O
n January 1, a new team of officers took the oath of office and the union embarked on a new era.

Edward A. Hall, the union’s new National President, is joined by new First Vice President Mark L. Wallace, and new National Secretary-Treasurer David P. Estes on the BLET’s Executive Committee. As recently as December, both Hall and Estes were operating locomotives, Hall at Union Pacific in Arizona and Estes at Amtrak in the Pacific Northwest. The three executive board members, BLET’s highest ranking officers, rolled up their shirt sleeves and began working as a team at the union’s headquarters in Ohio.

“We’re excited about what we can do together to build a better union,” said Hall. “We have new blood, a lot of energy and a deep bench.”

In addition to three new Executive Committee members, eight members of the union’s Advisory Board, a board majority, are newly-elected. The board is composed of the 14 highest-ranking elected officers in BLET and serves as the union’s chief policy-making body between conventions.

“We don’t want to just talk to members or talk at them, we want to listen. The members of this union are in the driver’s seat,” said Hall. “I’m planning to spend much of this year traveling the country and our members halls to meet with members and hear their thoughts on how this union can better serve them and what we can do to make their jobs better.”

Wallace, who served as a National Vice President before becoming First Vice President in the union’s 2022 election of officers, said that it will be “pedal to the metal” on the critical issues affecting engineers and trainmen who work in freight rail. “We have a year before we’re back at the table to negotiate a new national freight rail agreement, but we will be pushing for changes in scheduling and other policies this year to improve the quality of life for our members.”

The union also will be increasing its focus on passenger and commuter rail. “Amtrak in the Infrastructure Bill $66 Billion in New Funding...” has been a typical newspaper headline over the past two years. Stories about commuter rail expansion and new funding also are widespread.

However little attention has been devoted to the people that keep passenger trains running. “Amtrak continues to struggle with daily operations across the country and our members there are losing patience,” said Estes. “We’re also seeing our members at New Jersey Transit going without a new agreement, and the agency’s contract offer is below the rate of inflation and union’s standards. Additionally, commuter and regional rail systems like SEPTA are having a hard time functioning because of a shortage of engineers due to low wages. This is not acceptable.”

Biographical information on Executive Committee and Advisory Board members is available on the BLET website at https://ble-t.org/officers/.

The New BLET
Advisory Board:
EDWARD A. HALL
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
MARK L. WALLACE
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
DAVID P. ESTES
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
VINCE G. Verna
CORRESPONDING TRUSTEE
RICK C. GIBRONS
NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER
GARRISON D. BEST
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
RICHARD E. CROW
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
KYLE J. BAGBY
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
J. ALAN HOLDCRAFT
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
WILLIAM M. LYONS
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
PETER M. SEMENĘK
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
L. RANDY FANNON
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
PATRICK T. Driscoll
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
VINCE G. Verna
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
DAVID P. ESTES
NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER
MARK L. WALLACE
NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT
EDWARD A. HALL
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Amtrak’s eastbound Empire Builder departs Whitefish, Mont., nine hours late on the afternoon of January 2, 2023. Leading the way is one of the new ALC-42 Chargers. The Whitefish Mountain Resort ski area is seen in the background. See page 3 for News Brief about mechanical issues related to these new locomotives. (Photo by Justin Franz)
BLET National President Hall meets with IBT General President O’Brien

BLET National President Eddie Hall traveled to Washington D.C. on January 18, 2023 to represent BLET members in meetings with IBT General President Sean O’Brien. Eddie also met with the BLET’s National Legislative Office, which is located at the Teamster Headquarters and includes Vice President & National Legislative Representative Vince Verna; Director of Political Affairs Brendan Sullivan; Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Sean Simon; and Administrative Assistant Carlos Barrett Sr.

New Officers of the BLET National Division attended their first meeting with members on January 11, 2023, fulfilling President Eddie Hall’s commitment to engage more with the membership. He was joined by Vice President Rick Gibbons and Vice President Gary Best, a new member of the Advisory Board and recently assigned to the Union Pacific. Eddie presented plaques to Brothers Mike L. Brammer and Mark A. Fisher, long-time members of Division 81.

The event was attended by approximately 50 members and several officers from multiple General Committees of Adjustment of the Union Pacific. The main topic of discussion centered around the 11/4 project that is currently underway between Kansas City and Coffeyville. After the meeting, all the General Chairmen representing members on the Union Pacific met with the Carrier to continue the BLET’s efforts to provide scheduled off days across the system.

Eddie stated: “I enjoyed being with the members, shaking hands, and getting feedback. I saw firsthand the eagerness that all the officers had to engage with our members. It was refreshing and I look forward to attending these types of events throughout the year.”

Mike L. Brammer, a member of Division 81, receives a plaque in honor of his retirement from President Eddie Hall. He first joined the BLET in 2004.

Mark A. Fisher, a member of Division 81, receives his retirement plaque from President Hall. Brother Fisher has been a BLET member since 2004.

Fresh start begins in Kansas City

The Union Pacific Railroad reported fourth quarter and full-year 2022 financial results in late January 2023. While the railroad boosted its record income and record earnings, UP spent repurchasing shares of stock instead of investing in their employees by offering paid sick leave, reasonable schedules and benefits rose by about $500 million in 2022 to $7 billion, up about $46.6 billion, for less than the $6.3 billion that Union Pacific spent repurchasing shares of stock.

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Instead of buying back their own stock, UP should be investing in their employees by offering paid sick leave, reasonable schedules and in better quality of life for railroad workers,” President Eddie Hall said in an interview with CNN. “This is the only way the railroad will be able to solve their recruitment and retention problems and keep the trains running.”

Hall was working as an active engineer at the company as recently as December before taking over the union’s top job.

PRESIDENT HALL CONDEMNS UP’S CORPORATE GREED DURING INTERVIEW WITH CNN

UNION PACIFIC POSTED RECORD EARNINGS IN 2022, BUT SPENT MORE ON SHARE REPURCHASES THAN ON ITS EMPLOYEES

BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be considered an “official communication.” This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National President will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable National Division staff to confirm the sender’s membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This policy is intended to allow the National President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member’s unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

Adopted at Cleveland, Ohio on July 22, 2008.
T he BLET Safety Task Force hasdispatched a team of re-sponders to assist the Na-tional Transportation Safety Board with its investigation into the major derailment, fire, and chem-ical spill on February 3 in East Palestine, Ohio, located near the Ohio-Pennsylva-nia border. The technical spill and derailment have received widespread national me-dia attention. Chemicals released and burned include the hazardous substanc-es vinyl chloride, ethylene glycol mono-ethyl ether, ethylhexyl acrylate and iso-butylene. Officials with the EPA said in media reports that ethylhexyl acrylate is identified as the “most hazardous” of the preliminary reports from the EPA indicate that the chemicals have been found in multiple Ohio River tributaries.

In mid-February, Norfolk Southern officials backed out of a town hall meet-ing with the residents of East Palestine, citing safety concerns for its staff. Resi-dents have expressed doubt about their safety in the days after an evacuation or-der was lifted, and have reported animals dying and dead fish in waterways.

The derailment occurred near the Ohio-Pennsylvania border. The govern-ors of both states, as well as United States Senators, have called on Norfolk Southern’s response to the derailment and have called for more accountability from the railroad.

The BLET has been granted Party Sta-tus by the NTSB to help investigate the de-railment. The Party Status agreement pro-hibits the BLET from speculating about possible causes of the derailment and pre-vents the union from making public state-ments to the media. However, more in-for-mation will be published as the investigation unfolds. Please visit www.ble-torg for the latest information.

BLET’s Verna testifies in support of two-person crews at FRA hearing

n December 14, 2022, BLET Vice President and Na-tional Legislative Representative Vince Verna testified at a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) hearing in support of its proposed minimum crew size rule. The push by major freight rail carriers to eliminate one of the two qualified crew members that currently work in locomotive cabs is one of the big-gest existential threats facing rail operating employees.

“Determining train crew size and train size at the whim of the financial markets cannot be al-lowed,” Verna testified. “A railroad that attempts to game their opera-tions according to a business mod-el designed for other industries does so at their employees’ and the pub-lic’s peril. Railroad employees who work in the cab of the locomotive know best when it comes to safe train operations. Through their actions, train crews help safeguard lives and the lives of the public.”

At its core, the issue of crew size is a safety issue. Rail workers are already suffering from longer shifts, unpredictable schedules, and fa-tigue. That’s the role of the Federal Railroad Administration to prevent that risk.

The push by rail bosses to re-duce train crews despite enjoying historic profits from one of the most lucrative industries in Amer-ica — and after cutting more than 30 percent of rail jobs since 2017 — is part of a larger problem af-fecting the entire supply chain. Whether it’s the rail carriers, UPS, or freight companies, there is a united strategy by employers to purposefully understaff operations and push workers to their break-ing point. Why? Because there is seemingly no profit margin large enough to satisfy these 21st Cen-tury robber barons.

The minimum crew size rule is an essential safety regulation that needs to be implemented to rein-force rail workers and the communities their trains travel through.

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BLET's Verna testifies in support of two-person crews at FRA hearing

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The Dental Railroad Administra-tion was investigating a fatal ac-cident when a train operating on the main line struck a piece of angle iron protruding from a freight car on the adjacent main track. A Norfolk South ern conductor trainee was killed on December 13 in an accident in Basse-ren, Ala. Based on FRA’s preliminary results from its on-going investigation, the piece of angle iron appears to have been part of the freight car (not leding, but a repair to the carbody side top cord of a scrap metal gon-dola car) that was starting to disloide from the carbody. It appears that the piece of angle iron was in this state when the car was pulled from the cus-tomer, moved to a yard, and then add-ed to a different train on the main track. The angle iron, which was pro-ceeding into the fou of the adjacent track, pierced a locomotive car win-dow and fataliy injured a member of the crew. The FRA Safety Bulletin seeks to increase employee awareness of the hazardous condition that led to the fatality. (Source: Trains Mag-a-zine, FRA Safety Bulletin 2022-01)

2-PERSON CREW BILL INTRODUCED IN NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

Graves selected chair of House T&I Committee; Larsen is ranking democrat

FRA issues safety bulletin out December 20 Fatality on NS

BLET Safety Task Force investigating major NS derailment in East Palestine, Ohio

The Federal Railroad Administra-tion has been investigating a fatal acci-dent when a train operating on the main line struck a piece of angle iron protruding from a freight car on the adjacent main track. A Norfolk South ern conductor trainee was killed on December 13 in an accident in Basse-ren, Ala. Based on FRA’s preliminary results from its on-going investigation, the piece of angle iron appears to have been part of the freight car (not leding, but a repair to the carbody side top cord of a scrap metal gon-dola car) that was starting to disloide from the carbody. It appears that the piece of angle iron was in this state when the car was pulled from the cus-tomer, moved to a yard, and then add-ed to a different train on the main track. The angle iron, which was pro-ceeding into the fou of the adjacent track, pierced a locomotive car win-dow and fataliy injured a member of the crew. The FRA Safety Bulletin seeks to increase employee awareness of the hazardous condition that led to the fatality. (Source: Trains Mag-a-zine, FRA Safety Bulletin 2022-01)
Hubbard re-elected Chairman of Indiana State Legislative Board

Shane Hubbard of BLET Division 343 (Princeton, Ind.) was re-elected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Indiana State Legislative Board at its 15th quadrennial meeting. Terms of office for Brother Hubbard and all newly elected officers became effective November 1, 2022.

Brother Hubbard currently works as a locomotive engineer for Norfolk Southern in Princeton, Indiana. He hired out as a conductor on December 8, 1992, and has held continuous membership in the BLET since 1995. Brother Hubbard has served on the Indiana State Legislative Board’s Executive Committee since 2017, after being first appointed Alternate Secretary-Treasurer. He was first elected Chairman in 2018 at the board’s 14th quadrennial meeting held in Indianapolis, Ind. Also elected by acclamation were: 1st Vice Chairman Matthew J. Klausing, Division 537 (Elkhart, Ind.); 2nd Vice Chairman Scott H. Brown, Division 153 (Garrett, Ind.); Secretary-Treasurer Carl W. Brown Jr., Division 246 (Evansville, Ind.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer M. S. (Shawn) Hedix, Division 742 (Evansville, Ind.). The following were also elected by acclamation as Trustees: Jesse C. Reck, Division 106 (Muncie, Ind.); Jose Villasenor, Division 662 (Hammond, Ind.); and Ronald K. Uffelman, Division 153 (Garrett, Ind.).

After earning promotion to locomotive engineer on April 6, 1995, Brother Hubbard immediately joined the BLET effective May 1, 1995. He also currently serves as the BLET Chairman of the National Legislative Board Chairman’s Association, as well as serving the Brotherhood as Local Chairman of Division 343 and as Fifth Vice General Chairman and Trustee of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment. Brother Hubbard most recently served as Chairman of the Legislative Committee at the BLET’s Fifth National Convention in October 2022.

The Indiana State Legislative Board represents approximately 2,000 active and retired locomotive engineers and trainmen members from 19 Divisions, which represents members who work for CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern Railway, Canadian Pacific Railway, Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad, Amtrak, Louisville and Indiana Railroad, Chicago, Pl. Wayne and Eastern Railroad, Illinois Railway, Indiana Railroad and Indiana Southern Railroad.

BLET CALLS ON CONGRESS TO FIX FMLA FLAW THAT HARM’S RAIL WORKERS

February marked the 30th anniversary of the enactment of The Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1993. BLET has had a long history of participating in the press event and explain the need for enactment of FMLA reform that ensures all railroad workers have access to FMLA protections.

BLET Director of Political Affairs Brendan Sullivan and BLET Director of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Sean Simon represented BLET at the February 1 event. They joined legislators to bring light to the importance of modernizing FMLA for all rail employees.

Over the past several years, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative Vincent Verna has made it very clear to legislators that time waiting for a call, or staying at company lodging waiting for a call, should count towards a railroad worker’s FMLA hourly requirement. Brother Verna said: “A railroad worker who follows the rules, works safely and is available for the railroad to call them at any hour should not get their FMLA rights clawed back by a technical glitch in the law. We celebrate the anniversary of the law today, but we also put Congress on notice that FMLA needs reform for railroad workers and railroad workers need paid sick leave now.”

Marcia Falletta, BLET’s legislative representative stated, “Over the years our efforts to secure FMLA improvements on behalf of BLET members has not been lost on Congress. We are hopeful that our members’ voices and we will use every available tool to secure FMLA protections for all our members.”

Hall announces National Vice President assignments

In early January, BLET National President Eddie Hall handed out assignments to the National Vice Presidents. Eddie said the Vice Presidents have hit the ground running and are working with the General Chairmen through negotiations to create a better quality of life for the membership.

THE LIST OF OFFICERS AND ASSIGNMENTS IS AS FOLLOWS:

PETER M. SEMENEK
National Vice President
- CN - Wisconsin Central
- CR - Illinois Central (Cedar River)
- CN - Grand Trunk Western
- Illinois Railway
- Indiana Harbor Belt
- Metra (Chicago)
- CSX Railroad System/US/NE Line (Indiana Southern RR, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern)
- Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern
- L. RANDY FANNON JR.
National Vice President
- Division 16 (Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad, South Buffalo, Belt Line of Chicago, Union Railroad)
- Springfield Terminal (St. Lawrence & Atlantic RR, Delaware & Hudson RR)
- New York Susquehanna & Western (Connecticut Southern RR - Genesee & Wyoming (G&W), New England Central RR-G&W)
- New York Susquehanna & Western RR - G&W)
- Conrail Shared Assets/CXS Northern RR
- KCS - Kansas City Southern/LouisianaArk RR
- KCS - Mid-South Rail (SouthRail, Gateway Western RR, Illinois Midland-G&W)
- James P. Louis
National Vice President
- Amtrak (Keolis Commuter Service, Keolis Rail Services Virginia, LLC, Transit America Services, LLC)
- Long Island RR (New York & Atlantic)
- Metro North
- New Jersey Transit
- SEPTA
- PATH
- Garrison D. Best
National Vice President
- Union Pacific - Eastern District
- Union Pacific - Northern Region (Former C&NW)
- Union Pacific - Western Region (Pacific RR & Western RR, Portland Terminal)
- Utah RR
- Longview Portland & Northern and Longview Switching
- William P. Lyons
National Vice President
- Burlington Northern - Santa Fe/Former AAR
- Burlington Northern - Santa Fe/Former CSX/CSX/CR/RPF/WVD
- Burlington Northern - Santa Fe/Former STL-SF (Missouri & North Arkansas)
- Burlington Northern - Santa Fe/BNSF/MRL (Montana Rail Link, Otter Tail)
Save the dates:
2023 BLET regional meetings

The BLET National Division is pleased to announce the dates and locations of this year’s regional meetings: June 26-30 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and August 14-18 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

This year’s meetings will be held at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center (509 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53203) and the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort (10000 Beach Club Drive Myrtle Beach, SC 29572).

As with previous regional meetings, the 2023 meetings will be held Monday through Friday. Travel to the meeting, registration and a welcome reception for each meeting will be on Monday. Meetings, training classes and other events will be scheduled throughout the remainder of the week and will include a closing dinner on Thursday night. Travel home is on Friday for each meeting.

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

More specific details will be announced soon. Registration information will be available online at the BLET National Division’s regional meeting website (bletregionals.org). All members are encouraged to attend one or both of this year’s regional meetings.

LECMPA Congratulates Edward A. Hall on His Election to the Presidency of the BLET

The BLET and LECMPA have a long history offirsts – meeting the unique needs of their mutual members. Locomotive Engineers organized the BLE, America’s first labor union, in 1863. BLE Locomotive Engineers incorporated LEMPA, their craft’s first protective association, in 1910.

A Proud Past, A Faithful Future

LECMPA provides wage loss protection and other benefits to more than 25,000 union transportation workers across a range of crafts and trades throughout the United States and Canada. As a member-owned cooperative insurer, our responsibility is only to our own members and their families. Our mission is your financial security and peace of mind.
Each year, the BLET National Division compiles a list of scholarship opportunities available to the children of BLET members. Numerous financial aid opportunities are published here in the 2023 BLET Scholarship Directory. The scholarship opportunities vary widely. The following comprehensive list provides members and their families with contact information for each scholarship program. The BLET National Division does not maintain its own scholarship program, nor does it oversee or otherwise play any role in the administration of any of the programs included in this Directory. Interested parties are advised to contact the individual scholarship providers listed below for additional information.

Those aware of additional scholarship opportunities not included in this Directory are urged to contact the BLET Public Relations Department at: Bentley@ble-t.org.

THE 2023 BLET SCHOLARSHIP DIRECTORY IS AS FOLLOWS:

James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund (JRHMSF) is now accepting applications, and the deadline is usually March 1 every year. All applications must be completed through the online portal on the Fund’s website: http://www.jrhmsf.org. This JRHMSF website outlines eligibility requirements and application procedures, and applicants must complete a brief registration process to access the registration area.

There are two types of scholarship applications available: Academic Scholarships, which range up to $10,000, and Training/Vocational Scholarships, which range up to $2,000. Full details and eligibility requirements for each type of scholarship are available on the JRHMSF website at the link above.

James R. Hoffa became a Teamster member in 1934 and served as General President for 14 years. In recognition of his tireless service to the union and its members, he was honored as General President Emeritus for life. At the November 1999 General Executive Board meeting, then-General Secretary-Treasurer C. Thomas Keegel presented a resolution to establish the scholarship fund. Assisting the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members with their educational goals is a tradition that we are proud to continue.

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund is established solely to provide scholarships to the child or dependent of a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and contributions to the Fund are deductible as charitable contributions to the extent permitted by law.

For general questions about the James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund, please call (913) 670-4787 or email: contactus@applyISTS.com or JRHfund@gmail.com.

BLET Auxiliary and LECMPA Scholarship Programs

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

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

Applicants must be accepted for admission by an accredited university, college, trade school, or institute of higher learning. Recipients are chosen based on academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement.

For questions or assistance completing the application, contact Joyce Piekarski, Selection Committee Chairperson at (630) 963-6099 or Joyce.Piekarski@gmail.com.

BLET UP Southern Region GCA

The BLET’s Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjustment (UP-SR GCA) offers annual scholarships ranging from $750 to $2,000. Applicants must be the son, daughter, financial dependent or ward of a UP-SR GCA member in good standing per the BLET bylaws starting with the 2023-2024 school year. The deadline for applications is usually March 1 each year.

For questions or assistance completing the application, please email Ryan.Snow@caslb.org with the subject line: “Scholarship Application.” The application can be downloaded from the National Division website here: https://ble-t.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CA_Scholarship_2023.pdf. The deadline is typically May 15 each year to submit the application and all supporting documentation. California State Legislative Board

The BLET’s California State Legislative Board is currently offering a $1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior attending a college/trade/vocational school, whose parent or guardian is a member in good standing with his/her BLET Local chartered in California. If interested in an application, please email Ryan.Snow@caslb.org with the subject line: “Scholarship Application.” The application can be downloaded from the National Division website here: https://ble-t.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/CA_Scholarship_2023.pdf. The deadline is typically May 15 each year to submit the application and all supporting documentation.

Illinois State Legislative Board

The BLET’s Illinois State Legislative Board is currently accepting applications for its Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2013. Up to three $1,000 scholarships will be awarded to applicants whose parent or guardian is a BLET member in good standing with a BLET Division represented by the Illinois State Legislative Board (IL SLB). Applicants must be 26 years of age or younger.

Brother Don Little was a locomotive engineer with Metra commuter rail in Chicago and a proud member of Division 294 (Bensenville, III.) for 35 years. Brother Little was a strong advocate of education and always dreamed of establishing a scholarship program for the family members of fellow Brothers and Sisters who belonged to divisions chartered in Illinois. Unfortunately, Brother Little passed away before his dream was realized. In 2013, the IL SLB executive board helped make Brother Little’s dream a reality.

Locomotive engineers and conductors with Metra are saving $2,500 each year for the Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund. If interested in an application, please email Ryan.Snow@caslb.org with the subject line: “Scholarship Application.” The application can be downloaded from the National Division website here: https://ble-t.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/IL_Scholarship_2023.pdf. The deadline is typically May 15 each year to submit the application and all supporting documentation.

Wyoming State Legislative Board

The BLET’s Wyoming State Legislative Board is currently accepting applications for its Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2013. Up to three $1,000 scholarships will be awarded to applicants whose parent or guardian is a BLET member in good standing with a BLET Division represented by the Wyoming State Legislative Board (WY SLB). Applicants must be 26 years of age or younger.

For questions or assistance completing the application, contact Joyce Piekarski, Selection Committee Chairperson at (630) 963-6099 or Joyce.Piekarski@gmail.com.
WY SLB Chairman Cory Runion said the board will award either two $500 scholarships, or, in the event of a single applicant, one $1,000 scholarship each year to an immediate family member of a BLET member in good standing and holding membership in a Division chartered within the state of Wyoming. Scholarship applications will be awarded based on the application, along with the request documentation, by the WY SLB scholarship committee.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by June 30 of each year. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions, and application forms are available for download from the BLET National Division website, or can be requested from your Division Legislative Representative. Currently, the BLET has nine Divisions chartered in Wyoming — Division 31 (Bill); Division 207 (Casper); Divisions 44, 103 and 115 (Cheyenne); Division 94 (Gillette); Division 869 (Greycbull); Division 142 (Rawlins); and Division 624 (Sheridan).

For questions of assistance in completing the application, please contact your Division Legislative Representative.


BLET Division 269
BLET Division 269 (Jamaica, Long Island, N.Y.) offers two $500 scholarships to the children of BLET members who are already enrolled in college. Participation is limited to members of Division 269 only.

Winners are picked at random at the Division’s Christmas party.

For details, watch your Division 269 mobile app or contact Division Vice President Michael Garziano at (156) 841-4041.

BLET Division 622
BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.) offers two $500 scholarships to the children or dependents of Division 622 members. Scholarship winners will be chosen at random during a Division meeting in August. Applications must be received by July 31, 2023.

For more specifics, please visit the Division 622 website (http://www.blet622.com). You can also contact Division Secretary-Treasurer Neil Burk at nburk@blet622.com.

BLET Division 188
Clyde Larson Memorial Scholarship
BLET Division 188 in Superior, Wisconsin, is proud to announce the third year of its scholarship program dedicated to the memory of Clyde Larson — a devoted rail union leader, and mentor to many — whose untimely passing in 2017 left a void in the local railroad community.

Division 188 raises scholarship funds through the efforts of the Clyde Larson Memorial Scholarship (CLMS) Committee. Fundraising events are planned throughout the year and BLET members and their families are encouraged to participate (and to suggest other methods of raising funds toward this worthy cause).

Eligible applicants include the children (or children under the permanent care of) current BLET Division 188 members who are attending any post-secondary education (college, trade school, union apprenticeship program, etc.). Total monetary awards distributed will not be less than $1,000, and the number of winners is determined based on qualifying applications received. Scholarships are awarded to applicants chosen at random at Division 188’s regular meeting each August.

Applications will be emailed to all Division 188 members on the Division’s email list. Those who have not received an application by June 28, 2023, should email Division 188 Local Chairman Steven Moerke at steven.moerke@gmail.com.

Applications must be postmarked or received by August 15, 2023, 23:59 hours.

BR&CF Scholarship Program
The Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund (BR&CF) is pleased to provide opportunities for the sons and daughters of BR&CF members to participate in the Luther G. Smith Scholarship Program.

Children, including adopted and stepchildren, of BR&CF members who are in “Good and Regular Standing,” are eligible. Applicants must be 27 years of age or younger. Applicants may be current high school students who have applied for admission as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools or may be attending or enrolled as full-time students in accredited post-secondary schools.

International President Jesse Taylor advises that 20 scholarships of $2,500 each are awarded every year.

The BR&CF’s 2023 scholarship program commenced on October 1, 2022, with applications typically due on March 1 each year. The scholarship application is available by visiting BR&CF’s website at https://www.brcf.org.

Union Plus Scholarships
Union Plus awarded $200,000 in scholarships to 189 union members and union family members in the 2022 Union Plus Scholarship Program. Individual awards ranged from $500 to $4,000. The deadline is January 31 each year.

Rising education costs are making it difficult for many union families to afford the cost of tuition. That’s one reason Union Plus, which provides important consumer benefits to union members and retirees, offers a unique scholarship program. It has distributed more than $5.2 million in scholarships to over 3,600 union members and their children since 1991.

Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need, and appreciation of labor. A GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended.

The students selected for university, college, trade or technical school scholarships represent a wide sampling of backgrounds, union affiliations, goals and abilities. The selection process is very competitive since Union Plus receives over 5,000 applications each year. The Union Plus Scholarship Program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation, supported in part by contributions from the provider of the Union Plus Credit Card. You do not need to be a Union Plus Credit Card holder to apply for this scholarship.

Visit the Union Plus website to learn more: https://www.unionplus.org/scholarships.

Brotherhood’s Relief & Compensation Fund
365 DAYS OF COVERAGE IS BACK FOR A LIMITED TIME

There has never been a better time to become a BR&CF member. We’ve reduced dues by nearly 30% and extended 365 days of coverage to all existing members and all new members. These unprecedented actions reflect an unrivaled level of responsiveness to the needs of railroad workers. The BR&CF proudly offers the best value by providing the most affordable income protection in the industry at the highest level of service.

Most Affordable Dues in the Industry

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The BR&CF does not have a traditional sales force. We rely on existing BR&CF members to refer coworkers to the organization. If you refer a coworker, and they are approved for membership, we will pay you a referral fee of $250.00, provided they have not been a member in the previous twelve months. It’s that simple; just a referral.

JOIN TODAY: https://www.brcf.org/
BLET members ratify new contract with Illinois Railway

On February 10, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) unanimously ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Illinois Railway.

The new five-year agreement governs rates of pay, work rules, and health & welfare for approximately 50 engineers and conductors. The contract provides fully retroactive general wage increases of 22% over the life of the deal. The BLET secured a major improvement to how overtime pay is handled. Members will now earn overtime pay (at one and one-half times) after 8 hours instead of after 50 hours under the previous contract. The new contract guarantees all members will be eligible for five weeks of vacation (25 days) after 11 years of service, two paid personal days, an additional holiday, and secured overtime rates of pay for working rest days and holidays. Additionally, the BLET secured the removal of the wage step rate and incorporated training pay and a 30-minute lunch period.

Brother Pete Semenek, the new National Vice President assigned to the Illinois Railway, said the negotiating team consisted of General Chairman Dan Wells, Division 682 Vice Local Chairman Dustin Stadie, and retired Vice President Marcus Ruef.

National President Eddie Hall thanked all involved for their hard work on behalf of the BLET’s Illinois Railway membership.

MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO SIGN UP FOR WEBSITE

Go to Members.BLE-T.org to register for latest news and information for both publications. To opt-out of BLET publications in print, members will need to go to the Members Only area of the BLET website, click on the “Update Personal Information” option, and then select “Publication Delivery Preference.” Those who opt-out will be alerted by email whenever new publications are available in electronic format.

BLET ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER ACTIVITY REPORTS

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members’ activities are published here. Please scan the QR code to the left to open a PDF version of this month’s activity reports or go to www.ble-t.org/advisory-board-activity to view an archive of activity reports.

Photo of the Month: January—March 2023

ARIZONA'S INDEPENDENCE TRESTLE: CSX Transportation train Q277 heads for Louisville as it crosses the trestle near Independence, Kentucky, on the LLC Subdivision, just south of Cincinnati, Ohio. Photo taken on June 2, 2019, by Cory Rusch. Brother Rusch, a member of BLET Division 659 in Buffalo, N.Y., is a frequent contributor of BLET publications.