



CORONAVIRUS CRISIS: **BLET Leaders Respond**

Our work goes on despite
the COVID-19 pandemic
by President Dennis Pierce PG 2

Our Brothers on the front lines
are essential and at risk
by VP & NLR John Tolman PG 20

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN **Journal**

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Union Solidarity

**BLET supports
UAW strikers**

Membership Profile

**PATH engineer
Elena Clark
a pioneer
for women**



UNION PACIFIC'S LDG51B-10
(the Potash Turn) heads south down
the Cane Creek Branch near Moab,
Utah, on May 10, 2019.

Photo by Brother Cory Rusch, a member of
BLET Division 659 in Buffalo, N.Y. Brother
Rusch is a conductor with Norfolk Southern.

Also inside:

Last Runs
BLET Auxiliary Update
**Legislative &
Regulatory Update**
Brotherhood News

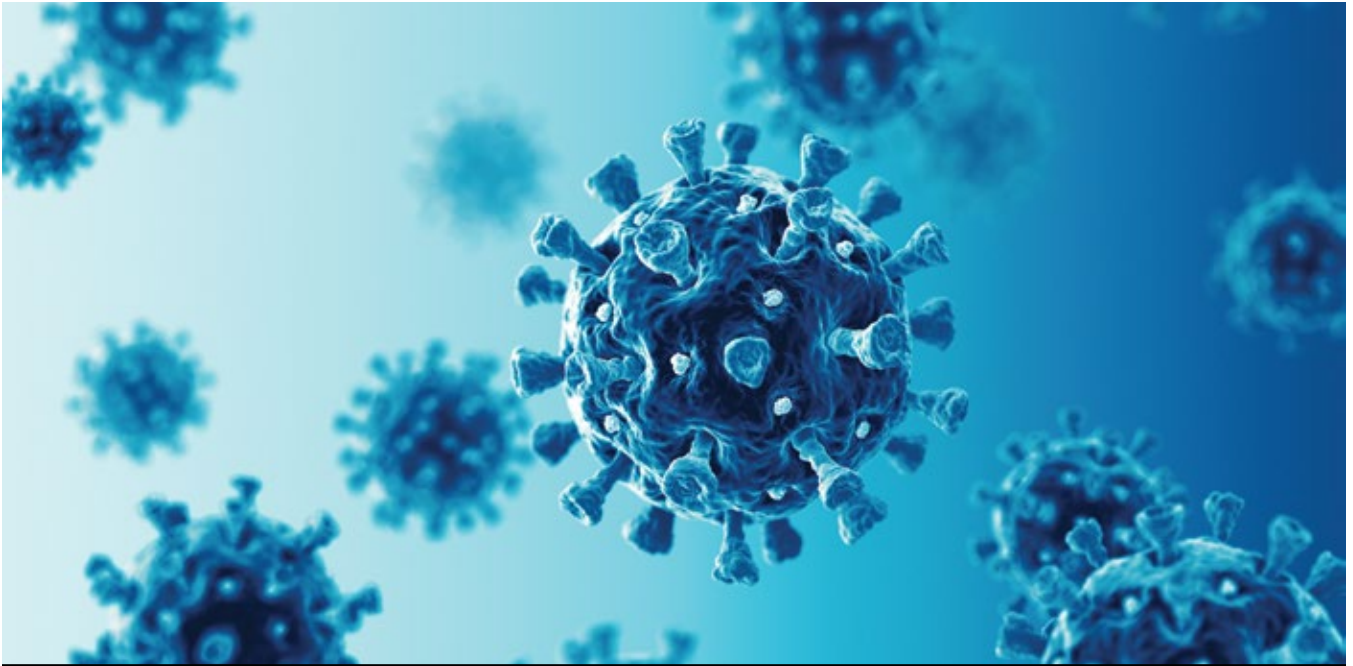




BLET President's Message

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Our work goes on despite the COVID-19 pandemic



**Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen have emerged as the Nation's
ULTIMATE ESSENTIAL WORKERS:**
Without these Brothers and Sisters being on the job,
the nation's commerce would come to a grinding halt.

I hope that this issue of the *Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal* finds you safe and well as we Americans are in the midst of the current nationwide fight to combat the coronavirus.

Our members often perform their duties in relative obscurity. But now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, locomotive engineers and trainmen have emerged as the nation's ultimate essential workers. Without these Brothers and Sisters being

on the job, the nation's commerce would come to a grinding halt. Active and retired BLET members, and their families, have known this for years, but it has taken this national pandemic to clearly see how important we are to our nation's economy.

BLET members hauling freight and moving passengers is key to keeping America going, and they will be even more important to ramping up the economy when the pandemic passes. On the freight side, the av-

erage double-stacked container train is around 9,000 feet long, and carries over 350 single load containers. On the BNSF, these container trains travel from Los Angeles to Chicago with eight crew changes, meaning that just eight two-person crews move 350 containers halfway across in the country in just over four days' time.

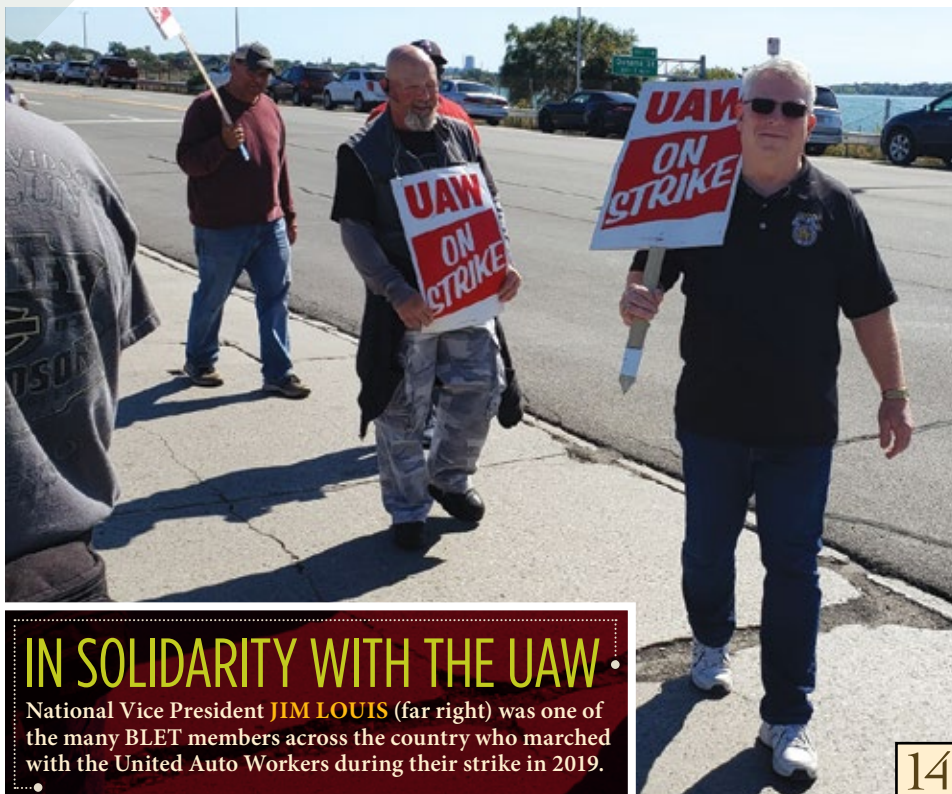
BLET members also haul all bulk commodities: coal, grain and oil, as well as auto parts, finished cars and trucks, chemicals and any-

thing else that can be shipped by rail on Class I rail carriers, as well as short line and regional railroads. These containers and bulk commodities provide the necessities that keep American homes and businesses fully stocked, and the efforts of our members also keep other workers employed: health care workers, auto workers, steel workers, grocery clerks, drug store workers, municipal workers and food service workers, just to name a few.

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Illustration: iStock.com/BlackJack3D

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IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE UAW

National Vice President **JIM LOUIE** (far right) was one of the many BLET members across the country who marched with the United Auto Workers during their strike in 2019.

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Journal

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Two BLET families win 2019 Union Plus scholarships

Union Plus recently awarded \$170,000 in scholarships to 108 students representing 34 unions, including two winners from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. The two BLET winners are:

- **Dominic Osciak**, son of Paul F. Osciak BLET Division 71 (Philadelphia, Pa.); and

- **MacKenzie Smith**, daughter of Nevada Smith of BLET Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.).

"I am proud to salute these fine students for their academic excellence, and I thank Union Plus for continuing to provide scholarship opportunities to the children of union families," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said.

DOMINIC OSCIAC

Dominic won a \$1,000 scholarship. He is a 2019 graduate of Sterling High School (SHS) in Somerdale, N.J. He plans to major in elementary and secondary education at New Jersey's Camden County College. Dominic, who has volunteered working with children on the autism spectrum, aspires to a career in special needs education. Christopher Carpenter, a social studies teacher at SHS, said Dominic possesses exceptional ability and character.

"Dominic is a student gifted with the drive for intellectual stimulation outside what can often be the rote and mundane world of the standards-driven high school curriculum," Carpenter said. "He is both a creative and a cooperative thinker with an appreciation for universal ideas and concepts so critical to academic and personal growth."



His activities and honors include: National Honor Society; Senior Spotlight; Student of the Month; Interact Club; Fellowship of Christian Athletes; varsity golf, cross country, and winter track. He volunteers for Amazing Transformations.

His father, Paul Osciak, is a SEPTA locomotive engineer and has been a member of BLET Division 71 in Philadelphia, Pa., since August 1, 1998.

MACKENZIE SMITH

MacKenzie won a \$3,000 scholarship. She is a 2019 graduate of Winslow High School (WHS) in Arizona. She plans to major in secondary education at Arizona State University and hopes to be an education administrator. MacKenzie completed more than 30 college credits through the dual-enrollment programs Technology to Advance Learning Outcomes at Northland (TALON) and Northern Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology (NAVIT). The daughter and

granddaughter of union workers, she is thankful in particular for her father's BLET membership.

"Since my dad changed jobs and joined BLET, my family has benefited from the better pay, benefits, and training that it provides," MacKenzie said. "Due to the change in our economy and society, workers are no longer being compensated fairly, so the fight continues for workers' right with the incredible support of unions like BLET."

Her activities and honors include: National Honor Society; WHS Citizenship Award; founder, WHS For Change; Student Council; academic letter winner; and WHS Spirit Line. Her volunteer activities include: S-Club; Salvation Army bell ringing; diaper drives; clothing drives; and hurricane relief fundraisers.

Her father, Nevada Smith, is a BNSF locomotive engineer and has been a member of BLET Division 134 in Winslow, Ariz., since March 1, 2017. 📖

THE UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, now in its 28th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation. Visit unionplus.org/scholarship for applications and benefit eligibility. The deadline usually is January 31 each year.

Know your rights

Northeast Ohio BLET members host whistleblower and harassment workshop

On March 14, BLET Division 607 (Cleveland, Ohio) and the Ohio State Legislative Board hosted a whistleblower and harassment workshop for all railroad workers in the Cleveland area. Approximately 71 attendees participated, representing 15 different BLET Divisions and numerous crafts from other railroad unions.

In addition to BLET members, other unions in attendance included the United Steel Workers of America (CWRO Railroad), SMART Transportation Division (conductors and yardmasters), American Train Dispatchers Association, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, and American Federation of Government Employees.

Members from the following BLET Divisions were in attendance: 3, 4, 34, 234, 260, 255, 292, 306, 447, 526, 607, 678, 757, 894, and 937. Also in attendance were officers of the Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/CF&E General Committee of Adjustment and the CSXT-Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment. Officers of the BLET Ohio State Legislative Board and Pennsylvania State Legislative Board were also in attendance.

Representatives of the law firm Steel and Moss led the whistleblower portion of the workshop, focusing on the Federal Employers' Liability Act, the whistleblower provisions of the Rail Safety Improvement Act, and railroad technology in general. Cleveland-based attorney Betsy Rader led the workplace harassment portion of the workshop. With 30 years of legal experience, Rader is a specialist in protecting worker rights and has successfully litigated and resolved employment cases involving many types of discrimination.

It was a valuable learning experience for all involved. Those in attendance learned a great deal of valuable information for themselves, which they are now able to bring back to their Divisions, GCAs and SLBs and share with other members. 📞



Fransen appointed Coordinator of BLET Safety Task Force

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce has announced that Brian Fransen began serving the National Division as Coordinator of the BLET Safety Task Force (STF), effective October 17, 2019,



Carl Fields served as STF Coordinator for nine years

following the retirement of long-serving Coordinator Carl W. Fields. President Pierce also announced the appointment of L. Randy Fannon to the position of Assistant Coordinator.

BLET National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno will continue serving as Chairman of the STF.

Brother Fransen is a BNSF locomotive engineer and Local Chairman of BLET Division 207 in Casper, Wyoming. He hired out with the former BN in 1993 at Casper, earning promotion to locomotive engineer in January of 1995. Fransen joined the Brotherhood on September 1, 1995, and began serving his Division as Local Chairman on January 1, 2010.

In 2012, President Pierce appointed Brother Fransen to serve the STF as an Investigator, and he has served the STF admirably ever since. He represented the STF during accident investigations in Heimdahl, N.D. in 2015, in Granger, Wyo., in 2016, and most recently in Granite Canyon, Wyo., in 2018. Brother Fransen was appointed to the position of STF Assistant Coordinator in May of 2019. He was elected 4th Vice General Chairman of the BNSF/MRL General Committee of Adjustment in 2019, having won election to serve as 2nd Alternate VGC in 2016 and 3rd Alternate VGC in 2013. Brother Fransen and his wife Nichole live in Casper, Wyo., and they have two children.

Brother Randy Fannon, the new Assistant Coordinator of the STF, is a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer and has been a member of BLET Divi-



Brian Fransen is the new Coordinator of the BLET Safety Task Force. He is the Local Chairman of Div. 207 and has been a STF Investigator since 2012.

sion 37 in Norton, Va., since 2010. Brother Fannon is Chairman of the BLET's Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines General Committee of Adjustment, having won election to that office in 2016. He served Division 37 as Local chairman from 2012 until his election to General Chairman in 2016. He was elected Vice General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Eastern Lines GCA in 2012. During his tenure as General Chairman, Brother Fannon's GCA has expanded with the addition of the Wheeling & Lake Erie property in March of 2017, followed by the Louisville and Indiana Railway in September of 2018. Brother Fannon was appointed to the Safety Task Force in November of 2012 and has been active on five launches over the past few years: Petal, Miss., Hyndman, Pa., Hoboken, N.J., Crozet, Va., Baltimore, Md., and most recently Elkhorn City, Ky.


"I thank Brother Fransen for accepting this appointment and I have every confidence that he will excel in his new role as Coordinator of the BLET Safety



Randy Fannon, is the new Assistant Coordinator of the BLET Safety Task Force. He has been a GCA General Chairman since 2016 and was Local Chairman of Div. 37 from 2012-2016.

Task Force," President Pierce said. "I also wish to thank Brother Fannon for his continued service to the STF, and I know he will do an excellent job as STF Assistant Coordinator."

Founded in 1989, the Safety Task Force was the first formal, union-based accident investigation team in the railroad industry. The STF assists federal agencies in the investigation of rail accidents, helping to determine probable causes and making safety recommendations. STF investigators study all aspects of rail accidents, including operations and human factors, signal systems, and track structures.

"Our Safety Task Force studies accidents from the viewpoint of locomotive engineers and trainmen to help determine how particular accidents occur and how to prevent similar accidents from happening in the future," President Pierce said. "I cannot overstate how important that is, especially in an industry that is oftentimes focused more on financial balance sheets than employee safety." 

John Edgar Thomson Foundation provides financial assistance to daughters of deceased railroaders

The John Edgar Thomson Foundation, a nationally recognized non-profit organization, provides limited financial assistance to daughters of deceased railroad employees.

The Foundation was established in 1882 and endowed by the will of John Edgar Thomson, who was the third president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Although childless, he left a large endowment for orphaned daughters of railroad employees to help maintain their good health and to provide for their higher education. Since its creation, the Thomson Foundation has assisted countless families in their transition back to a normal life.

In order to be considered for a grant, the deceased parent (regardless of gen-

der) must have been actively employed by a railroad in the United States at the time of death, and the cause of death need not be work-related. The parent,




John Edgar Thomson was the third president of the Pennsylvania Railroad

while on the active rolls of the railroad, may have been receiving disability or sick leave benefits at the time of death. Additionally, the daughter must be living with her remaining parent or guardian full time, unless attending college, to qualify for an award. To remain eligible, the Foundation specifically requires that both the daughter and her parent/guard-

ian must remain unmarried in order to receive aid. The family's financial status is also considered in the selection process.

The grant is available to daughters of the deceased throughout their infancy until the age of 18. It can be continued, however, until the recipient reaches 24 years of age provided that she is in pursuit of higher education. Whatever grant is awarded usually serves to benefit all members of the family. The Foundation also offers special health care benefits.

All applications are subjected to the approval of the Thomson Foundation's Board of Trustees. The funding for the work of the Foundation is completely independent of any railroad, and it neither solicits nor receives funds from the public. 

For further information, please contact Director Helen K Weiner, at:

The John Edgar Thomson Foundation, 201 South 18th Street, Suite 318 Philadelphia, PA 19103

Phone: (215) 545-6083 or (800) 888-1278 **Fax:** (215) 545-5102 **Email:** sjethomson@aol.com **Web:** www.jethomsonfoundation.com

Annuitants may need to increase tax withholding at age 62

Certain portions of a Railroad Retirement annuity are treated differently for Federal income tax purposes. Some Railroad Retirement beneficiaries may need to increase their tax withholding at age 62 in order to avoid paying higher income taxes at the end of the year. Certain beneficiaries, including those retiring at age 60 with at least 30 years of service, and some occupational disability annuitants, need to pay close attention to changes in tax withholding when they turn age 62.


A railroad retirement annuity is a single payment comprised of one or more of the following components, depending on the annuitant's age, the type of annuity being paid, and eligibility requirements: a Social Security Equivalent Benefit (SSEB) portion of tier I, a Non-Social Security Equivalent Benefit (NSSEB) portion of tier I, a tier II benefit, a vested dual benefit, and a supplemental annuity.

In most cases, part of a railroad retirement

annuity is treated like a social security benefit for Federal income tax purposes, while other parts of the annuity are treated like private pensions for tax purposes. Consequently, most annuitants are sent two tax statements from the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) each January, even though they receive only a single annuity payment each month.

When certain retired employees turn age 62 (or the spouse turns age 62, provided the employee is also at least age 62), the taxability of tier I benefits changes from all private pension-equivalent benefits to a split between SSEB and NSSEB portions. For many annuitants this means that the tax withholding in place will automatically decrease, and sometimes this change is significant. This is because any Form RRB W-4P on file with the RRB will not consider the SSEB portion of tier I in the withholding calculation. In many cases, the SSEB portion will be subject to taxation because of the total amount of the

annuitant's income, and the decrease in withholding may result in an insufficient amount of taxes being withheld. Notices are released to annuitants advising of the change in the withholding amount, and they are encouraged to discuss the issue with a tax advisor or the IRS to determine the correct amount of withholding for them. Annuitants often need to file a new tax withholding election form with the RRB to increase withholding following this change; otherwise they may face a larger tax liability than expected when filing Federal income tax returns the following year.

The RRB has prepared an extensive list of questions and answers to explain this issue and to address the importance of individuals establishing accurate tax withholding from their annuities. BLET members who may be impacted should visit the RRB website (www.rrb.gov) for more details, or contact the RRB Field Office where they live. 

Retired BLE President Dubroski a back-to-back winner of public service award



Former BLE International President Edward Dubroski wins the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award for Leadership and Innovation in 2018.



Former BLE International President Edward Dubroski wins his second consecutive New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award for Leadership and Innovation in 2019.

Brother Edward Dubroski, retired International President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, is the proud back-to-back winner of the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Award for Leadership and Innovation. President Dubroski won the prestigious honor in 2018 and again in 2019.

Brother Dubroski served in the Brotherhood's highest office from 1999-2001. In 1986, he was elected to the office of International Vice President. In 1991, he was elected to the position of General Secretary-Treasurer, the union's chief financial position. In 1996, Dubroski was elected by acclamation to the union's second highest position, First Vice-President. He was then ele-



President Dubroski served as the BLET President from 1999-2001

which is a cancer-causing chemical, from locomotive engines and roundhouses. In addition to his environmental work an officer of the BLE, Broth-

er Dubroski served on the Clark Township Environmental Committee for eight years.

In 1999, he won the Jefferson Award for the second year in a row in recognition for his work in creating and implementing the BLET Safety Task Force, which works alongside the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate and determine the cause of train accidents throughout the United States. The Jefferson Awards are the nation's oldest and most prestigious recognition program for volunteer public service of the United States Senate.

During his tenure as GST, Dubroski became the founder and creator of the BLE Safety Task Force, also serving as

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During his tenure as GST, Dubroski became the founder and creator of the BLE Safety Task Force, also serving as

its first Chairman. Dubroski began his professional railroad career in 1955, as a track worker on the Central Railroad of New Jersey, during which time he served in the U.S. Air Force Reserves. Following two years in the U.S. Army, he hired out as a fireman for the Jersey Central Railroad in 1960. Dubroski earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1963.

After holding several offices in and resigning from the Brotherhood of Lo-

comotive Firemen & Enginemen union, Dubroski joined BLE Division 157, and was elected as its Legislative Representative in 1970. He succeeded to the office of BLE General Chairman on the Central Railroad of New Jersey General Committee of Adjustment in 1974, and was reelected the next year, running unopposed. In 1977, Dubroski was elected as an alternate district chairman on the Conrail General Committee of Adjustment. He was elevated to Conrail

District "G" Chairman in 1980, then reelected three consecutive terms, the last two times unopposed.

In 1981, at the BLE's Third Quinquennial Convention, Dubroski was elected as an Alternate Vice President and served on the convention's Finance Committee. He was elected to Conrail Alternate General Chairman in 1983, and reelected in 1986.

Dubroski and his wife, Genevieve, have one son and one daughter. 🇺🇸

letters to the editor

Support people who support us

(BLET Editor's Note: The following letter from Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Calvin Groose was sent to BLET members living in Missouri in January 2020.)
Brothers and Sisters:

I hope the year 2020 brings great new opportunities for all.

With the new year comes new opportunities and of course, new challenges. Especially in the industry which we belong. We are seeing rapid changes in our occupation. The current FRA administration, fueled by the railroad corporations' desires, seems to green light any push that the railroads are performing. Double or triple length trains, pursuit of single person or autonomous trains, skeleton staffing of all crafts, which our industry relies upon, all with zero regard for safety of employees or the public. If any of us had any doubts that the railroads are operating at the behest of Wall Street, those should be cleared now. Accidents are up 40% from fiscal year 2018 on the two largest carriers. We have always known that unregulated industry is devastating to workers and the public. Our union is not an arm of any political party and should not be, but make no mistake, this is the direct result of the 2016 election cycle.

"As BLET members, I hope we all can make a positive difference in our workplaces and in our communities. We need to always take the high road when confronted with adversity and our actions will be a guide for others."

— Calvin Groose, Division 609

We as a union are an obstacle in the way of deregulation (or no regulation) and additional profit. They are gunning for us. The Janus decision from the Supreme Court is a fine example. The Supreme Court could have chosen from hundreds of cases elevated to this chamber. It is no accident that they chose to hear this one. It was of no urgency and the result was and is immediate to the union movement. Public sector employees are just the start of this attack, which is destined to head to the private sector union members.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to elect persons who support workers and the middle class. The winner of most elections is the candidate with the most financial backing. Therefore, Super PACs such as ALEC and Citizens for Prosperity, endowed with corporate and individual wealth, can choose who gets elected in our districts even though they have no connection to the

area. They need that vote and will exercise their power when the legislator is called upon. Return on investment. Their reach is far beyond the federal level into states and even counties and cities. With the dark money being hidden from the public, and giant tax cuts for these wealthy donors, the funds are pouring in at an alarming rate. Return on investment.

For every dollar in our economy that moves from the middle class up the economic ladder, a very small amount makes its way back down to the people. This is one result of tax cuts. Taxes are the tools governments use to even the economic playing field. These funds educate our children, build roads, provide food safety and ensure an adequate supply, provide healthcare to the population, etc. The movement of these tax dollars are vital to a vibrant economy. When these taxes are cut, less of our nation's dollars are available to fund these necessary projects.

These programs employ our population with decent paying jobs. Always remember which direction the nation's funds are heading when choosing a candidate in elections. Hopefully to our citizens, who in turn continue the transaction. The wealthy and corporations do not let go of a cent unless it has an adequate return. The rest of us circulate our income because we need it to survive. The current economic boom of the last decade is an example of this government spending. Our problem is that we have cut taxes so deep that we are now spending a trillion more than we take in. I can't tell you how this will work out but I am skeptical. Money is not free and will need to be paid back.

We need to continue to educate ourselves as our environment changes. As BLET members, I hope we all can make a positive difference in our workplaces and in our communities. We need to always take the high road when confronted with adversity and our actions will be a guide for others.

Respectfully,

Calvin Groose
BLET Division 609
(Jefferson City, Mo.)
Chairman, Missouri
State Legislative Board

IN THE LINE OF DUTY: Bruce A. Dominique Jr.



Brother Dominique with his parents

BROTHER BRUCE A. DOMINIQUE JR., A MEMBER OF BLET DIVISION 219 IN SHREVEPORT, LOUISIANA, was killed in a railroad accident on September 6, 2019. He was 36 years old.

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

According to media reports, Brother Dominique was severely injured when an 18-wheeler collided with his train at a grade crossing on West 70th Street at Kennedy Drive in Shreveport. He was taken to Ochsner LSU Health hospital where he died at 4:25 p.m. The National Transportation Safety Board is not investigating this fatal accident.


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

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

When not on duty, Brother Dominique enjoyed model railroading, railroad photography, collecting railroad memorabilia, and studying railroad history. He built his own model railroad, the Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas & Eastern (aka "LATE"). Brother Dominique worked for the Kansas City Southern as an engineer and trainman before joining the Union Pacific. Brother Stokes said Dominique ran the KCS business train, the Southern Belle, on a couple of occasions.

Prior to his railroad career, Brother Dominique was an officer with the Bossier City Police Department. Brother Stokes said Dominique was especially close to his mother and father. Brother Dominique is survived by his father Bruce, brother Christopher "Chad" Speir, and wife Christina. Sadly, his mother Anita passed away on July 24, 2019.

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

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

GIA International President Onita Wayland, 1928-2020; Husband Tony Wayland, 1922-2020

ONITA WAYLAND, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE GRAND INTERNATIONAL AUXILIARY (GIA) TO THE BROTHERHOOD OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS, passed away peacefully on January 20, 2020. She was 91 years old. Her husband Tony Wayland, a retired member of BLET Division 620 (Fort Worth, Texas), passed away the next day on January 21, 2020. He was 97.

Sister Wayland served as GIA International President from 2001-2006. She was born in Limestone County, Texas, on February 13, 1928. She graduated from Groesbeck High School in 1945 and met Tony a short time later. They were married on October 26, 1946, and spent the next 73 years together as a happy, loving couple.

Tony was born on October 17, 1922, and was active in sports including basketball, football and tennis. After graduating from Mart High School in 1941, he was signed to play minor league baseball by the Brooklyn Dodgers. His career was interrupted by World War II. He enlisted in the Army and served in the European Theater with the 104th Calvary Reconnaissance Troup (Mecz) and was discharged on December 1, 1945.

After returning to the states, Brother Wayland hired out with the Missouri Pacific Railroad. He eventually worked his way up through the ranks and earned promotion to locomotive engineer. He was a member of the Brotherhood for 51 years. He joined Division 620 on December 1, 1968, and his retirement became effective on May 31, 1984.

Sister Wayland joined the GIA in 1969 and held many offices within the Auxiliary. From 1986-2001, she served the GIA as an International Officer and was elected to the Auxiliary's highest office in 2001. During her tenure as President, the Auxiliary conducted a nationwide fundraising



Snapshots of Onita and Tony Wayland (**top left, lower left**) taken at various regional meetings over the years. **Top right:** Onita with Barbie Lynch of Belen, N.M. **Lower right:** Brother Tony (right) with the late Cooksey Humphrey (left).


campaign by selling "Mainline Cooking," a cookbook containing recipes submitted by railroad families. The book contained humorous quotes, a section featuring railroaders' stories and tips on eating healthy while working on the railroad.

Tony and Onita lived all their married life in Mart, Texas, where they raised their family in the house Tony, his father, and his brother built. As avid football fans, Tony and Onita followed the Mart Panther football team. Both were active in the Mart community throughout their lives.

The couple is survived by: two daughters, Brenda Fischer and husband, Lee; and Toni W. Daugherty and husband, Roger; grandchildren, Kristen Folley; Kori Wayland Fancher; Steven

and Jill Fischer; and Meredith and Chad Dupree; great-grandchildren, Kai and Kade Crawford; Elena Fischer; and Fischer Dupree; and numerous nieces and nephews.

They were buried at the Prairie Hill Cemetery in Mart, Texas, on January 25. Memorials may be made to the First Baptist Church of Mart (601 East Texas Ave., Mart, TX 76664, (254) 876-2521) or to the charity of your choice.

"Members of the Greatest Generation, Tony and Onita Wayland left an indelible mark on our Brotherhood and our Auxiliary," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "On behalf of our entire organization, I extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Tony and Onita." 

Former BLE General Chairman Morris Royal, 1921-2019

FORMER BLE GENERAL CHAIRMAN

MORRIS ROYAL SR. passed away on October 29, 2019. He was 97 years old.

Brother Royal was born November 16, 1921 in Texarkana, Arkansas. He was a World War II Veteran of the United States Navy and a Union Pacific locomotive engineer. Brother Royal was a highly respected member and officer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers for 62 years. He spent many of those years in service to the membership as an elected officer of the BLE, serving his General Committee of Adjustment as Secretary-Treasurer and eventually as General Chairman. He was a member of Division 496 (Texarkana, Ark.), and he retired effective January 31, 1987.

He was preceded in death by his



Morris Royal was a BLET member for 62 years. He was a member of Div. 496 and served as S-T of the GCA and eventually GC.

and Charlotte Royal of Sherman, Texas, and Ira and Sue Royal of Texarkana, Arkansas, seven grandchil-

wife, Mary Royal, a daughter, Patricia Gail Royal, and a grandson, Tony Buchanan. Survivors include one daughter, Barbara Buchanan of Texarkana, Arkansas, two sons and daughters-in-law, Morris Jr.,

dren, 17 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

Funeral services were held on November 1 at the Texarkana Funeral Home-Arkansas Chapel in Texarkana. Brother Royal was buried with military honors at the Harmony Grove Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the International Mission Board, 3806 Monument Avenue, P. O. Box 6767, Richmond, VA, 23230-0767.

"Brother Royal served this Organization with dignity and respect for many years," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "On behalf of all BLET members throughout the nation, I extend our condolences and deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Brother Royal." ☪

BROTHERHOOD OBITUARIES:

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

AS OF AUGUST 31, 2019

121 — Kenneth W. Enlow
171 — L. P. Liguori
214 — Jose F. Rivas
269 — J. R. McCormick
382 — Raymond C. Greening
383 — Ronald P. Chilcoat
383 — Paul B. Gilmore
383 — R. L. Hann
446 — Geoff E. Martin
518 — J. C. McCulloch
739 — G. W. Kabonic
762 — B. F. Cox

AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

127 — Edward Marcink
155 — Daniel N. Fallin
190 — Clarence M. Barnett
219 — Bruce A. Dominique
239 — J. W. Liszeski
259 — John R. Evans
269 — J. J. Dougherty
269 — Thomas A. Farrish
269 — R. W. Grammick
269 — J. J. Lynch
269 — H. L. Obser
286 — K. E. Heck
301 — B. D. Wyrick

402 — Cameron R. Shelden
404 — R. L. Hauser
435 — A. A. Fountain
442 — Larry D. Hanback
567 — T. W. Presley
575 — Edgardo A. Refojo
621 — Tom C. Hiser
644 — J. E. Wills

AS OF OCTOBER 31, 2019

1 — Frank A. Battaglia
28 — David W. Breeding
30 — Walt E. Henderson
88 — R. L. Jeffers
95 — Charles W. Gunter
101 — W. R. Welch
179 — Roy L. Carr
261 — J. R. Wendt
269 — A. H. Shahan
402 — Gerald F. Britton
404 — P. H. McGhee
404 — Gregory E. Scott
569 — Ira W. Vinson
699 — W. L. White
910 — C. A. Littlepage

AS OF NOVEMBER 30, 2019

9 — James L. Brantley

10 — D. G. Stealey
30 — Justin A. Shealy
190 — Samuel Shadd
251 — Richard R. Martin
269 — Michael T. Gallo
283 — W. A. Gandy
325 — Donald P. DeFalle
357 — J. P. Max
362 — Lee G. Schaures
496 — M. L. Royal
497 — E. C. Banks
497 — Brian L. Omara
892 — W. J. Kerr

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019

14 — John A. Stewart
20 — Daniel M. King
23 — Ricky Dowdy
62 — E.D. Smith
95 — Scott M. Barnes
130 — B. R. Stiner
190 — Roger A. Scott
269 — Joseph S. Gallagher
286 — D. L. Willis
309 — Arnie E. Braden
328 — Dana L. Chastain
370 — W. W. Wilson
497 — W. R. Doyle

497 — L. Zuffanti
527 — M. G. Daniels
593 — Donald Grayson

AS OF JANUARY 31, 2020

20 — Dave W. Hanson
28 — James H. Booth
107 — W. C. King
115 — Mitchell L. Kolar
176 — W. A. Ettenhofer
192 — R. D. Barchfield
213 — Ronald W. Lane
239 — Jason R. Brooks
262 — Randy D. Smith
269 — John A. Robelen
285 — Ernie J. Armstrong
366 — W. W. Biddle
382 — John J. Millerski
409 — D. R. Conner
582 — W. Klein
620 — M. C. Wayland
629 — Robert A. Stewart
659 — J. G. Manley
660 — Anthony K. Larry
742 — A. J. Gilmore
762 — C. R. Brown
937 — P. H. Winter



Teamsters Want Workers' Voices to Be Heard

With the presidential primary season in full swing, I am urging all Teamsters members and their families to get out and vote. We should be voting based on the issues that most affect working people. I'm talking about the basic rights of workers. I'm talking about the right to a secure retirement.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2019, we surveyed our members to determine what issues are most important to them in this election. Based on the results of the national survey, retirement security, protecting workers

rights and fair trade that ensures good quality jobs rounded out the top three.

As candidates have crisscrossed the country, Teamsters have been there raising questions and demanding they show leadership on those issues and more. We mounted an unprecedented effort to mobilize rank-and-file members, retirees and their families to make their voices heard and have influence over the candidates' policy positions from the very start of this presidential election. Candidates wouldn't be talking about pensions and making these commitments if it wasn't for the

coordinated effort from Teamster local unions and the members across the country.

And now we are organizing our members to participate in the primary process, making an educated decision to support the candidate they think is best on our issues. Members have been talking directly to members at worksites about the issues and where the candidates stand. We have been registering new voters, assisting with early and absentee voting and urging our members to get out and vote in their primary. The union has even brought presidential candidates directly to worksites to

give our members unparalleled access to these candidates to take issues directly to them and get straight answers.

I urge every voter that supports working people to visit our website and review the candidates' positions as you make up your mind on who to support. And then vote! Because when Teamsters vote, America wins.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

Teamsters warn Trump not to move too quickly to reopen

During these trying days, all Americans are understanding who the truly essential workers are. It's not the corporate chiefs nor the barons of Wall Street, it is the front line workers we interact with every day, they are us — essential workers are those who work in hospitals, prisons, police, emergency personnel, healthcare, trucking, railroads, grocery, highway, road crews — who are, in large measure, union members.

We are the essential workers. As essential workers we need to ensure we and our fellow workers are being

provided adequate protection while we carry on our daily work.

President Hoffa was one of a dozen leaders from the corporate world, labor and trade associations on a conference call in April with President Trump to discuss that topic. Trump dubbed the group the "Great American Renewal Task Force." He cautioned against reopening businesses across the country too quickly, for fear of endangering workers.

President Hoffa urged Trump to make sure everything is in place for a safe return to the workforce. That

means getting testing in place so people can get a test easily if they need one, and results need to be available much more quickly. Workers can't afford to take two weeks off the job to wait for a test result. And, job sites need to be fully stocked with everything from masks to disinfectant wipes.

Trump has slashed regulations as a way to help businesses boost profits. Hoffa stressed that the pandemic will require rigorous new regulations to make sure workers are protected. He said strict rules will need to be written and enforced by

the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Since taking office Trump has done the opposite, limiting OSHA's regulatory power and dramatically reducing the number of workplace inspections. Hoffa says Trump must reverse that practice. We need OSHA more than ever and you've got to put teeth in OSHA.

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.

Union Solidarity

From coast to coast, members of the *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen* turned out in force to support their Brothers and Sisters in the *United Auto Workers* during their strike against General Motors in the fall of 2019. The strike lasted over 40 days and came to a conclusion when UAW members ratified a new contract in late October 2019. We are proud to share some of their stories here.

Solidarity with UAW in Nevada

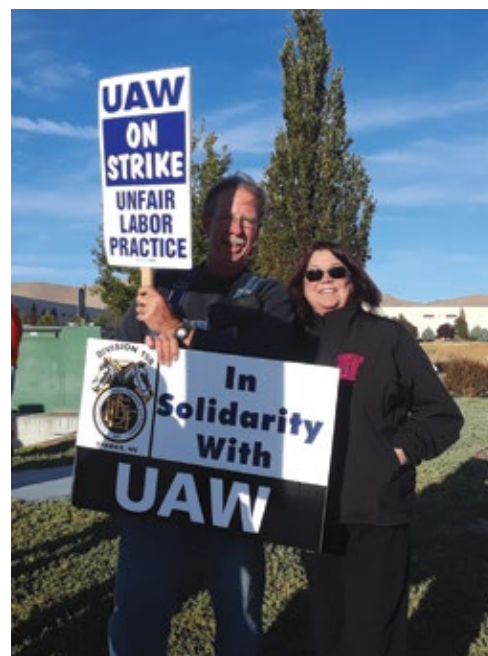
ON SEPTEMBER 20, MEMBERS OF THE BLET AND SMART-TD in Nevada stood on the picket lines with members of the United Auto Workers at the GM parts distribution warehouse in Reno, Nevada. Their show of support was part of a larger-scale Solidarity Picket organized by the Northern Nevada CLC. UAW members struck General Motors over a number of issues, including pay, work rules, and the use of temporary workers. In the top photo, at right, is (from left): Paul Ansberry, Local Chairman of BLET Division 158 (Sparks, Nevada) and 1st Vice Chairman of the UP-Western Lines/Pacific Harbor Line General Committee of Adjustment; Chad Castagnetti, Legislative Representative of BLET Division 800 (Portola, Calif.); Ethan Christensen, Local Chairman (Switchmen) of SMART-TD Local 1043; and Gabe Christenson, member of SMART TD Local 1043. Present but not pictured is Matt Parker, Chairman of the BLET Nevada State Legislative Board, who was behind the camera for this photo.



In town for a meeting on October 4, 2019, Nevada AFL-CIO Executive Secretary-Treasurer Rusty McAllister invited members of affiliates to join him at the UAW picket line. A good turnout ensued. Nevada AFL-CIO President Liz Sorenson was also present, doing her usual outstanding job of leading the group in shouting out labor's resolve to see GM workers receive a fair contract at management inside the building.



LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORTERS, FROM LEFT: Unidentified UAW member; Denise Lopez, Community/Political Activist; Rob Benner, Secretary-Treasurer of the Northern Nevada Central Labor Council; Alex Goff, Organizer/Activist for CWA-IUE and Democratic National Committeeman; Patricia Ackerman, Democratic Candidate for Nevada Assembly District 39; Unidentified UAW member; and Clint Koble, Democratic candidate for Nevada Congressional District 2.



MATT PARKER, Chairman of the BLET Nevada State Legislative and Deb Calkins, Business Agent for Teamsters Local 533.



A PART OF THE CROWD of union Brothers and Sisters who turned out.



AT CENTER, Nevada AFL-CIO President Liz Sorenson and Executive Secretary-Treasurer Rusty McAllister (holding red UAW sign).



BLET MEMBER WILL BARTLETT MET SENATOR KAMALA HARRIS at the UAW picket line in Reno, Nevada, on October 3, 2019. Brother Bartlett is 2nd Vice Local Chairman for Division 158 and Trustee for the Nevada State Legislative Board.

Buffalo BLET stands with UAW

On September 27, BLET Vice President Jim Louis met with members of the United Auto Workers and walked the picket lines with them in Buffalo, N.Y.

Vice President Louis reported that that there were approximately 3,000 union Brothers and Sisters are walking the picket line in Buffalo. After walking

the line, Brother Louis was invited to their union headquarters where he held discussions UAW Local 774 President J. R. Baker. He also met with several other UAW officers and thanked them on behalf of the BLET for what they were doing on behalf of organized labor. He spent time with Buffalo BLET officers to obtain items that the UAW members and their families needed during that strike.

"It was sad in one sense to see what

they were experiencing, but heartwarming and proud to be a union member and walk with them," Vice President Louis said.

Louis is a fourth-generation railroad worker who learned the values of unionism from his mother, Leona, a union baker. As a young girl, she would toss loaves of bread to striking autoworkers in Flint, Michigan, at the risk of being chased by management guards.



Vice President Louis, second from left, with striking UAW members in Buffalo, N.Y.



Elena Clarke

From Newark to World Trade, PATH Engineer Stays the Course

The view from the front of a PATH train on the Newark-World Trade Center line is breathtaking.

PATH Engineer Elena Clarke enjoys that rare view every day, watching the sun set over the city skyline while she's on the job. "I remember when I first saw that view," she recalled as she headed east into New York from Newark Penn Station on a recent afternoon run.

Clarke sits at the front of the train, controlling its speed, among many other crucial tasks in order to transport thousands of passengers safely from one side of the Hudson to the other. In addition to operating the entire train, she's also looking out for hazards on the tracks — everything from maintenance workers to dropped cell phones — and constantly coordinating with her conductor and the control desk.

"I don't think people realize that there's a real person up front keeping that train moving," Clarke said. "I'm laser-focused when I get in that seat. I'm the reason people get to work or go home to their families, and that's a lot of responsibility, but it's really rewarding."

Clarke wasn't always in the driver's seat. After college, she wanted to be a professor but eventually realized that she didn't want to be in school for that long. After a few different jobs, her father, a second-generation Port Authority employee (making her a third), suggested that she go



"I'm laser-focused when I get in that seat. I'm the reason people get to work or go home to their families, and that's a lot of responsibility, but it's really rewarding."

after an engineer or conductor job at PATH.

"My first thought was, are you crazy? I can't drive a train!" Clarke remembered.

Nevertheless, she applied to work at PATH. And although she was passing all her tests, she still felt like she didn't belong in the engineer's seat. "Before I started at PATH, I thought working with trains was a man's world," she said. "I thought I was going to be looked at as a joke."

But as Clarke transitioned from passenger assistant to

conductor to engineer, she started to see the number of female engineers increasing. Today, she's among 37 other female engineers, up from just three in 2000. "I saw other women doing the jobs that I wanted to do, and it made me feel like I can do this and I want to do this," she said.

Operating a PATH train on the system's busiest line during rush hour takes an incredible degree of focus and quick decision-making. Dan Ryan, a dispatcher based in Newark, has experienced Clarke's skill



Photo: courtesy Elena Clarke

**Two generations of
Clarke and PATH employees:**
Sister Clarke with
her father, Michael.

firsthand. "Elena is so dependable. I know I can count on her for anything, whether that's keeping her train on time or helping out a fellow crew member," he said.

Clarke's job is not an easy one and her dedication does not go unnoticed, whether that's out in the field below the Hudson River or back at her parents' house in South Carolina.

"If her grandfather was alive today, he'd be very proud that she's a third generation Port Authority employee," said her father, Michael Clarke. "Knowing that she's now confident in what she initially saw as a very challenging job, it also makes me proud to have her as my daughter and my co-worker."

BLET Editor's Note: The Port Authority of NY NJ recently profiled PATH locomotive engineer and BLET member Elena Clarke on its official blog, Portfolio. Sister Clarke has been a member of BLET Division 497 in Jersey City, N.J., since September 1, 2013. The article is reproduced here with permission. Original story written by Abigail Goldring.

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

You Can Also Shop For BLET Merchandise Online. Go to www.bletmerchandise.com



Plaid Placket Polo Shirt — BLT-0245

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

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



Short Sleeve Moisture Tec Tee — BLT-0247

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

Available in navy blue sizes small
thru 4XL
Small-XL \$18.00, 2XL \$19.50, 3XL
\$21.00, 4XL \$22.50



Raglan Hoodie — BLT-0225

Soft and cozy is how you will



describe our new pullover hoodie. Navy blue and heather gray give it a stylish look and the left chest embroidered

logo finishes it off in our classic red, white and blue.

Available in blue and
gray sizes small thru 4XL
Small-XL, \$46.00, 2XL \$48.00,
3XL \$50.00, 4XL \$52.00



Rosewood Clock — BLT-0117

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

Engraving available.
Clock \$129.00
Engraving \$10.00



BLET Woven Beanie — BLT-0233

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

Available in one size.
Beanie \$15.00



Oxford Dress Shirt (multiple colors) — BLT-0230

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

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

Jersey Full Zip Jacket — BLT-0221

This is must have addition to



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

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

New Cool Watch — BLT-0222

The newest addition to our watch



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

Engraving is available.
Watch \$99.00
Engraving \$10.00

Bamboo Polo Shirt — BLT-0246

A luxurious fabric that feels so good to wear!



This polo is silver with a contrasting stripe in the collar and a touch of that

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

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

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, there will likely be a delay in fulfilling orders online. Please contact American Products for more information.



Our Brothers on the Front Lines Are Essential and At Risk



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

These past few months have added two new terms that will remain ingrained in our collective dictionaries — COVID-19 and Essential Workers. Across the country, our Brothers and Sisters day-after-day remain on the front lines, delivering the goods and services that are necessary to sustain our country in the midst of a pandemic. They have been coined by our federal and state leaders collectively as “Essential Workers.” They are equally brave, dedicated, resolute and at-risk.

All of us in this industry understand the challenges our trainmen, conductors, engineers and all railroad workers face every day, but these challenges have never been greater. Every day, hundreds of thousands report to work in the face of danger for the greater good, putting duty and sacrifice ahead of the safety of themselves and their families.

Essential Workers they are called. In the Labor Movement, and in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and

Trainmen, we have another name — Brothers and Sisters. And we cannot let them go to battle without the equipment they need for success and survival.

This pandemic has changed our world. There is no going back. And now, more than ever, our workers need protections that are promised by the railroads. We do not need press releases and buzzwords from our railroad management — we need masks, and disinfectants and bold strategies that put workers first and everything else second to last. We need the railroads to put aside these thoughtless attendance policies. We need essential protections for our essential workers. We need action.

At the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, our number one priority is to protect our Brothers and Sisters. In times of war, railroads have always been an essential mover of goods and services to the front lines. As our members transport food, disinfectants and support electricity demands that run our cities and hospitals, it's no wonder our members have been deemed essential in this national effort.

But, currently, our members have been bringing their own protective gear to the battlefield. And the railroads that our members operate trains for

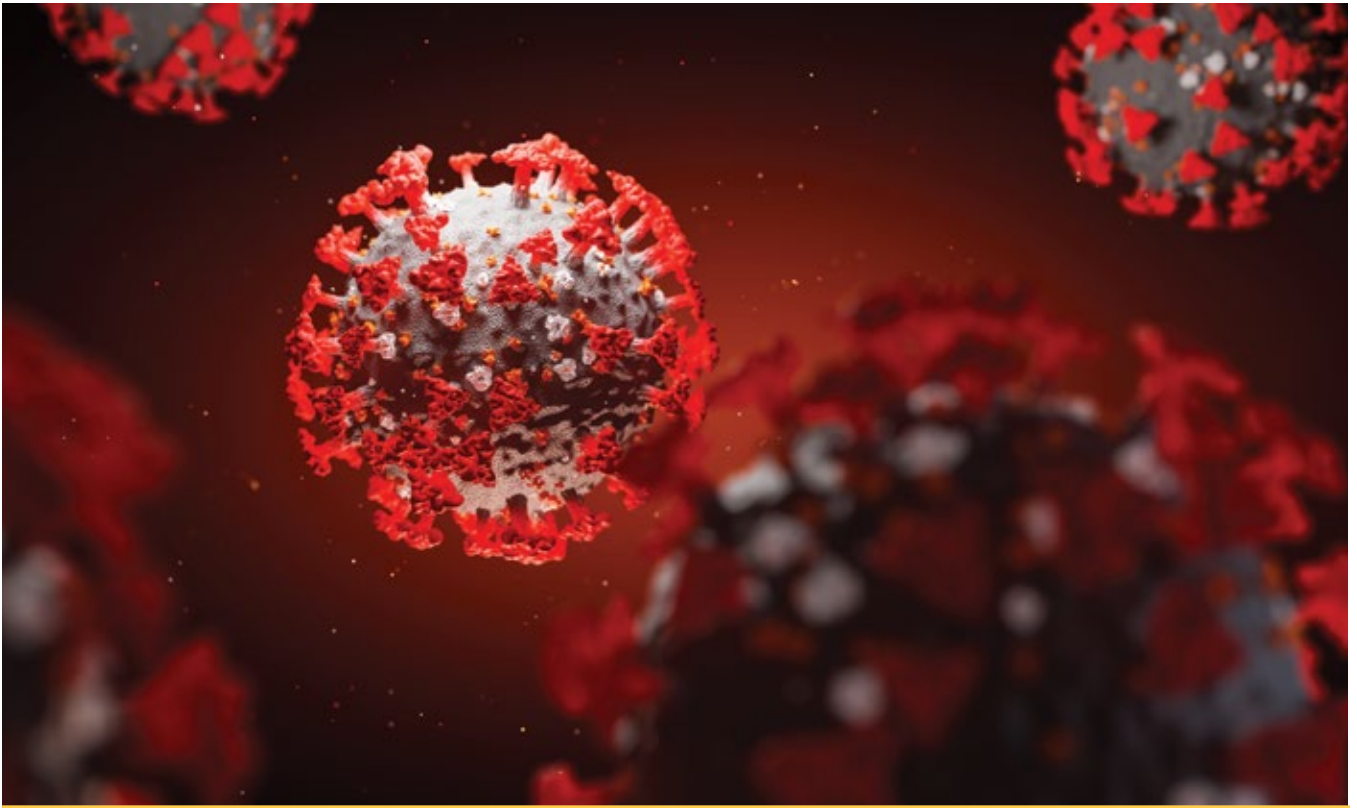
have been shameless in most cases, acting as if it's business as usual when lives are at stake.

Corporations and industries will be wholly transformed when this pandemic concludes. While the financial impacts will affect our world, so too, will the moral impacts corrode our institutions if the railroad switch steers first to commerce, rather than worker protection. How we, as our Union, the railroad industry and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) manages through this crisis will have great, altering impacts — good or bad. Life or death.

It wasn't always this way. The railroad industry that I've dedicated my life to, and my father dedicated his life to before me, has historically been one that took care of working families.

New initiatives of the industry have affronted that tradition. Precision Scheduled Railroading, or PSR, where carriers cut their inventory and employees to the bare bones, have crushed the “Essential Worker.” It's a practice that can only be conducted through the decimation of safety regulations that have kept our workers and the general public safe for decades. The FRA continues to be complicit in ignoring and

“As I write this, I know of several of our Brothers who have tested positive for COVID-19. While there have been no deaths that I am aware of, it is a constant threat to our BLET family. Across our larger industry we do know the death toll as it grows daily. In New York City, dozens of mass transit employees have perished as a result of COVID-19.”



Protecting workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be a top priority:

Railroads must provide a clean and safe working environment. They must provide the protective gear that frontline workers need to protect themselves and their families. There must be a bold action plan to ensure worker safety is the first priority on every transport. We will not survive without one.

tossing away regulations for the sake of railroad greed.

There was a time when the Chamber of Commerce included labor when bidding on jobs, and the FRA coordinated with labor proactively to keep the industry safe. But much has changed. And several of the standards the railroads are attempting to undo in these unprecedented times are an injustice to the employees who, too, have dedicated their livelihoods to this industry. The purpose of the FRA is to enforce rail safety regulations and policy — not serve as a rubber stamp to the 21st century railroad barons.

Much of what we knew yesterday will never be the same. People will always reference before and after COVID-19. The new normal has yet to be cast, and we are in the most unpredictable times of our lives.

Today I found myself reflecting on when I was young, going to the an-

nual railroad picnic at a Massachusetts state park. Every year, hundreds of my father's co-workers would gather with each other's families. My dad, David, was a conductor and General Chairman, and our shared experiences then helped guide my path towards where I am today. I recall the comradeship of those days when, even as young as I was, I could recognize the shared values that everyone held. It was of family, of friendship, of brotherhood. It was a time when employees and employers were as one.

When I entered the railroad in the early 70s that comradeship was still there, but it has eroded overtime as priorities have shifted away from workers. Don't get me wrong. This is not just related to the railroad industry but all of corporate America.

As I write this, I know of several of our Brothers who have tested positive for COVID-19. While there have been

no deaths that I am aware of, it is a constant threat to our BLET family. Across our larger industry, we do know the death toll as it grows daily. In New York City, dozens of mass transit employees have perished as a result of COVID-19.

Railroads must provide a clean and safe working environment. They must provide the protective gear that frontline workers need to protect themselves and their families. There must be a bold action plan to ensure that worker safety is the first priority on every transport. We will not survive without one.

Over the past century, crises have changed the course of history. Will we become a more unified world after COVID-19? Will our Brothers and Sisters be recognized for their duty and courage in the face of danger? Will corporate employers again recognize the value of the everyday worker? The Essential Worker? It's not time that will tell the story, it's up all of us. 🇺🇸

Regulatory review: Looking back at 2019



BY VINCENT G. VERNA
DIRECTOR OF
REGULATORY AFFAIRS

I wanted to take the opportunity in this Regulatory Update to review some of the issues that our National Legislative Office faced during the year 2019. Hopefully, this summary will be informative to our membership.

Government Shutdown

The year 2019 started with a government shut-down. This shut-down started on December 22, 2018, and lasted until January 25, 2019. All the relevant offices that BLET interacts with for safety and regulatory issues in our nation's capital were closed. Unfortunately, a lot of good people who work for the federal government missed work and paychecks for no good reason. The Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), whose charter was allowed to lapse in 2018 and was later reconstituted, met in late 2018 but the government shutdown delayed any further meetings until April 2019. Because of the shut-down, the year started off in such a way that we really never got a firm footing on some regulatory issues, and when the FRA did get up and running, it took actions that were unanticipated (more on that later).

Cross-Border Crew Challenges With Mexico

In late 2018, the National Legislative Office helped circulate a letter to the new Congress and obtained signatures from then-Ranking Member Peter DeFazio for a letter to DOT Secretary Elaine Chao regarding our cross-border issue. In early 2019, the BLET — led by National Pres-

ident Dennis Pierce and Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman — met with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, and now, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair DeFazio on the issue. Our delegation also held a face-to-face meeting with Secretary Chao on the issue, and also shared our concerns with Benny Thompson, Chair of Homeland Security, and Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Trouble at The Office of Management and Budget

BLET and all other rail unions interested in regulatory policy for safety on our nation's railroads need to be aware of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This office is part of The White House and reviews any potential regulations that could come from the FRA. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) is the stop at OMB where regulations get reviewed.

In Washington D.C., there is a saying that "personnel is policy." As far as OMB personnel is concerned, the year started with the appointment of Neomi Rao to lead OIRA. She has since vacated that role for a federal judgeship on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. It was a controversial pick because Rao had never been a judge or even tried a case in state or federal court before her confirmation. She replaced on the Court of Appeals Supreme Court Justice Bret Kavanaugh. But in her short time at OIRA, she changed regulatory policy into "deregulatory policy."

This is particularly troublesome for BLET members who rely on safety regulations and the enforcement of safety regulations to maintain a safe working environment. In a stroke of Washington D.C. irony, Rao was a clerk for the late

Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. After his death, the nomination of Judge Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court that was blocked in the U.S. Senate, and later filled by a Trump appointee. The Chief Judge on the United States Court of Appeals where Rao now sits as a judge is Merrick Garland.

Two-Person Crew Legislation

In 2019, the BLET Washington Office was directed to organize two separate campaigns on Capitol Hill (each three days long) advocating for the two-person crew bill and the cross-border bill. There are many regulatory issues that interface with two-person crew and the cross-border issue. Remember when I wrote earlier about FRA's unanticipated actions in 2019? One of those actions facilitated a renewed push for crew size in the legislative forum. FRA withdrew the rule on crew size on May 29, 2019. BLET knew early on that the FRA would not pursue a crew size rule. What we did not realize was that FRA would also claim that their unwillingness to regulate on crew size was in effect a negative pre-emption and that constituted FRA asserting jurisdiction over the states that had passed laws governing crew size.

RSAC and SOFA Meetings 2019

The BLET participated in a full RSAC Committee meeting on December 4, 2018, which was the first meeting of the reconstituted RSAC. As previously mentioned, no momentum was gained from that kick-off meeting due to the government shut down from December 22 to January 25, 2019. It was the longest in history.

The next meeting was held April 26, 2019. Among other items, we discussed RSAC's make-up of new groups and new protocols. There are smaller working groups currently working on Certifica-



tion for Signal Maintenance Employees and Train Dispatchers. The next full RSAC Meeting was held on November 26, 2019, in Washington D.C. That meeting consisted of a much smaller group and it remains to be seen how effective the RSAC will be in a reduced capacity format. Other RSAC activities in 2019 included a conference call on October 17 regarding 49 CFR Part 225 accident reporting. There is a desire to update the accident reporting form — specifically, the BLET would like the form to capture train length and the number of crew members. As of right now, FRA does not keep those statistics but individual railroads do. This group has only had conference calls thus far.

In 2019, BLET and other rail labor organizations met four times with FRA Administrator Ron Batory. BLET met with him on March 6, July 10, October 16, and November 14. The meetings were positive in the sense that Administrator Batory allotted plenty of time to talk about our issues.

The SOFA Group met in February in Kansas City. It was the first meeting following the retirement of Brother Rob Svob from the committee. Brother Rob's expertise and 40-plus years of service will be a loss of institutional knowledge that cannot be replaced. However, the BLET will fill Brother Svob's chair soon.

Other SOFA news included the start of a new chairman for the committee: Brendan Gerardo, who replaces Ricky Huggins. Huggins still oversees FRA Accident Branch.

Interactions with Transportation Research Board

The FRA has a simulator at the Volpe Center in Cambridge, Mass., that the BLET has visited in the past. They now use it for a CTIL Project that studies various human factors issues in a laboratory setting. The Transportation Research Board (part of the National Academy of Sciences) has a safety committee and BLET has had a seat on that committee for many years.

TRB has a group that is tasked with reviewing the effectiveness of FRA's Re

“This was a sampling of the regulatory events of 2019. I am hopeful that 2020 will bring a renewed focus on how to enforce current safety regulations and possibly promulgate new regulations that will keep our Brothers and Sisters safe on the job.”

search and Development, which they requested BLET's involvement in during 2015 and again during 2019. That group is currently reviewing FRA now and BLET's part of the sub-group is focused on human factors projects at FRA. That group met again in D.C. on November 21-22, 2019.

At the January meeting, there was a meeting of stakeholders for the CTIL, Railroaders Guide to Healthy Sleep, and a very useful discussion in the Safety Committee regarding long trains and the problems that can come with them. We viewed a very good presentation by Grady Cothen. Former Deputy Administrator for Safety at FRA. Cothen has an insider's skill when it comes to knowing how to navigate the FRA Safety Database. Cothen's presentation was instructive as far as analyzing potential risks that long trains can pose. BLET is working on a regulatory/legislative position regarding very long trains. As of now, there is no regulatory forum where we could put forward a position. However, BLET wants to be ready when we have an avenue as far as it is meant to be a starting point — and we have some good information taken from TRB presentations, GAO reports and prior studies done on brake technology.

BLET Comments on Waiver Petitions

The BLET submitted extensive joint

comments with SMART-TD on July 8, 2019 regarding 49 CFR Parts 240 and 242, Conductor/Locomotive Engineer Certification Regulation harmonization. These can be found in the docket at: FRA-2018-0053. The final rule is still pending.

In March 2019, we addressed Union Pacific's Hours of Service “waiver.” In March, UP claimed it had received a waiver from FRA on HOS due to the extensive flooding. The trouble with this is that the Carrier told crews it had the waiver in place before a waiver request was granted by FRA. This caused major confusion amongst our members, at BLET and at FRA.

On September 23, 2019, we submitted comments regarding FRA-2016-0036 Inward Facing Cameras. This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was due to a legislative mandate in the FAST Act. The FAST Act provision for inward and outward facing cameras concerned passenger operations. However, FRA posed many questions seeking comment regarding passenger and freight operations. BLET needed to respond to FRA's request for comment about the possible negative effects on our affect members should FRA move forward on a camera regulation for freight operations.

Another issue that received BLET comment is a pending HOS Pilot Program for short lines. Comments were due on December 13 regarding a pilot program that would allow crews to work between the hours of 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. BLET is concerned that this will exacerbate fatigue, not help it. The science has long been in concerning circadian rhythms.

Conclusion

This was a sampling of the regulatory events of 2019. I am hopeful that 2020 will bring a renewed focus on how to enforce current safety regulations and possibly promulgate new regulations that will keep our Brothers and Sisters safe on the job. BLET will always try to effect positive change for our members and the public in any safety forum where we participate. 🗣️

Ed Hawkins completes 39-year railroad career



Brother Ed Hawkins completed his Last Run on January 2, 2019.

Brother Thomas E. (Ed) Hawkins of BLET Division 84 (Greenville, S.C.) retired after 39 years of service when he safely completed his Last Run for Norfolk Southern on January 1, 2019.

His railroad career began in 1980 when he hired out as a brakeman on the Southern Railway at Greenville, S.C. Brother Hawkins went firing in November of 1995 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer with the Norfolk Southern in November of 1996. He has been a dedicated member of the Brotherhood for over 22 years, having initiated into Division 84 on August 1, 1996.

For 16 years (2001-2017), Brother Hawkins diligently and faithfully

served his Division as Secretary-Treasurer. He also served as First Alternate Delegate to the National Division (2004-2012), Legislative Representative and Delegate to the State Legislative Board (2010-2012) and as Delegate to the National Division (2016-2018).

Brother Hawkins' Last Run occurred on January 1, 2019, when he worked as the locomotive engineer on Norfolk Southern Train 222P301 from Greenville to Charlotte, N.C. His retirement became effective the next day. During his railroad career, Brother Hawkins was recognized with a Safety and Service Award from the carrier.

Brother Hawkins and his wife Wanda were married on February 14, 1998.

Sister Wanda was an asset to the BLET Auxiliary, serving as Secretary of the Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) and as a Delegate to the Auxiliary's 2014 National Convention, representing the Southeastern Region. Brother Hawkins has one daughter, Karlee, one stepson, Derek Stafford, and one stepdaughter, Christie Stafford. He also has one grandchild, Phoenix, and two step-grandchildren, Jeremy Payne and Zackary Payne.

His hobbies include NASCAR and camping. During retirement, Brother Hawkins has spent more time with his family and has enjoyed traveling.

Congratulations on your retirement and thank you for your service to our Brotherhood! 🇺🇸

Veteran engineer Dan Albert was sixth on Amtrak's national seniority roster

After nearly 48 years of railroad-ing, including 46 as a locomotive engineer, Brother D.L. (Dan) Albert of BLET Division 752 (Rensselaer, N.Y.) safely completed his Last Run for Amtrak on November 7, 2019. He was #6 on Amtrak's national seniority roster for locomotive engineers at the time of his retirement.

Brother Dan hired out as a fireman for the Penn Central in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1972. He went firing on June 26, 1972, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1974. He worked as a Conrail locomotive engineer from 1976-1986, and joined the Brotherhood on October 1, 1986.

His Brother, D.J., also is an Amtrak locomotive engineer, working in and around Niagara Falls, N.Y. Dan hired out on the railroad before D.J., but when Dan came to Amtrak there was another "D.L. Albert" on the railroad who declined the transition to Amtrak. It is believed that both sets of paperwork were discarded inadvertently. Dan retired as #6 on Amtrak's national engineer seniority roster. But as a result of the paperwork mix-up, he was #2 in Zone 3 and his brother D.J. was and remains #1. D.J. is also a member of BLET Division 752.

Prior to the start of his railroad career, Brother Albert served in the U.S. Army from 1969-1971. He was stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., but was not sent to Vietnam as another member of his family was already serving there.

Brother Dan's last run came on November 7, 2019, when he worked as locomotive engineer of Amtrak train #63 (engine #724) between Syracuse and Niagara Falls, N.Y. On hand to congratulate Brother Dan on his Last Run were Division 752 President Bill Fleischmann and Division 752 Vice President Luke Irvine. Brother Dan's retirement became effective the next day.

Brother Dan and his wife Mary Lou have seven children: Matt, Chad, Shan-



Officers from BLET Division 752 were on hand to congratulate Brother Dan upon completion of his Last Run and the end of his 47-year railroad career. From left: Luke Irvine, Vice President of Division 752; Brother Dan Albert, Division 752; and Bill Fleischmann, President of Division 752.

non, Danielle, Kate, Bekah and Ryan; and 12 grandchildren. Many of Brother Dan's immediate family members work or have worked in the railroad industry. His son Matt works out of the Collinwood Yard in Cleveland, and his son Chad is a long time member of Division 3 (Cleveland) who works a traveling switcher in Erie, Pa. His father Louie was a train dispatcher in Erie, Pa., and retired in Cleveland, Ohio. His Brother Darryl was a CSX locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 3 in the Cleveland before retiring in 2013. And as previously mentioned, his Brother D.J. continues to work as an Amtrak locomotive engineer.

Brother Dan was an active on-the-job training instructor. He trained many new and existing engineers over the years, most recently Jake Rush, who worked as a student engineer during Brother Dan's Last Run on November 7, 2019.

"Brother Dan was known for being a methodical, pragmatic and wise en-



Brother Dan Albert operates Amtrak Train 63 on his Last Run with assistance from Jake Rush, one of his final student engineers. This photo was taken just west of Rochester, N.Y., on the day of Brother Albert's Last Run, November 7, 2019. Photo courtesy: Kai Rendon

gineer," said Luke Irvine, who serves Division 752 as Vice President and Alternate Legislative Representative. "He was bestowed with a unique ability to calmly and concisely impart decades of wisdom and experience on newer generations of engineers." 📷

Former Arkansas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Todd retires



Brother Todd and his wife Jane at the 2014 Southwestern Convention Meeting in St. Louis, Mo.

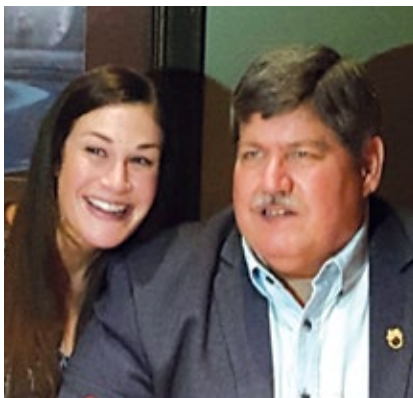


Brother Todd and his brother, Arlin Todd, former Chairman of the Louisiana State Legislative Board.

Brother Terry L. Todd, long-serving Chairman of the BLET's Arkansas State Legislative Board, retired on January 2, 2018. His railroad career spanned more than four decades, and he spent over 20 years as an elected officer of the BLET.

Brother Todd hired out as a brakeman with the Missouri Pacific Railroad at Monroe, La., in June of 1977. He went firing on June 29, 1978, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on September 8, 1979. He has held continuous membership in BLET for more than 40 years, having joined the Brotherhood on September 1, 1978. He first joined Division 915 (Alexandria, La.), transferring to Division 585 (North Little Rock, Ark.) several years later.

In 1996, Brother Todd began serving Division 585 as President and Legislative Representative, offices that he held until his retirement. He spent 20 years as an officer of the BLET's Arkansas State Legislative Board, serving as its Secretary-Treasurer from 1998-2002 before being elected Chairman in 2002. He was reelected to six terms of office



Brother Todd with his daughter Haley at his surprise retirement party given by the members of Division 182.

as Chairman between 2002 and 2018, most recently winning reelection by acclamation in 2016.

Brother Todd was Chairman of the BLET's former Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) from 2006-2015, and represented his Division as Delegate to several BLET National Division conventions over the years. He is a former 1st Vice Chairman of the BLET's National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC) and former Chairman of NASLBC Region

2. Brother Todd has been a member of the Arkansas State AFL-CIO Executive Committee since 2001. He also served as a National Division Representative on the Rail Safety Advisory Committee's (RSAC) working group for Hours of Service.

Two major railroad safety bills were signed into state law during his tenure as Chairman of the Arkansas State Legislative Board. In 2009, then-Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe signed House Bill 1318 into law. The "Safe Transportation of Railroad Employees by Contract Carriers Act" increased safety for railroad workers by mandating improved safety standards for van drivers employed by railroad contract carriers as well as the motor vehicles they use to transport train crews to and from off-duty locations. The law mandates hours of service for van drivers, drug testing for drivers, inspections of the vehicles, and maintenance of the vehicles. It also mandates liability insurance of \$5 million for each motor vehicle that transports railroad employees. In 2017, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, a Republican, signed

Act 955 into law, which protects train crews by imposing harsher penalties on criminals who target railroad workers. The act is designed discourage terrorist acts against freight railroads and public transportation employees, and protects locomotive engineers, conductors, switchmen, brakemen, trainmen, and firemen.

Brother Todd's Last Run came on December 21, 2017. He worked as locomotive engineer of a manifest train (operating an SD70 locomotive) between Longview, Texas, and North Little Rock, Ark. His retirement became effective January 2, 2018. Members of Division 585 in North Little Rock honored him with a surprise retirement dinner and party following his Last Run.

Brother Todd comes from a railroad family. His father Marlin Todd was an electrician and manager for the Missouri Pacific for many years. His Brother, Arlin Todd, is a BLET member and a retired locomotive engineer. Arlin is also a former Chairman of the BLET's Louisiana State Legislative Board.

During retirement, Brother Todd



Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson (seated) signs Act 955 into law on April 6, 2017. The bill discourages terrorist acts by imposing harsher penalties on criminals who target railroad and public transportation workers. Standing, from left: Arkansas State Senator Eddie Joe Williams (a retired member of BLET Division 585); Terry Todd, BLET Arkansas State Legislative Board Chairman at the time of the bill's signing; Wayne Denson, current BLET Arkansas State Legislative Board Chairman; and Gerald Sale, SMART-TD Arkansas State Legislative Director.

still attends union meetings and enjoys hunting. He also enjoys spending more time with his family.

Brother Todd and his wife, Jane Gray-Todd, were married on June 24, 1989. He has three children: Lindsey (deceased), Haley and Ryan, and four grandchildren.

Upon learning of Brother Todd's retirement, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said: "Brother Terry, you are obviously leaving large shoes to fill, and will be missed. Congratulations on your retirement. I most sincerely hope you enjoy a long and rewarding retirement." 📖

Randy Blair a BLET member for over 40 years

With over 40 consecutive years of membership in the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, Brother Randy J. Blair of BLET Division 578 (Tulsa, Okla.) completed his Last Run for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway on December 26, 2019.

Brother Blair's railroad career began more than 42 years ago when he hired out with the former St. Louis-San Francisco Railway as a hostler on October 10, 1977. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer less than a year later. A proud owner of a 40-year BLET membership pin, Brother Blair has over 41 years of consecutive membership our Brotherhood, having initiated into Division 578 on October 1, 1978.



Randy Blair

For his Last Run, Brother Blair worked as a locomotive engineer on a roundtrip from Tulsa Yard to Tiger. His retirement became effective on December 27, 2019.

Brother Blair is a third generation railroader, following in the footsteps of his grandfather Henry Blair, who worked as a carman from the 1920s-1950s, and his father Buddy Blair, who worked as a locomotive engineer from 1959-1997. He also has three uncles who worked as carmen in the Cherokee Yard.

Brother Blair and his wife Tammy were married on September 24, 1982. The couple has two children and one grandchild. He enjoys shooting sports, and has no plans during retirement except to enjoy life.

Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, Brother Blair, and thank you for your many years of dedicated service to our Brotherhood! 📖

BLET salutes Carl Fields upon retirement

Brother Carl W. Fields, who served the BLET Safety Task Force for more than 25 years, retired effective October 17, 2019. His railroad career spanned more than 41 years with the Norfolk & Western Railroad and the Indiana Harbor Belt.

On behalf of all BLET National Division officers, staff, and the entire membership throughout the United States, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce expressed his thanks and appreciation to Brother Fields.

“Your dedication, work ethic and organizational skills have helped secure the BLET’s position as leader among all of Rail Labor in accident investigation,” President Pierce wrote, upon receipt of Brother Fields’ resignation letter. “Your talent and input will be sorely missed. I wish you a long and enjoyable retirement.”

In addition to his work on the Safety Task Force, Brother Fields also represented the BLET on the Advisory Board of the Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program from 2014-2019.

“BLET leaders and members alike have benefited from your work to ensure timely and detailed training is provided regarding transportation of hazardous materials, and in sharing first responder responsibilities with civil authorities when a hazmat incident occurs in our industry. Your contributions in this field are all the more important because you help to ensure that training is afforded that the carriers cannot bother to provide,” wrote President Pierce.

BLET National Secretary-Treasurer Steve Bruno, who serves as Chairman of the Safety Task Force, said: “I am proud to salute Brother Fields upon his retirement and thank him for his many years of service and leadership. With



Brother Carl Fields has hung up his hard hat after serving the BLET Safety Task Force for more than a quarter of a century.

his warm personality and good sense of humor, Carl has many friends within our Brotherhood and we will miss him.”

Brother Fields hired out on the Norfolk & Western Railroad on April 1, 1978. He went firing with the Indiana Harbor Belt in April of 1991 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on August 2, 1991. He joined BLET Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.) on July 1, 1993, and has held continuous membership for the past 26+ years.

In 1994, he began work for the BLET Safety Task Force as an Investigator, serving as Assistant Coordinator from December 7, 2006 to August 3, 2010, and as Coordinator from August 3, 2010 to October 17, 2019.

Brother Fields has served the Brotherhood in numerous other offices throughout his long and distinguished railroad career. He served Division 682 as Legislative Representative for 15 years

(2001-2016), and served the Indiana State Legislative Board for 14 years in various offices, including: 2nd Alternate Vice Chairman, 2002-2004; Alternate Secretary-Treasurer, 2004-2006; and as Secretary-Treasurer, 2006-2016. He was appointed to serve on the Arrangements Committee at three BLET National Conventions (2010, 2014 and 2018), and had the honor of serving on the Arrangements Committee for the BLET’s 150th anniversary celebration in Detroit, Mich., in May of 2013.

He and his wife Cheryl have been married since October 5, 1986, and they reside in Mokena, Ill.

“It has been an honor to serve the Brotherhood these past 25 years, and to work in the railroad industry for more than 41 years,” Brother Fields said. “I have been fortunate to work alongside some of the most devoted union activist Brothers & Sisters in the industry.”

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 ◀▶

BLET members also operate the nation's passenger and commuter railroads as well, including: Amtrak nationwide; Keolis Commuter Service (KCS) in Boston; Long Island Rail Road, Port Authority Trans-Hudson and New Jersey Transit in New York and New Jersey; Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority in Philadelphia, New Jersey and Delaware; Keolis Rail Service Virginia (KRSV) operating Virginia Railway Express service between our nation's capital and its Virginia suburbs; Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) providing service between Washington and the Baltimore metropolitan area; Metra in Chicago and its suburbs; NorthStar in Minneapolis; Sounder in Seattle; and Transit America Services, Inc. (TASI) operating Caltrain service between San Francisco and San Jose, Calif. In many of these large cities, our members provide the only means of transportation to frontline workers such as hospital staff, who are among the most important essential workers during the pandemic.

It is the commuter and passenger employees who have been the most affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority in greater New York City, which includes the Long Island Railroad, has reported nearly 100 COVID-19 related employee fatalities, with scores of employees testing positive or in quarantine. Most East

“The BLET will continue the fight for concrete action to address these ongoing problems, with officers and members at all levels of our Brotherhood doing their part to draw attention to industry and governmental shortcomings.”

Coast commuter operators are now providing masks and gloves for operating crews, but proper personal protective equipment (PPE) was not available early on in the pandemic. Representatives from the BLET and other Rail Labor Unions have been working hard to get proper PPE for all commuter and passenger employees, and those efforts are just now starting to bear fruit.

Legislatively, the BLET — along with the rest of Rail Labor — successfully lobbied to ensure that the needs of railroad workers and their families were included in the first coronavirus stimulus package, which was signed into law on March 27. On March 26, the United States Senate unanimously ratified H.R. 748, a \$2 trillion stimulus package known as the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the U.S. House of Representatives passed the measure by a voice vote on March 27, and President Trump signed the bill into law later that same day.

The legislation benefits out-of-work railroaders by waiving the 7-day waiting period for benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) and providing \$50 million to cover the costs of providing these additional benefits. It increases RUIA unemploy-

ment benefits through an additional \$1,200 biweekly benefit and provides \$425 million to cover the costs of providing these additional benefits through July 31, 2020. The legislation allows the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to access approximately \$130 million of remaining American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to provide extended benefits through December 31, 2020, and supplies RRB with \$5 million to pay for additional administrative costs.

The measure also protects Amtrak workers by providing \$1.02 billion in funding for the National Railroad Passenger Corp., which is split between the Northeast Corridor (\$492 million) and its National Network (\$526 million). And the bill provides \$24.9 billion in grants for various transit agencies throughout the nation.

Working in conjunction with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, we continue to fight to secure added benefits and protections for railroad workers in future stimulus legislation that is currently being discussed in Congress.


Returning to the nation's freight carriers, the BLET also is leading the fight to get the freight carriers to not only provide a clean and sanitized workplace for all railroad workers, but to also

treat them fairly if they become ill, must take care of a sick family member, or must be quarantined. Despite our best efforts, very few of the nation's freight carriers have agreed to provide additional paid leave to address absences related to the pandemic.

In fact, very few carriers have even agreed to suspend their draconian attendance policies, despite our warnings that these policies will force locomotive engineers and trainmen to come to work when they are sick with or after they been exposed to the coronavirus. Just as we predicted, sick workers continue to report to work just to protect their jobs, unnecessarily exposing their co-workers to even greater risk.

Additionally, and like many other industries, the railroads as a group were caught woefully unprepared insofar as PPE and sanitation supplies are concerned. On top of all this, the Federal Railroad Administration has granted the industry unprecedented relief from safety regulations, but has refused to require the CDC-based initiatives we proposed to require protection of the health of our members.

The BLET will continue the fight for concrete action to address these ongoing problems, with officers and members at all levels of our Brotherhood doing their part to draw attention to industry and governmental shortcomings.

As I said, BLET members are the ultimate essential workers, and we will prevail in our fight to ensure that the nation's rail carriers provide them with a safe workplace during the pandemic. 



PTSD: An Ever-Present Elephant In The Room



**SUBMITTED BY
JESSICA COLE**

NATIONAL 2ND VICE
PRESIDENT / LEGISLATIVE
REPRESENTATIVE,
BARABOO, WISCONSIN

“The hardest part is that you’re usually the last person to see that particular individual alive,”

so said our own John Tolman, Vice President and National Legislative Representative of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. He was quoted in a 2015 article published by *Newsweek* regarding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among railroad workers who are involved in critical incidents such as fatalities, accidents, collisions, near misses, and the like.

According to Vice President Tolman, rail operators will experience three critical incident exposures during their careers, on average. Further data in the *Newsweek* article suggests that 12.1% of them will develop PTSD or its symptoms as a result of these incidents.

PTSD symptoms include irritability, trouble sleeping, night terrors, feelings of guilt and unexplained anxiety or agitation, preoccupation with thoughts and dissociation from current reality, flashbacks, and difficulty interpreting and recalling timing of events. *Slaughterhouse Five*, the classic novel by Kurt Vonnegut, is an anti-war novel that famously describes the fracturing of time and the psyche of a World War II soldier who has PTSD. Vonnegut is dead on target in its descriptions of the illness. The protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, is literally “unstuck in time.”

Another, much newer book, *The*

According to Vice President (John) Tolman, rail operators will experience three critical incident exposures during their careers, on average.

Further data in the Newsweek article suggests that 12.1% of them will develop PTSD or its symptoms as a result of these incidents.

first hand account from a war time reporter who developed PTSD, but also describes research and treatments that helped him in varying degrees. For family members of an affected person, one of the most difficult aspects of the disorder is the impossibility of knowing what it is like to be the affected person: a deeply traumatic event literally puts the victim of that event on the other side of a wall that the rest of the world can’t quite see through. Literally, for the victim and for the family, it divides the world into those who have experienced this and those who haven’t. *The Evil Hours* does a brilliant job of bridging the void, creating empathy among PTSD sufferers, and their families and friends.

In March 2014, the Federal Railroad Administration announced that all railroads would need to implement a Critical Incident Response Plan as mandated by the 2008 Rail Safety Improvement Act. This has been done in various ways by the different carriers, but a stark problem remains: no matter whose plan you read, most plans

revolve around offering employees counseling after a critical incident. That’s a logical — but ineffective — place to start because in many cases, PTSD is nearly silent at the outset, such as immediately following the traumatizing incident. However, it is relentlessly progressive as months and years go by, with symptoms worsening and becoming more and more entrenched until and unless treatment is sought. Therefore, families and friends need to be vigilant and should seek advice from a counselor if they feel a loved one may have a PTSD issue.

Because PTSD can cripple a person badly enough that they are unable to work or maintain normal family relationships, it’s crucial to get treatment. PTSD sufferers can regain much peace and ability to function in the “normal” world with appropriate intervention and treatment.

Good health insurance benefits are available to many rail employees, and these include mental health benefits. In many cases, this will be the first line of relief against PTSD symptoms brought on by critical incidents at work.

Whereas many State Workman’s Compensation plans provide for benefits for those who suffer from PTSD brought on by workplace occurrences, rail workers fall under the Federal Employers’ Liability Act. And according to an article from *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*:

“Railroad and subway drivers can experience psychological trauma when trains strike or nearly miss other trains, motor vehicles, or persons or become instruments of death. Derailments, collisions, and suicides on the tracks can induce feelings of help-



KNOW THE SIGNS OF PTSD:

Symptoms include irritability, trouble sleeping, night terrors, feelings of guilt and unexplained anxiety or agitation, preoccupation with thoughts and dissociation from current reality, flashbacks, and difficulty interpreting and recalling timing of events.

lessness, horror, guilt, and anxiety in the drivers. Although some drivers experience acute stress disorder (ASD) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), their conditions are not always acknowledged within the occupational setting. The world literature suggests that PTSD has been an increasing focus of concern, giving

rise to detailed intervention protocols. In the United States, the Federal Employers' Liability Act (FELA) governs the adjudication of work-related injuries among railroad employees. In practice, it is difficult for railroad drivers with PTSD to receive benefits if there was no 'direct impact' linked to the employer's negligence."

In conclusion, I believe that the PTSD issue is probably far under-addressed within the ranks of the railroad, not only for employees directly affected, but for their co-workers and families. If I can be of help to anyone who might need help in dealing with a possible PTSD issue, please call me at (262) 672-9742. ☎

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.

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BLET MARKS 157TH ANNIVERSARY

On May 8, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) proudly marked its 157th anniversary. The union was founded as the Brotherhood of the Footboard on May 8, 1863 in Marshall, Mich. In 1864, the union changed its name to Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), the name it retained for 140 years until merging with the

International Brotherhood of Teamsters on Jan. 1, 2004, when it became the BLET. The BLET is the oldest labor union in the Western Hemisphere.

In the three decades before the founding of the BLET, locomotive engineers suffered abominable working conditions. The 24-hour workday was commonplace. Railroad magnates ran roughshod over employees. Strikes were often mercilessly crushed.

Several attempts to organize locomotive engineers were made between 1855 and 1860.

William D. Robinson was elected the first Grand Chief Engineer of the Brotherhood of the Footboard in 1863. The name would change to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers the following year.

It wasn't until April 1863, however, that William D. Robinson, a Michigan Central locomotive engineer, brought 19 men of the craft together at his home in Marshall, Mich., and inspired them to found the organization, which survives today.

A monument marking the event still stands in Marshall.

At a meeting in Detroit the following month, a dozen men agreed to tie their destinies together. They cemented a common bond on May 8, 1863, electing Robinson as their Grand Chief Engineer (president), and naming the group the Brotherhood of the Footboard. By August 1863, 10 Divisions had been established — Detroit and Marshall, Mich.; Michigan City, Ind.; Adrian, Mich.; Norwalk, Ohio; two in Chicago, Ill.; Lafayette, Ind.; Crestline, Ohio; and La Porte, Ind. The name Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) was adopted at the first national convention held in Indianapolis in August 1864.

