiate the BLE's merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Initial merger documents called for the word "Brotherhood" to be dropped from the name, so that the merged

organization would have been known as simply the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Department, or LETD. Brother Speagle was one of the driving forces to keep "Brotherhood" as a part of the merged organization's name, and the name Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen was adopted when the organizations merged in 2004.

Brother Speagle and his loving wife, Sue, were married in 1966. He is survived by Sue; his sons, Stephen Jr. (Rie) and Aaron; his daughter-in-law Julia; his grandchildren, David (Melissa), Ariel (Dillon), Alyssa, Ariana, Sierra and Emma; his great grandchildren, Brett, Hudson, Ryker and Holden; his brothers, Edward (Kathy) and Gordon (Pam); and his pet dog Misty.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said, "There are many of us who serve, or served, as officers and employees of our great Union who benefited from knowing and working with Steve, myself included. Steve was more than just a mentor to me, he was a true friend. One of the only things that Steve was more passionate about than our Union was his family, and my heart goes out to Sue and the entire Speagle family." 

AFL-CIO's Rich Trumka unexpectedly passes

RICHARD TRUMKA, WHO HAD SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE AFL-CIO SINCE 2009, passed away unexpectedly on August 5, 2021. He was 72 years old.

Trumka was known for his fiery rhetoric and his harsh attacks on corporate America. His 50-year career was dedicated to America's unions and working people

In 1982, at age 33, Trumka ran on a reform ticket and was elected the youngest president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

There, in addition to reforming the UMWA's fractious bureaucracy, he led one of the most successful strikes in recent American history against the Pittston Coal Company, which tried to avoid paying into an industry-wide health and pension fund.

Trumka was elected AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer in 1995, and held that post until 2009, when he was elected President.

Rich Trumka carried with conviction throughout his life the power of solidarity and commitment — from the mines of southwest Pennsylvania to the helm of America's largest federation of unions. With solidarity and commitment, we all have a chance to work in dignity and live well.

Following his passing, the AFL-CIO Executive Council on August 24 elected Liz Shuler to serve as president. A visionary leader and longtime trade unionist, Shuler is the first woman to hold the office in the history of the labor federation.

The AFL-CIO is comprised of 56 unions and represents 12.5 million members. 



Rich Trumka

BROTHERHOOD OBITUARIES:

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

AS OF MAY 31, 2021

28 — Jeffrey A. Martin
39 — D. L. Humphrey
64 — T. E. Dailey
121 — James W. Ewald
155 — Stephen D. Speagle
190 — Ronnie D.

McCallister
191 — Dale K. Jenkins
197 — Joe R. Mayorga
207 — Dale R. Fronk
228 — B. G. Montgomery
269 — Kenneth M.

Harrigan
269 — William C. Miller
269 — Carl J. Reddington
301 — W. E. Harman
365 — Starry D. Bonds
447 — Eric S. Bullion
566 — Danny L.
Thompson
620 — Megan G. Morgan
659 — Scott C. Eisenhauer

AS OF JUNE 30, 2021

42 — Earl H. Longhiber
166 — J. W. McLaughlin
182 — Verda T. Murphy
182 — Chester L. Wilson
202 — Thomas E.
Finnegan

228 — Robert V. Puckett
238 — Shahraim C. Allen
241 — Ted L. Pax
269 — John C. Di
Raimondo
269 — Neil E. Manttari
269 — Glenn Miller
269 — Bernard M.
Warnock
325 — Joseph L. Bradley
765 — D. R. Grimes

AS OF JULY 31, 2021

38 — G. L. Rayle
60 — J. W. Welch
75 — Kenneth J. McGuire
167 — David A. Lane
269 — Donald R.
Chasteen
325 — Thomas E. Curry
442 — T. L. Howell
448 — D. E. Hensdill
622 — Mike J. Masid
622 — Alan D. Ullrich
662 — Regina Bland
827 — D. W. Franzen

AS OF AUG. 31, 2021

2 — Steve J. Lusty
2 — Tom S. Sauser

4 — J. F. Dile
20 — Ottoway Shepherd
20 — Lester D. Brown
42 — Mareece Webb
52 — Anthony Walker
84 — John F. Kennedy
115 — Pat G. Martinez
192 — Leon C. Gauthier
227 — M. D. Streiff
269 — Stephen C.
Simonson
269 — Donald F. Supper
383 — Jason M. Smith
405 — C. M. Arellano
500 — William M.
Morton
523 — Steve W. Ashcraft
592 — Randy N. Johnson
593 — Shannon Carter
598 — B. D. Martin
662 — Kenneth L. Caple
766 — Bonnie G. Leake
800 — Lestin D. Nelson
944 — Steffen Storbeck

AS OF SEPT. 30, 2021

1 — Michael A. Prasol
46 — Robert Trafton
96 — Frank T. Nuenthel
114 — Tyrone K. Schmidt

121 — R. A. Phillips
123 — John E. Lane
185 — J. J. Lansky
197 — Russell R. Elley
206 — Juan. . Bustos
269 — John E. Menechino
269 — Robert P. Potthast
301 — R. J. Stewart
309 — E. F. Dixon
365 — G. P. Matherly
497 — Lovet O. Obakpolor
498 — Simon McClain
504 — David D. Brown
526 — John E. Fowler
585 — Ronnie H. Byrd
585 — Joseph G. Garrigus
602 — H. L. King
678 — Anthony J. Sharp
894 — H. E. Phillians
899 — Danny R. Grimes

AS OF OCT. 31, 2021

11 — Roger A. Ahrens
26 — N. E. Davis
46 — Thomas A. Knight
77 — Ryann C. O'Keefe
95 — William W. Gray
165 — B. C. Fuell
190 — E. A. Faulkner
286 — A. Vasta

362 — Ryan C. Jorgensen
421 — R. L. Gruarin
495 — J. G. Bush
537 — G. L. Moyer
542 — R. J. Wahl
551 — R. S. Avgerinos
612 — Edmond B.
Finnerty
674 — Antoine R. Johnson
683 — D. A. Darnell
858 — Eric R. Biley

AS OF NOV. 30, 2021

114 — R. Bilgri
115 — Robert L. Sherwood
169 — Vincent J.
Gramuglia
171 — James H. Faulkner
194 — V. A. Hahs
200 — R. P. McLaughlin
206 — W. A. Slentz
269 — Robert Fells
370 — H. E. Cave
383 — Rick G. Barrios
383 — Denise S. Bock
383 — Brady B. Brown
421 — Jaime Rivera
494 — H. A. Grunow
511 — O. C. Boggs
717 — Estin F. Wilhite



Eric Gabaldon, Brendan Sullivan join BLET National Legislative Office

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce announced that he has appointed two BLET members to serve in key roles at the Union's National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. Brother Eric A. Gabaldon of Division 400 (Albuquerque, New Mexico) is the BLET's new Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, and Brendan P. Sullivan of Division 769 (Sanford, Florida) is the new Director of Political Affairs.

As the Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, Brother Gabaldon will promote legislative and regulatory efforts that are beneficial to BLET members, and collaborate with other organizations to earn the backing of government officials and the public. Most recently, Brother Gabaldon served the BLET as Chairman of the New Mexico State Legislative Board, having won election to that position in 2016 and 2020. Additional duties will include review and analysis of existing and proposed legislation, meeting with local, state, and federal government officials and lobbyists, and updating the BLET's officers on relevant laws and regulations that impact our members.

As the Director of Political Affairs, Brother Sullivan will interact with local, state, and federal legislative bodies and government agencies to represent and advance the BLET's advocacy plans and interests. Brother Sullivan most recently served the BLET as Chairman of the Florida State Legislative Board. Among other assignments, Brother Sullivan will lobby for legislative issues and handle political education.

Both Brothers will work under the direction of National President Pierce and Vice President and National Legislative Representative Vincent G. Verna.

"Brother Gabaldon and Brother Sullivan have our full support at the Na-

"We now have a complete team and are working to get everyone up to speed in the Office. I share the full confidence expressed by President Pierce in Brothers Eric and Brendan."

— VP VINCE VERNA

tional Division, and I know each Brother will bring a strong work ethic and unique experience to their new position," President Pierce said. "I look forward to working closely with these Brothers and have every confidence that they will do an excellent job advocating for BLET members on Capitol Hill."

Vice President Verna said BLET members throughout the country will benefit from having a full staff in Washington, D.C.

"I am very happy to welcome Eric and Brendan to the D.C. Office," Vice President Verna said. "We now have a complete team and are working to get everyone up to speed in the office. I share the full confidence expressed by President Pierce in Brothers Eric and Brendan. They bring over 40 years of combined experience to bear in the performance of their new duties. BLET members can have pride and confidence in these good Brothers. They have already demonstrated a very significant level of commitment to relocate their families to the D.C. area to help strengthen BLET's presence in Washington."

Brother Gabaldon is a Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) locomotive engineer who has held continuous membership in Division 400 since March 1, 2006. He hired out as a me-

chanical laborer with the BNSF railway in Belen, N.M., in 1998. He transferred to train service on March 12, 2003, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on August 11, 2003 on the El Paso Subdivision station in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Brother Gabaldon was elected to four terms as Division 400's Local Chairman that began in 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019. He was also elected to a term as Legislative Representative for Division 400 beginning in 2016 and elected to two terms as Chairman of the New Mexico State Legislative Board in 2016 and again in 2020. Since March of 2021, Brother Gabaldon has represented the BLET as a member of the Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group.

Brother Gabaldon is a third-generation railroader. His grandfather was a clerk for the Santa Fe railroad. His father retired after 34 year of service in Maintenance of Way for the former Santa Fe/BNSF railroad. His brother Esequiel "Zeke" Gabaldon is a car inspector/rapid responder in Belen, New Mexico, for BNSF. His uncles Dennis and Barney Silva are both retired switchman/conductors for the former Santa Fe/BNSF railroad.

Brother Gabaldon and his wife, Nicole, were married on March 8, 2014. They have three sons and one daughter.

"I learned from a young age the importance of Unions and the importance of Union participation going to meetings with my father," Brother Gabaldon said. "He always told me to get involved and protect what our past Brothers and Sisters fought for. I grew up in a Union household and enjoyed the benefits it provided me. Today, I raise my family and am enjoying those same benefits and more thanks to the BLET."

As a fifth generation railroader, Brother Sullivan spent his childhood



At a training session for the new hires, from left: Brother Gabaldon; retired Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman; Vice President Verna; Brother Sullivan; and retired Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Bob Hagan.



Vice President Verna welcomes Brother Gabaldon.



Vice President Verna welcomes Brother Sullivan.

riding on Amtrak trains. His great-great grandfather worked as a railroad crossing guard, manually lowering gates to protect horses and buggies from approaching trains. His great uncles were both car inspectors for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company. Brendan's grandfather joined the Army and was assigned to the railroad battalion. He operated troop trains both domestically and abroad during World War II. He would return home from war to work as a yardmaster for the New York, New Haven, and Hartford. Brother Sullivan's father would

also follow in the family tradition by going to work for the railroad as a car inspector with Amtrak.

Brother Sullivan has worked for over 21 years with CSX Transportation out of Sanford, Florida. Initially he worked "on the ground" as a conductor before moving to engine service. Upon becoming a locomotive engineer, Brendan joined BLET Division 769. He went on to be elected to the positions of Division President, Legislative Representative, and Local Chairman. In addition, Brendan served on the Florida State Legislative Board as both Vice Chairman and

Chairman. During his free time, Brendan enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters.

"I believe that organized labor is the tide that raises all ships," Brother Sullivan said. "When unions negotiate and create a prevailing wage, all American workers, union and non-union benefit. I am proud to be a union member, and thankful for all of the opportunities that union stability has created for myself and my family."

Brother Sullivan's appointment became effective October 1, 2021, while Brother Gabaldon's became effective October 11, 2021. 

32 retirees honored at 54th annual Division 269/LIRR Dinner Dance

BLET Division 269 and the Long Island Rail Road General Committee of Adjustment honored 32 retirees at the annual Dinner Dance retirement party on November 13, 2021.

The BLET members who retire from the Long Island Rail Road are the guests of honor each year at the Dinner Dance, which is a tradition that dates to the late 1960s. The 2021 event was the 54th annual.

“The annual Dinner Dance provides an opportunity for us to join together in the spirit of fellowship and camaraderie to salute and honor those locomotive engineers who have pulled the pin during the past two years,” LIRR General Chairman Kevin Sexton said. “It is my privilege, along with Division 269 President Karl Bischoff, to present each of them a plaque commemorating their years of service and to also present the Albert J. Sollar Award to the LIRR Engineer for the Year 2021.”

The 2020 Dinner Dance was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, so 2020 and 2021 retirees were recognized at the 2021 event.

The following 2020 retirees were honored: David Whitehead (19 years); Donald Vetter (25 years); Tom Riley (26 years); Emmanuel Marcelin (33 years); Arthur Boos (28 years); Percy Farrington (23 years); Steve Outlaw (30 years); Bill Burchianti (32 years); Kenneth King (16 years); Jerome Grieb (16 years); Eva Scott (26 years); William J. Corley (31 years); Patrick Doherty (30 years); Mike Burke (20 years); Dora Coryell (31 years); Steve Roder (34 years); and Chris Shine (32 years).

The following 2021 retirees were honored: R. Bruce Van Brunt (22 years); Puranjit Jodan (24 years); Doug Denson (33 years); Walter Hilsenbeck (37 years); James Kavanaugh (18 years); Evan Scott (32 years); Patrick Shivers (21 years); Richard Stewart (34 years); Fatmir R. Barolli (24 years); Ed Mari (25 years); Michael Thomas (22 years); Thomas

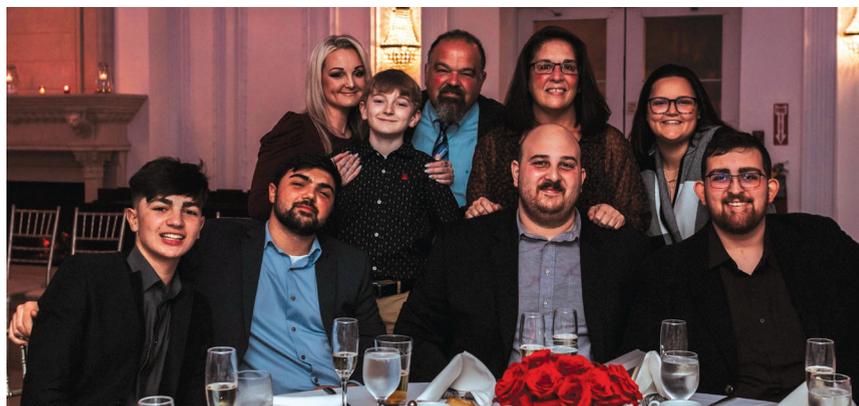
Curtin (26 years); William J. Gleason (29 years); Edward J. Cullum (27 years); Frank Racanelli (18 years); and Mark Varrelli (32 years).

Three Brothers were presented with the Albert J. Soller Engineer of the Year Award for 2021. Brothers Giani Panagiotou, John Zabniak and Thomas Short bravely and heroically responded to a fire at Penn Station on October 13, 2021. Acting as first responders, they used fire extinguishers to help fight the blaze, which occurred on the rubber diaphragm between an Amtrak luggage car and a passenger coach. A trespasser who was on top of the train was electrocuted by the overhead catenary and tragically caught fire. The Brothers alerted FDNY, EMS and police regarding the emergency. The trespasser fell off the top of the train to the track bed. A

police officer tried to render assistance but the platform was too high. Brother Panagiotou sprang into action, lifting both the police officer and the trespasser onto the platform.

Brother Panagiotou has over 12 years of consecutive membership, having joined BLET Division 269 on January 1, 2009. Brother Zabniak has 13 years of membership, having joined Division 269 on March 1, 2008. Brother Short has over 21 years of membership, having joined Division 269 on August 1, 2000.

“The selfless actions of these three BLET members are truly heroic,” General Chairman Sexton said. “They are model employees that did not hesitate to assist in an emergency, and they performed their duties with the utmost professionalism.”





Zappitelli retires from NS with more than 40 years of injury-free service



Brother Zappitelli and his wife Diane at his retirement party on August 27, 2021. The couple celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in 2021.



Brother Zappitelli with a commemorative plaque presented at his retirement party.

Tom A. Zappitelli, a member of BLET Division 607 (Cleveland, Ohio), retired from Norfolk Southern effective February 12, 2021. He has over 26 years of membership in the Brotherhood, first joining the organization on June 1, 1994, and he retired with more than 40 years of injury-free service effective February 12, 2021.

Friends held a retirement party for “Zapp” in Ashtabula, Ohio, on August 27, 2021, hosted by retired UTU conductor Jerry Lambert. In attendance were about 30 active and retired railroaders who celebrated Brother Zappitelli on his well-deserved retirement. They presented him with a commemorative plaque and other gifts in recognition of his outstanding railroad career.

Brother Zappitelli hired out as a trainman for Conrail in Ashtabula, Ohio, on August 13, 1976. He attended Conrail locomotive engineer school in July of 1993 and joined BLET Division 607 in Ashtabula effective June 1, 1994. He earned promotion to engineer shortly after the Norfolk South-

ern-CSX split date in 1999 and opted to continue his career with NS. Brother Zappitelli paid his dues as a new engineer and spent many years bouncing between Cleveland and Ashtabula in order to hold a regular job.

After more than two decades of dedicated railroad service, Norfolk Southern honored Brother Zappitelli with a safety award for 25 years of injury-free service. Near the end of his career, NS honored him once again with a watch for 40 years of injury-free service.

Brother Zappitelli’s Last Run came on January 5, 2021, when he worked as locomotive engineer of the 20E between Elkhart and Conway. His retirement became effective on February 12, 2021.

Brother Zappitelli and his wife Diane celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary in 2021. The couple has one son, Matthew, one daughter, Mallory, and five grandchildren. Brother Zappitelli comes from a large railroad family. His uncle A.C. Rich spent many years working for the New York Central; his father-in-law E.J. Kalil was a

conductor for the Pennsy; and two of his brothers-in-law, Tony Preschiano and Dennis Kalil, also worked in the industry. His son, Matthew, works in project management for the Delta Railroad where he currently heads a project to build 32 miles of passenger track near in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Brother Zappitelli is a member of the National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees (NARVRE) and is a former presenter with Operation Lifesaver. During retirement, he and his wife Diane plan to travel more and go on cruises once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides. They also plan to visit their daughter in Indianapolis. During his spare time, Brother Zappitelli enjoys spending time outside and working on his yard, which is his sanctuary of peace.

The BLET National Division thanks Brother Zappitelli for his many years of faithful membership to the BLET and joins the Brothers and Sisters of Division 607 in extending best wishes for a long, happy, and healthy retirement. 🍷

Division 52's Fred Cox remembers first day at work like it was yesterday

Brother Fred M. Cox, a 32-year member of BLET Division 52 (Baltimore, Maryland), has seen a lot of things in his 45-year railroad career, but nothing more unusual than his first day on the job. It's one of his favorite stories, and he was kind enough to share it with the *Journal* and its readers.

"I've witnessed many changes in the industry throughout the years," Brother Cox said, "but there's one story I'd like to relate about my first day on the railroad. It was August 6, 1976, but I remember it like it was yesterday. There were five men on the crew and I knew nothing about the railroad. We did not have portable radios back then. The conductor told me to go out and get on the engine, which I did. The engineer told me I was going to pass signals. There was a guy sitting in the fireman's seat who had very large and dark sunglasses on and he looked like he was sleeping. He never said a word the entire time I was on the engine. Well, I relayed the hand signals that were signaled to me to the engineer and we made up the track. We got off the engine for lunch and I noticed that the engineer had a very severe limp. I asked the rear brakeman about the guy in the fireman's seat and was told that he was a '42 man, the last fireman in Baltimore, and he was yarded because he was legally blind! He was biding his time until retirement when his job would attrite out. Later that night I found out the engineer had his leg cutoff in the 50s when he worked as a hump rider. He had an actual wooden prosthetic leg. He was allowed to go into engine service where he ended up retiring.

"So, when I tell the story of having a blind fireman and a one-legged engineer back in the day to new hires



Brother Cox with wife Judy and daughter Courtney at the 75th annual EUMA convention in 2013.

they laugh and look at me in disbelief. True story though. That's just one example of how the railroads have changed dramatically. Those two guys wouldn't be able to set foot (no pun intended) on any property today."

Following that unusual first day, Brother Cox's railroad spanned the next 45 years where he worked for Conrail, Norfolk Southern, and as a full time officer with the BLET, fighting to protect the rights and interests of his fellow union Brothers and Sisters and their families.

Brother Cox hired out as a brakeman for Conrail out of Baltimore, Maryland, on August 6, 1976. He went firing in March of 1978 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in January of 1980. Brother Cox first joined the Brotherhood in 1989 as a member of Division 235, transferring his membership to Division 52 in 1993. From 1993 until his retirement in 2021,

Brother Cox was an active and involved union leader who held numerous elected offices for the Brotherhood.

In 1992, Brother Cox began serving Division 52 as President, a position he continued to hold following his retirement in July of 2021. In 1993, he was first elected Local Chairman of Division 52. In 2008, he was elected Alternate Vice General Chairman of the Conrail General Committee of Adjustment (GCA). Following Norfolk Southern and CSX's split of Conrail, Brother Cox was elected 2nd Vice General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines GCA in 2012, a position he was reelected to in 2016. Brother Cox was elected 1st Vice General Chairman of the NS-Southern Lines GCA in 2019, a position he held until retirement in July of 2021.

Brother Cox was also active in the BLET's former Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA), serving as

Division 446's Pat Perea retires after 44 year career

Arrangements Chairman of the 65th Annual EUMA convention in 2003 and the 75th Annual convention in 2013. Both were held in Baltimore.

Brother Cox's Last Run for the railroad was in May of 2012, when he worked as locomotive engineer of a traveling road switcher between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. The remaining nine years of his career was spent in full time union service, helping the Brothers and Sisters of the NS-Southern GCA and Division 52. His retirement became effective July 1, 2021.

Brother Cox and his wife Judy were married in October of 1990. They had three children, John, Melissa and Courtney. Tragically, Melissa passed away on September 10, 2021, after a 13-month battle with pancreatic cancer. "The main reason I retired was to spend time with her and I'm glad that I did," Brother Cox said. "We were all with her at the time. She is at peace now after a valiant fight." Brother Cox also has two grandchildren.

His hobbies including working on and collecting old Harley Davidson motorcycles, woodworking, and surfing. He also serves as President of his Community HOA. During retirement, Brother Cox plans to spend more time with family and friends "while searching for the perfect beach."

"I'm very fortunate to have had a job that I loved since day one — being a locomotive engineer," Brother Cox said. "It is one of the many blessings I've had in my life. Another is the honor and privilege of having served alongside the men and women of this great Organization in representing the members in the field. I'm very grateful to have met and joined with Brothers and Sisters from all over this country in our fight for decent and fair wages, safe working conditions and equitable retirement benefits. I'd like to think I made a change for the better. Best regards to everyone moving forward and keep up the fight!" 📍



Brother Perea when he first hired out (left) and on a recent hiking trip.

Following a 44-year railroad career that began in 1977, Brother Patrick Henry Perea of BLET Division 446 (Belen, New Mexico) safely completed his Last Run for the BNSF Railway on June 23, 2021.

Brother Perea hired out in 1977 as a switchman/brakeman for the Santa Fe Railroad in La Junta, Colorado. He went firing for the Santa Fe on May 17, 1979 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on May 13, 1980. He first joined the Brotherhood as a member of Division 400 (Albuquerque, N.M.) prior to transferring his membership to Division 446 (Belen, N.M.). From October of 1987 to April of 1988, Brother Perea worked as a fireman for Amtrak.

A dedicated union member, Brother Perea served Division 446 as First Vice Local Chairman from 2006-2009, and as Alternate Legislative Representative from 2013-2016. He is the proud owner of a 30-year BLET membership pin.

Earlier in his career, Brother Perea was recognized for his help in preventing a likely accident and possibly saving a life. He was off duty and driving home when he noticed an automobile that had high-centered on a railroad crossing. He quickly alerted the dispatcher just prior

to Amtrak's arrival at that location. He received special recognition for averting the likely collision.

Brother Perea's Last Run came on June 23, 2021, when he worked as a locomotive engineer on the BNSF Transcon, Southwest Division. He operated 12K manifest train H-BARTUL (a Dash 9) from Winslow, Arizona, to Belen, New Mexico.

Brother Perea and his wife Debora D. Sweeney were married on June 28, 1980. The couple has two adult children — Jeremy P. Perea and Jessica A. Perea. Brother Perea's family has deep roots in the railroad industry. His maternal grandfather, Justo Montoya, was a Maintenance of Way Foreman with the Santa Fe who retired with 50 years of service. His Brother, Matthew J. Perea, was a BNSF locomotive engineer who retired with 41 years of service.

During retirement, Brother Perea and his wife would like to travel to Europe and hope to see more of the United States. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and working on his 1978 Chevrolet pickup truck.

"It has been a very rewarding and fulfilling career," Brother Perea said. "I have always been a proud union member." 📍

After 50 years on the railroad, BLET's Bob Hagan retires



Brother Hagan had the honor of speaking at the BLET's 150th Anniversary Celebration in Detroit in 2013.



Brother Hagan and his wife Michele Lepore-Hagan, who represents Ohio House District 58.

Robert F. Hagan of BLET Division 757, who most recently served the BLET as Director of Political and Legislative Affairs at its National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., retired effective September 1, 2021. His railroad career spanned five decades.

Brother Hagan summarized his long career as follows: "Fifty years on the railroad, two years in a steel mill, five months at GE Glass, 28 years as an elected state legislator, and six years as a labor lobbyist in Washington D.C."

"What a beautiful run, Brother Hagan said. "I want to thank all BLET members for allowing me the privilege of fighting for them in the halls of Congress."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce appointed Brother Hagan to serve the BLET as Director of Political and Legislative Affairs effective July 13, 2015. At the time of that appointment, Brother Hagan had 44 years of railroad experience and 28 years of experience as a state legislator, making him more than qualified for the job.

"With his wealth of knowledge, Brother Bob Hagan was a valuable member of our National Legislative Office staff," President Pierce said. "All BLET members were able to benefit from his presence on Capitol Hill thanks in large part to his railroad experience of more than 40 years and his 28-plus years in the political arena. Brother Hagan helped our Brotherhood face many important political and legislative issues during his time in Washington, and he did an excellent job of educating legislators and representing the best interests of our members. I am proud to extend best wishes for a long, happy, and healthy retirement. You deserve it and you have earned it, Brother."

In 1986 — while working full time as a locomotive engineer — Brother Hagan was elected to a seat in the Ohio House of Representatives, representing the 53rd Ohio House district, centered in Youngstown, Ohio. Over the next 28 years, he served in both the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio State Senate. At the time of Brother

Hagan's election in 1986, his father, Robert E. Hagan, was also serving in the House. Between 1986 and 1990, the Hagans were the first father and son to simultaneously hold seats in the Ohio House of Representatives. His wife, Michele Lepore-Hagan, was elected in 2014 to fill his former seat as Representative of House District 58.

In 2013, Brother Hagan had the honor of serving as one of 24 guest speakers at the BLET's 150th anniversary celebration in Detroit — the city where the Brotherhood was founded on May 8, 1863. "It was a once in a lifetime opportunity and a distinct honor," he said.

Brother Hagan hired out with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad on March 8, 1971, and worked out of the Haselton Yard in downtown Youngstown, Ohio. He later began working as a locomotive fireman, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1978. He spent the majority of his career working as a CSX locomotive engineer.

Brother Hagan has held continuous membership in the BLET since 1997. 

Jim Underwood completes 49-year career, was #1 on Idaho seniority roster

Brother James (Jim) Underwood of BLET Division 228 (Pocatello, Idaho) retired after 49 years of railroading, including 47 as a locomotive engineer. He enjoyed working the mountainous runs from Pocatello to Butte, Montana. Brother Underwood made his Last Run on the Day Blackfoot Local (LCT-41) on October 18, 2019, and retired July 1, 2021.

Brother Underwood's railroad career began on June 1, 1972, as a clerk at Union Pacific Fruit Express (a subsidiary of Union Pacific Railroad). He went firing on May 8, 1974, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on September 27, 1974. He was initiated into Division 228 in Pocatello on May 8, 1974, and has been a dedicated member for over 47 consecutive years. Brother Underwood has actively recruited many new members in his many years of membership. Brother Underwood enjoyed training new locomotive engineers on the job. He was a trainer for UP's Fuel Masters Program and was the Idaho Operation Redblock Coordinator.

Brother Underwood has held many elected BLET positions in his career. On August 1, 1974, he took over Division 228's Secretary-Treasurer position just 2 months after joining the Brotherhood. He held that office until 1980 (six years), then served as Division 228's Alternate Secretary-Treasurer from 1980 to 2004 (24 years). He was also on his Division's Audit Committee from 1980-2004 (24 years). In 2004, Brother Underwood was reelected to serve as Division 228's Secretary-Treasurer, a position he held until 2016 (12 years). He held the position of Division Delegate for five years (2011-2016), and represented Division 228 as Delegate to the BLET's Third National Convention in Las Vegas in 2014.

On the state level, Brother Underwood served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Idaho State Legislative Board from 2004-2017 (13 years). At the General Committee level, he served as



Brother Underwood stands by the first locomotive he operated as a locomotive engineer in 1974. Like Brother Underwood, the locomotive is now retired. It is on static display in Ross Park in his home town of Pocatello, Idaho.

Secretary-Treasurer of the Union Pacific-Western Region General Committee of Adjustment from 1975-1991. During those 16 years as GCA S-T, Brother Underwood worked with six different General Chairmen.

On the regional level, Brotherhood served as Recording Secretary of the BLET's former International Western Convention (IWC) from 2011-2016 (five years). He also attended all but one IWC from 2004-2016.

Brother Underwood was born in Pocatello, Idaho, on March 10, 1950, and loved playing all sports. Prior to the start of his railroad career, he went to Idaho State University on a baseball scholarship and received a bachelor's degree in marketing and a minor in finance. He was active in the Army ROTC while in college.

Brother Underwood comes from a railroad family. His father Glade Underwood was a carman in the 1950s-60s, and his grandfather Ray Underwood was the night watchman at the Pocatello roundhouse in the 1940s-50s.

Brother Underwood has two boys, Jeremy and Jared, three girls, Jamie, Korbie and Jade, a stepdaughter, Monica, and 14 grandchildren and 1 great-



Brother Underwood and his wife Lori at the 2014 International Western Convention (IWC) in Minneapolis.

granddaughter. He married the love of his life, Lori, on September 26, 2003.

His hobbies include racquetball, weightlifting, camping, 4-wheeling, fishing, yardwork, hunting elk, and is a fan of all sports. He and his wife Lori have season tickets to the Las Vegas Raiders and they enjoy going to those games. Brother Underwood especially likes helping alcoholics and addicts in their struggle to recover and overcome addiction.

"I really enjoyed serving in union positions in the BLET," he said. "I have a degree in business marketing and a minor in finance and couldn't have had a better work experience than my BLET locomotive engineer job!"

Colpoys logs over 1.7 million accident-free miles for Union Pacific

After a railroad career that began in 1968, Brother John P. Colpoys of Division 125 (Clinton, Iowa) pulled the pin retired from the Union Pacific Railroad effective September 1, 2021.

Brother Colpoys has been an exceptional railroader with a long and unique work history. In his career, he worked as a fireman, brakeman/conductor, and locomotive engineer on the freight side, and also in on-board services on the passenger side. He retires with an accident-free safety record.

He hired out in June of 1968 as a fireman for the Delaware & Hudson Railroad in Mechanicville, New York. He left the industry for a time to attend college. He and his wife Kathleen were married on January 29, 1987, and after having four children (Ken, Kristin, James and Nick) over the next few years, Brother Colpoys sought to resume railroading to help with his family's financial obligations.

Not being able to find a conductor or engineer job, Brother Colpoys landed an opportunity in Miami with Amtrak's on-board service department in 1993. He worked there for two years until finding a job as a conductor-trainee with the Chicago & NorthWestern (C&NW) out of Boone, Iowa, in 1995. At the time, C&NW was in the process of being bought out by the Union Pacific. After two years of work as a conductor, Brother Colpoys realized one of his lifelong dreams and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1997.

His Last Run came on August 27, 2021, when he worked as locomotive engineer of a high-priority Z train.

"He has 25 years of service in Iowa with the Union Pacific Railroad as of July 31, 2021," Kathleen Colpoys said. "We have a grand total of 368 months of total service under Railroad Retirement! Wow, what a ride for both of us!"

In his duties for the CNW/ Union



Brother Colpoys prepares to climb down from locomotive #8619 following his Last Run.



Final tie down.

Pacific, Brother Colpoys traversed 1,785,000 miles of track. When including his time in on-board services for Amtrak, he has logged a grand total of over two million miles of riding the rails for his career.

"I'm not sure how many men can claim fireman, brakeman/conductor, on-board service and locomotive engineer with a flawless career of safety," said Kathleen Colpoys. "As you can see, I am very proud of my husband and his accomplishments."

Brother Colpoys followed in the foot-

steps of his father, James Colpoys, who was a telegrapher and Superintendent of Safety for the D&H. His father eventually worked as Vice President of Rail Operations for the D&H, where he helped the railroad win four gold Harriman awards for safety during his 30 years of service.

Like most locomotive engineers, Brother Colpoys sacrificed time with his family because of his work obligations to the railroad.

"We as a family have had many missed holidays, birthdays, and special occasions because railroading has no weekends or holidays," Mrs. Colpoys said. "It's not easy raising four children with the demands of a railroad. Thankfully, all the children turned out well and are positive members of society."

Brother Colpoys hobbies include painting and art in general. During retirement, he plans to spend more time with his wife, their four children, and two grandchildren. "Most important to me right now is catch-up time with my wife and family," Brother Colpoys said. "My career put them second for too many years." 

Gerri Clark retires after 50 years of service to RRB

The BLET is happy to salute Geraldine “Gerri” Clark upon her retirement after more than 51 years of service at the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB).

“On July 2, 2021, the effective date of her retirement, Gerri will have dedicated 51 years of her life to serving railroad workers and their families,” said John Bragg, Labor Member of the RRB. “Gerri’s leaving will mark the end of an era for the Railroad Retirement Board and I am indebted to her dedication and commitment to the men and women of the rail industry who keep this country moving. Her work over the last 51 years has helped assure that railroad workers always receive the benefits they need and deserve.”

A Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) employee since 1970, Gerri was appointed to her current position in 1985 by former Labor Member of the Board C. J. Chamberlain. She was the first woman to be named a Board Assistant in the agency’s history. Gerri also served as an assistant to Labor Members, V.M. “Butch” Speakman, Jr., and W.A. “Walt” Barrows.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Clark was a claims specialist with the RRB’s former Advanced Systems Team, which was charged with automating claims processing procedures. She previously served as a claims specialist in the Planning, Analysis and Training Unit of the agency’s then Bureau of Retirement Claims, and as a retirement claims examiner.

During her tenure in the Office of the Labor Member, Ms. Clark was the driving force behind the Informational Conference program. The conferences were introduced by the Labor Member to help educate local rail labor representatives about the benefits available to members and their families under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment



Gerri Clark addressed BLET members at the union’s 2018 regional meeting in Monterey, California.

Insurance Acts. Thousands of representatives attended conferences over the years and achieved a better understanding of the provisions and financing of the railroad retirement and unemployment insurance systems, and of the administrative organization of the RRB. In turn, they helped improve the effectiveness of the agency’s benefit program operations by passing on to their fellow railroad employees the information they acquired at the conferences.

More recently, Ms. Clark spearheaded the launch of the office’s Pre-Retirement Seminar program. The seminars have proven to be a popular successor to the informational conferences, offering similar content, but open to rail labor representatives and also railroad employees and their spouses nearing retirement.

“Gerri’s retirement is a great loss to

my office and the RRB,” Brother Bragg said. “Her 51 years of dedication to the RRB, rail labor, and to both active and retired rail workers is unmatched. Her self-motivation, commitment to improving customer service and willingness to always go the extra mile when called upon will be greatly missed. I wish Gerri the best as she begins this new chapter in life, but most importantly I want to thank her for her service. She has truly been a pleasure to work with.”

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce echoed those sentiments.

“Gerri Clark has been a good friend to Rail Labor, and countless BLET members have benefitted from her professionalism and dedication over the past five decades,” President Pierce said. “On behalf of more than 57,000 active and retired members of the BLET, I wish Gerri Clark a long, happy and healthy retirement.”

Konrad Kriegh pulls the pin after 43-year career

On October 29, 2021, the Casper Terminal and BLET Division 207 (Casper, Wyoming) celebrated the Last Run of Konrad E. Kriegh, with his daughter Heidi serving as his brakeman. Fittingly, Brother Kriegh's long and storied career ended in the same place where it began over 43 years ago — he hired out as a brakeman for the BN out of Casper Terminal in May of 1978.

Brother Kriegh went firing on March 8, 1979 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on June 1, 1979. He first joined the BLET on June 1, 1979. At the time of his Last Run, Brother Kriegh had 42 continuous years of union membership and 38 years of service as a union officer.

Brother Kriegh's knowledge of the locomotive engineer's craft was vast, and he was always willing to help others diagnose and fix their locomotive issues. He was highly respected by all who worked with him. His last six years or so before pulling the pin was spent working the Casper road switcher in the afternoon.

Konrad served the BLET for almost the entirety of his railroad career. First initiated on June 1, 1979, serving as Vice Local Chairman in 1980, elevating to Local Chairman, then on to President until passing the torch after 38 years as an officer in 2018. He represented the members of Divisions 869, 184 and 207 over the years. His leadership will not be forgotten. His experience will be missed. His mentoring of young engineers will be carried on through those that learned under his tutelage.

Konrad's personal time includes volunteering at the Casper YMCA on the board, working out in the YMCA's gym, building and fixing things around the Kriegh homestead, and spending time



Brother Kriegh with his daughter, Heidi Miller, who served as his brakeman on the day of his Last Run.



The members of Division 207 presented Kriegh with a brass bell in recognition of his retirement from union service at a Division meeting on February 7, 2019.



His first day on the job as a fireman (1979).

with his family. Konrad's family includes wife Leona; daughter Heidi Miller (a switchman) and son-in-law Brian Miller (a locomotive engineer); son and daughter-in-law Roy and Ashley Kriegh; and grandchildren Isabella, Jaden, Addison, and Benjamin. His niece Alyssa Kelbert is also a switchman in Casper and his brother Arn Kriegh retired from the BNSF in 2016 from Edgemont, South Dakota.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce presented Brother Kriegh with a 30-year continuous membership pin in 2019. Prior to his election as National President, Brother Pierce was General

Chairman of the BNSF/MRL General Committee of Adjustment (GCA), which allowed him to work with Brother Kriegh on Brotherhood business.

"You are respected on the property in Casper and the surrounding terminals by the Carrier, as well as your colleagues," President Pierce said. "Your fellow Division officers speak very highly of you, and you are recognized as a great and valued officer by the BNSF/MRL GCA. On behalf of all BLET Brothers and Sisters, I would like to thank you for your contributions to our Brotherhood and congratulate you on your retirement." 📣

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 <=>

Both Unions continue their lobbying efforts to gain passage of national crew size legislation, but it is important for all BLET members to understand the challenges we face anytime we advance federal legislation. From outside of Washington, D.C., it may seem to some that it should be easy to change federal law; snap your fingers and the laws we don't like are changed, and the new ones we want are in place. But the reality is that this isn't really about how hard the Unions work to pass legislation. What it actually comes down to is that while there are many in Congress who support working class Americans, there just aren't enough in Congress to pass the legislation that the Unions continue to support on behalf of their members.

That does not mean that our Unions will ever stop the fight to secure all forms of legislation that improve the workplace conditions and rights of all rail employees, but those who control Congress control that outcome.

The third front in our fight for two-person crews is the big one, the collective bargaining front. It is no secret, and I heard it loud and clear at the Town Hall meeting. All rail union members are way past pissed off that the rail carriers refuse to give us an acceptable contract. Although we continue to work under the existing collective bargaining agreement, which under the Railway Labor Act (RLA) does not expire while we are bargaining, the fact that the Nation's railroad employees have worked for over 2 years without a raise in pay is totally unacceptable. Having been called essential workers but treated like expendable workers throughout the pandemic, to then have to endure inflationary costs as we work out of the pandemic with no financial reward to recognize our contribution, our membership has every right to be pissed off.

To bring a conclusion to the ongoing negotiations, all rail unions are now in mediation, a step required by the RLA. And while it's also easy to complain about some of the aspects of the RLA, remember

"It's quite simple, this is what the fight for two-person crews looks like. It is clear that the rail carriers have no intentions of offering a settlement that the membership would accept, and that is why you have been presented with no tentative agreements. Their reasoning is plain to see; they seek to divide us hoping that our Unions will turn on each other in a race to the bottom."

that the Act's preservation of your existing contract rights while we bargain are why our healthcare costs have not gone up. Its also why there has been no change to crew consist requirements; under the RLA, those agreements cannot be modified while we bargain.

Although all rail unions are working to move the negotiations to the final steps of the RLA's bargaining process, including self-help and a Presidential Emergency Board if necessary, we must step back and understand why the negotiations have dragged on this long.

It's quite simple, this is what the fight for two-person crews looks like. It is clear that the rail carriers have no intentions of offering a settlement that the membership would accept, and that is why you have been presented with no tentative agreements. Their reasoning is plain to see; they seek to divide us hoping that our Unions will turn on each other in a race to the bottom. As I said before, to protect a two-person crew, BLET must protect the Engineer and SMART-TD must protect the Conductor. While BLET is not at the on-property bargaining tables where crew consist negotiations are being forced on SMART-TD, we are together at the national table where all other aspects of the negotiations will be resolved.

But, recent actions by the carriers make it clear that they seek to divide us at the national table. In fact, at our last bargaining session prior to seeking mediation,

the carriers offered an insulting wage increase proposal that was nowhere near acceptable, but added that while it was being offered to all other Unions, it was not being offered to SMART-TD unless they capitulated on crew consist. These are divide-and-conquer strategies by the carriers and we must not take that bait.

Even more obvious in the on-property fight to preserve two-person crews are the attendance policies being imposed across the country. This too is what the fight for two-person crews looks like. Like many of you, I am convinced that this is an attempt, through terminations or resignations, to reduce the number of employees that might qualify for protections in an attrition-based reduction in crew size that the carriers so desperately seek. This fight is far from over, but on the Union Pacific, BLET's General Committees have won almost every attendance related dismissal case with full back pay that they have taken to arbitration. I know that back pay will never make up for all of the hardships endured during an unjust termination, but arbitration is where these disputes must be resolved when legal actions have been exhausted. Similar cases have also been successful on CSX following their imposed policy. On the BNSF front, a federal judge ruled against the Unions in our effort to have the court block the policy, but this is only round one of this battle as well.

These fights are all what it looks like to be in the middle of the battle to preserve two-person crews. And one thing is for certain, the rail carriers are doing everything in their power to turn us against each other. That includes agitating their employees to turn Union against Union, member against Union, and even member against member. This is not the time to take that bait, blaming your Union when the railroad abuses you is a win for the railroad. In reality, our unity between BLET, SMART-TD and our collective memberships could well determine the outcome of this battle of the ages, the battle over two-person crews. Support for your Union's efforts when and where you can is critical to our success; our strength is in our unity. 🗣️



BLET Auxiliary awards 10 scholarships for the 2021-2022 school year

Congratulations to the 10 scholarship recipients for the 2021-2022 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 (LECMPA).

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 admission 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.

APPLICATIONS, INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, AND MAILING ADDRESS FOR SUBMISSION MAY BE FOUND ON THE AUXILIARY WEBSITE AT 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

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.





2021 - 2022

BLET AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

RECIPIENTS OF LECMPA \$2,500 AWARDS

ALISON ANDERSON

Alison will be attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. Her father, Mark Anderson, is a member of BLET Division 333 in St. Paul, Minnesota and works for Union Pacific Railroad. Her mother, Nancy Anderson, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



NATALIE KING-SHAW

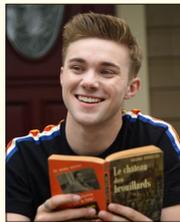
Natalie will be attending the University of San Diego as a Junior. Her father, James Forrest King-Shaw, is a member of BLET Division 158 in Sparks, Nevada. Her mother, Linda King-Shaw is an auxiliary member-at-large.



RECIPIENT OF \$1000 AUXILIARY AWARD IN MEMORY OF LEONA A. LOUIS

JARED BISBIKIS

Jared will be attending the University of San Francisco as a Junior. His father, Jason Bisbikis, is a member of BLET Division 839 in Stockton, California, and works for the BNSF railroad. His mother, Kathleen Bisbikis, is a member of the NorCal Auxiliary in Stockton, California.



RECIPIENTS OF \$1,000 AUXILIARY AWARDS

CAMBRYANA BACKUS

Cambryana will be attending West Texas A&M University as a Freshman. Her father, Shane Backus, is a member of BLET Division 299 in Amarillo, Texas, and works for the BNSF railroad. Her mother,



Cindy Backus, is a member of the Amarillo Auxiliary No. 99.

JASON BALDWIN

Jason will be attending the Aveda Institute in Portland, Oregon. His father, Steve Baldwin, is a member of BLET Division 362 in La Grande, Oregon, and works for the Union Pacific Railroad. His mother, Christine Baldwin, is a member of the Eastern Oregon Auxiliary in La Grande, Oregon.



JONATHAN CHENCHAR

Jonathan will be pursuing a Master's Degree at the University of Wyoming. His father, Mark F. Chenchar, is a retired member of BLET Division 115, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and is retired from the Union Pacific Railroad. His mother, Marta Chenchar, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



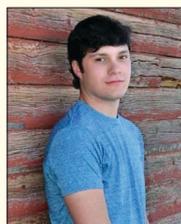
DANIELLE FINCHAM

Danielle will be attending the College of Pharmacy at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Nebraska. Her father, Fred Fincham, is a member of BLET Division 224 in Marysville, Kansas. Her mother, Nancy Fincham, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



CHAD MARTIN

Chad will be attending Otero Junior College as a Freshman. His father, Troy Martin, works for BNSF Railroad, and is a member of BLET Division 430 in Trinidad, Colorado. His mother, Lisa Martin, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



MAYA RAMSEIER

Maya will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as a Freshman. Her stepfather, Eric Stroik, works for CN Railway, and is a member of BLET Division 174 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, and an auxiliary member-at-large. Her mother, Kate Giblin, is an auxiliary member-at-large.



BRENDEN RUNION

Brenden will be attending the University of Wyoming in Cheyenne, Wyoming. His father, Cory Runion, works for the Union Pacific Railroad, and is a member of BLET Division 116 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. His mother, Jacqueline Runion, 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. 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.

NOTE: The information contained in this article is for informational purposes only. The BLET National Division does not manage this scholarship program and is not responsible for the awarding of scholarships.



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SAVE THE DATE

2022 BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

The BLET National Division is pleased to announce the dates and locations of its 2022 regional meetings: June 13-17 in Denver, Colorado; and August 1-5 in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Denver regional meeting will be held at the Hilton Denver City Center and the Baltimore regional will be held at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor.

As with the past regional meetings, the 2022 meetings will be arranged on a Monday through Friday schedule. Travel to the meeting, registration and a welcome reception for each of the two meetings will be on Monday (June 13 for Denver and August 1 for Baltimore). Meetings, training classes and other events will be scheduled throughout the remainder of the week and will include a closing dinner on Thursday night. Travel home is on Friday for each meeting (June 17 for Denver and August 5 for Baltimore).

Per the BLET Bylaws, regional meetings are held "for the purposes of membership training, education and discussion of matters of importance to the membership." Additionally, the meetings are structured to include options for fellowship with other members and their families.

More specific details will be announced at a later date. Registration information will be available online at the BLET National Division's regional meeting website (<http://bletregionals.org>). All members are encouraged to attend one or both of these regional meetings in 2022.

DENVER, COLORADO

JUNE 13-17, 2022 | HILTON DENVER CITY CENTER



Photo: Scott Dessel Martin

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

AUGUST 1-5, 2022 HILTON | BALTIMORE INNER HARBOR



Photo: Visit Baltimore

For more information visit us online at:

BLETREGIONALS.ORG