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West Virginia Fall Splendor

With its rear end still spanning the New River, a high priority westbound CSX Q135 hugs the river bank at the height of West Virginia's gorgeous fall foliage season in October of 2015. The Portsmouth, Va. to North Baltimore, Ohio intermodal will soon ease its way out of the New River Gorge after completing a slow journey through one of the state's most remote regions. Photo taken at Hawks Nest, W.Va., on October 20, 2015. Photo: courtesy Chase Gunnoe



BLET fights industry effort to reduce air brake inspections

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is taking a stand against a rail industry effort to nearly double the distance freight trains can travel between mandatory air brake inspections.

"Reducing the frequency of safety-sensitive air brake inspections would degrade safety and would place the lives of our members and the public at risk," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for a waiver that would allow freight trains to travel up to 2,600 miles between mandatory air brake inspections instead of the current industry standard of 1,500 miles. Brother Vincent G. Verna, the BLET's Director of Regulatory Affairs, testified on behalf of the BLET at a FRA public hearing to examine the issue that was held on September 13.

"We strongly urge the Railroad Safe-

ty Board to deny AAR's waiver petition," Brother Verna testified. "The waiver requested would extend the distance between required tests up to an additional potential 1,100 miles, cutting the frequency of inspections roughly in half."



Vince Verna

The AAR intends to use a technology known as wayside Wheel Temperature Detectors (WTDs) to monitor braking effectiveness, based on the logic that properly working brakes impart heat to the wheels. Finding cold wheels would indicate a potential problem with the train's air brakes. BLET is not opposed to the technology — just the way the industry intends to use it. During the hearing and in its written submission, BLET took the position that the technology could be deployed as a way to provide

early warnings to train crews that may help prevent accidents, but that it should not be used to supplant existing safety inspections performed by qualified railroad employees.

"BLET believes WTDs should be deployed in the field and utilized for their intended use of examining wheel temperature in between terminals. WTDs should not, however, be used as a pretext for dodging regulatory safety standards," Verna testified.

The AAR is seeking a waiver from the FRA to allow a pilot project consisting of revenue service unit coal trains running on the Union Pacific (UP) system between Wyoming's Powder River Basin and an unloading facility in White Bluff, Ark., a round trip of approximately 2,600 miles. The WTD that monitors the system is located at Sheep Creek, Wyo. Under current UP operating practices, the coal trains running in this service are classified as extended haul trains and operate intact

up to 1,500 miles between brake tests required under 49 CFR part 232.

"One irony of the requested waiver is that it seeks to use WTDs in lieu of inspections on the very types of trains (coal) that frequently carry the greatest tonnage and rely on effective brakes to ensure a train remains under control," Verna testified. "We reject the premise that detecting temperature ranges that are out of the norm, on the one hand, and performing inspections and tests required by federal regulations and positive law, on the other, are interchangeable. We also take issue with waiving safety regulations in favor of a wholly unregulated product. This while permitting trains with extreme amounts of tonnage to travel 2,600 miles through inspection points avoiding inspection."

Just over two years ago, in a ruling dated June 20, 2014, the FRA denied rail carriers' effort to deploy this technology at the expense of air brake inspections. ©



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Welcome Aboard!

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BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

I am writing this month's message to you in the weeks leading up to the national election on November 8, 2016. Between now and then, the airwaves will have been inundated with campaign rhetoric, much of it focused on issues other than those that are most important to the economic security of working class Americans. Many promises will have been made, in some cases by politicians whose track records show no concern for the working middle class of our great country. Even so, by the time you read this message, the election will be over, and our Brotherhood's efforts will adjust to that outcome.

One thing is for sure, when the election is behind us, it will be time for us all as BLET members to join in solidarity and turn our focus back to the workplace issues that matter most. First and foremost, the BLET is currently engaged in national negotiations for a new contract. Our organization is a member of a coordinated bargaining group with five other unions: the Transportation Division of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART-TD); the American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA); the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS); the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers, and Helpers (IBB); and the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers / SEIU (NCFO). Together, our six unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers and comprise more than 58 percent of the workforce who will be impacted by negotiations.

The current round of negotiations has lasted nearly two years, with Section 6 notices having been served on December 8, 2014. Although a final agreement is not yet on the table, considerable progress has been made in identifying the issues of greatest importance to both sides and serious discussions are ongoing. Our Coordinated Bargaining Group believes that a voluntary agreement is the desired outcome and to that end we will continue negotiations. Should we be unable to reach a voluntary settlement,



Legislative Representative training class at Teamsters Headquarters in Washington, D.C., during the final week of September 2016.

the provisions of the Railway Labor Act will require us to seek the assistance of the National Mediation Board. Once those steps are invoked, the process could ultimately conclude with the newly elected President of the United States of America appointing a Presidential Emergency Board to make recommendations on a settlement between the parties. Elections do have consequences, and we will all have a better idea what those consequences are by the time this message reaches the field.

Even though the unions in our bargaining group represent different crafts, many of our basic issues are the same: fair pay and benefits for the sacrifices we make. Although not all members of our coalition live the lifestyle of an operating employee, those who live it first-hand know what it's like to endure the railroad lifestyle of being on call 24/7, 365-days a year. In short, our bargaining efforts seek fair compensation and benefits to ensure that all members can provide for our families. We all know that the families of railroad workers make huge sacrifices to support our railroad lifestyle, and our efforts must be to provide well for them.

Rest assured, we will have a tough time accomplishing our

goals at the bargaining table regardless of who sits in the White House. Corporate America and certain bought-and-paid-for politicians in Congress have spent decades cultivating a hostile anti-worker environment in America. Make no mistake; their efforts will not diminish when the election is over. They will continue to make it difficult for any Union to achieve collective bargaining agreements that strengthen the middle class.

In addition to quality pay and benefits, a safe working environment is another issue we all have in common as BLET members. The issue of Positive Train Control (PTC) and two-person train crews has been at the forefront of our efforts over the past several years.

In 2008, a Metrolink commuter disaster in Chatsworth, Calif., prompted Congress to pass the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA). There were 25 people killed in the Chatsworth disaster, and investigators determined that PTC likely would have saved those lives and prevented the tragedy. The RSIA mandated that railroads install PTC by December 31, 2015. This life-saving technology has been on the NTSB's "Most Wanted List" of transportation safety im-

provements since the 1970s.

Following passage of the RSIA in 2008, the railroads were given seven years to install PTC. However, the railroads dragged their feet for each of those seven years, and at the eleventh hour began lobbying Congress for an extension of the PTC deadline in late 2015. Part of their lobbying campaign consisted of fear mongering and threats. The railroads threatened to shut down the economy of our great nation if they were not allowed to avoid the deadline that they had years to prepare for. Congress quickly caved and granted an extension to 2018 and, in some cases, 2020. In the months that followed this extension, additional lives have been lost in avoidable accidents. It is hard to fathom how those responsible for these delays in providing a truly safe workplace can reconcile their actions.

In an effort to reach full implementation of PTC, the Federal Railroad Administration has been keeping track of the progress made by each railroad subject to the PTC provisions of the RSIA since early 2016. Of the 31 freight and commuter railroads required to install PTC by 2018, seven have already said they will not meet the deadline. You can see how your rail-

road is doing at the FRA's PTC Annual and Quarterly Reports website: <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0628>.

It is clear to me that for the railroads, PTC is nothing more than a matter of dollars and cents. In their news releases and comments to the press, the carriers are quick to point out how much money they have spent on PTC implementation. They are even quicker to say they need to recoup their investment, and they believe the easiest way to do that is to cut jobs. This is a classic example of putting profits over safety.

For the BLET, and rail labor in general, PTC is about preventing accidents and saving lives. Safety has been a Brotherhood priority since we were founded on May 8, 1863. Our goal is the same today as it was over 153 years ago: to eliminate accidents and to make sure that you go home safely to your family at the end of your run. How can you put a price on a human life? Apparently, that's what the railroads have done. It is just a matter of time before they have more blood on their hands from a PTC-preventable tragedy.

These are just a few of the major issues facing our Brotherhood. In addition, we must address issues such as inward facing cameras, rail worker fatigue, inaccurate train line-ups, and electronic distractions such as LEADER and Trip Optimizer. But the only way we can make progress is when all of us are waging these struggles together.

The best way to learn more about these issues is to become more involved in your Brotherhood. Attending your Division's monthly meeting is a great way to get started and to learn more about the issues. Also, attending one or both of the BLET Regional Meetings in 2017 (see Page 4) will give you the opportunity to learn the latest first-hand from myself and other National Division officers. As I have said many times before, union membership is not a spectator sport. Given the multitude of issues we face, now is the time to join me by becoming more involved in your Union.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

“One thing is for sure, when the election is behind us, it will be time for us all as BLET members to join in solidarity and turn our focus back on the workplace issues that matter most.”

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 be reviewed and forwarded to

the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

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 poli-

cy 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, 2010. ©



GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JAMES P. HOFFA

LOST CORPORATE TAXES COULD FUND NEEDED INFRASTRUCTURE

Elected officials, both Democrats and Republicans, increasingly view infrastructure investment as an essential step to creating jobs and bolstering the U.S. economy. That's a good thing.

Yes, the plans may differ in size and scope, but the realization that money needs to be spent on roads, rail, mass transit, energy networks and water systems is one that will hopefully move beyond campaign promises after November. The Teamsters have been pushing such a message for more than a year. It needs to become a reality if this nation is to become the absolute best it can be.

To do that, however, will cost money. So how does the country come up with the funds? Easy, make corporations who have been stashing their profits offshore pay their fair share.

Currently, it is estimated that U.S. corporations have effectively shielded some \$2.4 trillion in profits overseas.



That means they are cheating America out of about \$126 billion a year in tax revenue. There is nothing fair about engaging in such activity.

A new report by the Economic Policy Institute and Americans for Tax

Fairness found that about 55 percent of American corporate offshore profits are held in tax-haven countries. As a result, corporations only contribute \$1 out of every \$9 in federal revenue, down from \$1 out of every \$3 at its peak.

"While the statutory tax rate on corporate income is 35 percent, estimates of the rate corporations actually pay put the effective rate at about half the statutory rate," the study finds. "Driving this divergence between what corporations are supposed to pay and what they actually pay is a combination of offshore profit shifting and tax avoidance. Multinational corporations pay taxes on between just 3.0 and 6.6 percent of the profits they book in tax havens."

It is time for corporate America and Congress to do the right thing. Politicians and big business shouldn't drape themselves in the flag while doing nothing to end this fleecing of the nation. Corporate fat cats making record profits don't need these dollars — the U.S. does.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT

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Four rail hazmat training classes available

The Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program is hosting four training sessions in the coming months. The dates are as follows: November 13-18, 2016; January 15-20, 2017; February 19-24, 2017; and March 19-24, 2017.

Each class will run on a Sunday through Friday basis, with an orientation session at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday and departure on Friday. All training will be conducted at the Houston Fire Department's Val Jahneke Training Facility, 8030 Braniff St., Houston, Texas, 77061.

This training addresses OSHA and DOT required training in addition to procedures, different levels of response and worker protection in a hazardous materials emergency or release, weapons of mass destruction awareness, and the incident command system. The training also provides completion of the OSHA 10-Hour General Industry Outreach requirements. The programs are delivered using interactive classroom instruction, small group

activities, hands-on drills and a simulated hazmat response in full safety gear.

The Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program is funded to provide this training by a federal grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). These five-day hazmat training courses will provide rail workers the essential knowledge, skills, and response actions in the case of an unintentional release. These tools will allow rail workers to protect themselves, their co-workers and their communities.

The funding provides the following student expenses: travel, lodging and meals. In addition, an incentive of \$175.00 per day is available to all training participants of these programs, except those who are able to secure regular pay through their employer, or are paid union officers. ©©

PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER:
RAILWORKERTRAININGPROGRAM.ORG



SAVE THE DATE:

2017 BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS

The BLET National Division is pleased to announce the dates and locations of its 2017 regional meetings: June 5-9 in San Antonio, Texas; and August 14-18 in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The San Antonio regional meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency-San Antonio Riverwalk in Texas and the Myrtle Beach regional meeting will be held at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort in South Carolina.

As with the 2016 regional meetings, the 2017 meetings will be arranged on a Monday through Friday sched-

ule. Travel to the meeting, registration and a welcome reception for each of the two meetings will be on Monday (June 5 for San Antonio and August 14 for Myrtle Beach). Meetings, training classes and other events will be scheduled throughout the remainder of the week and will include a closing banquet on Thursday night. Travel home is on Friday for each meeting (June 9 for San Antonio and August 18 for Myrtle Beach).

Per the BLET Bylaws, regional meetings are held "for the purposes of membership training, education and dis-

ussion of matters of importance to the membership." Additionally, the meetings are structured to include options for fellowship with other members and their families, entertainment, fun and relaxation.

More specific details will be announced at a later date. Registration information will be available online at the BLET National Division's regional meeting website (www.bletregionals.org). All members are encouraged to attend one or both of these regional meetings in 2017. @@

WWW.BLETREGIONALS.ORG

JUNE 5-9 • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



Photos: visitsanantonio.com

AUGUST 14-18 • MYRTLE BEACH, S.C.



Photos: [Visit Myrtle Beach](http://VisitMyrtleBeach.com)

Nick Johnson reelected Arizona State Legislative Board Chairman

Brother G.N. "Nick" Johnson was reelected by acclamation to his third term as Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board at the Board's quadrennial meeting in Long Beach, Calif., on August 22, 2016.

A member of BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.), Brother Johnson is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer who first joined the Brotherhood on April 1, 1999. Most recently, he was elected by acclamation to the chairman's office at the Board's meeting on October 23, 2012. He was first elevated to the office of chairman on August 1, 2011, after former chairman Vincent G. Verna was appointed to serve as the BLET's Director of Regulatory Affairs out of Washington, D.C.

Also elected by acclamation were: 1st Vice Chairman Manny Perez III, Division 647 (Phoenix, Ariz.); 2nd Vice Chairman Richard Kolomitz, Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.); Secretary-Treasurer Stephen Whitman, Division 28 (Tucson); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Jake Howard, Division 383 (Fort Mohave, Ariz.). Elected by acclamation to serve as Trustees were: Kevin Onnembo, Division 123 (Phoenix, Ariz.); Manny Perez III, Division 647 (Phoenix, Ariz.); and Richard Kolomitz, Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.).

Guest speakers included: BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce; Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; National Vice



Members, officers and guests at the Arizona State Legislative Board's quadrennial convention on August 22, 2016.

President Mike Twombly; Union Pacific-Western Lines General Chairman Bill Hannah; and Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna.

"I am proud to offer my congratulations and thanks to Brother Nick and all officers of the Arizona State Legislative Board," President Pierce said. "I thank them for their dedication to serving our Brotherhood. They will have much work to accomplish over the next several weeks in advance of the November elections, but I have every confidence that they will rise to the task."

Additional special guests included: Brian P. Carr, UP-Western Lines 1st Vice

General Chairman; Cory Runion, Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman; and Bob Hagan, BLET Director of Political and Legislative Affairs.

Brother Johnson coordinated the date and location of the Board's 2016 quadrennial meeting to coincide with the beginning of the BLET's Regional Meeting in Long Beach, Calif. The location gave members and delegates of the Arizona State Legislative Board the opportunity to meet with as many National Division officers and Staff as possible.

The BLET's Arizona State Legislative Board represents approximately 600 active members throughout the state. @@



Geisler reelected General Chairman of UP-Eastern District GCA

Dave L. Geisler was reelected General Chairman of the Union Pacific-Eastern District General Committee of Adjustment at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada, from August 9-11, 2016.

Brother Geisler is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 133 (Denver, Colo.). He first joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 1996.

Also elected during the quadrennial meeting was: 1st Vice Chairman Chad M. Lambert, Division 364 (Wichita, Kan.); 2nd Vice Chairman Brian S. McCoy, Division 183 (Omaha, Neb.); 3rd Vice General Chairman Mike J. Quick, Division 133 (Denver, Colo.); Secretary-Treasurer Pat F. Nealon, Division 44 (Cheyenne, Wyo.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Stacey L. Madsen, Division 88 (North Platte, Neb.).

Officers representing the National Division at the meeting were: First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt and National Vice President Michael D. Towmbly.

"I offer my congratulations and thanks to Brother Geisler and all officers of the Union Pacific-Eastern District General Committee of Adjustment," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I know they will do an excellent job of representing our UP Brothers and Sis-



Dave L. Geisler

ters. Also, I extend best wishes to Brother Mark Chenchar for a happy and healthy retirement."

Additional BLET guests included: General Chairman Warren Dent, Union Pacific-Southern Region; General Chairman Bill Hannah, Union Pacific-Western Lines; General Chairman Ronnie Rhodes, Union Pacific-Central Region; and Steve Leyshon, Union Pacific-Western Region.

During the meeting, the delegates honored long-serving 1st Vice Chairman Mark Chenchar, who is now retired. Brother Chenchar was presented with a Brass Bell in recognition of his years of dedicated service to the Brotherhood.

The BLET's Union Pacific-Eastern District General Committee of Adjustment represents approximately 1,200 active members in 16 different Divisions. @@



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BLET establishes Maryland State Legislative Board

On June 2, 2016, the newly established BLET Maryland State Legislative Board held its inaugural meeting in Frederick, Md., and Brother David M. Dinges of BLET Division 181 (Brunswick, Md.) was elected as the Board's first Chairman.

Also elected to four-year terms were: 1st Vice Chairman Christopher T. Brown, Division 52 (Baltimore, Md.); 2nd Vice Chairman Frank L. Shillingburg, Division 934 (Cumberland, Md.); and Secretary-Treasurer Daniel B. Swartz, Division 181 (Brunswick, Md.).

In addition to the elected officers mentioned above, Maryland-based BLET members present at the inaugural State Legislative Board meeting were: R.W. (Wes) Boyer Sr., Division 97 (Baltimore, Md.); and Fred M. Cox, Division 52 (Baltimore, Md.). Brother Cox also serves as 2nd Vice Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment.

Representing the National Division at the meeting were: Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman and Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Robert F. Hagan.

"I congratulate Brother Dinges and all officers of the Maryland State Legislative Board," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I also thank our Brothers and Sisters in Maryland for taking the initiative to establish a State Legislative Board."

In April, a majority of active members belonging to Divisions chartered in Maryland overwhelmingly voted to establish the Maryland State Legislative Board. It is comprised of approximately 320 members from BLET Division 52 in Baltimore (Norfolk Southern), Division 97 in Baltimore (CSX), Division 181 in Brunswick (CSX) and Division 934 in Cumberland (CSX).

With the addition of Maryland, the BLET now has 40 State Legislative Board throughout the United States. ©



Members, officers and guests attending the inaugural meeting of the Maryland State Legislative Board on June 2, 2016. From left: National Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; Maryland SLB 1st Vice Chairman Christopher T. Brown; Maryland SLB Chairman David M. Dinges; Division 97 Legislative Representative R.W. (Wes) Boyer Sr.; Maryland SLB Secretary-Treasurer Daniel B. Swartz; Maryland SLB 2nd Vice Chairman Frank L. Shillingburg; Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment 2nd Vice Chairman Fred M. Cox, Division 52 (Baltimore, Md.); and BLET Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Robert F. Hagan.

Railroad unemployment and sickness benefits will slightly decrease under adjusted sequestration rate

Beginning October 1, 2016, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) will reduce railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 6.9 percent, up from the current 6.8 percent reduction, as required by law.

The adjusted reduction amount is based on revised projections of benefit claims and payments under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. It will remain in effect through September 30, 2017, the end of the fiscal year. Reductions in future fiscal years, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.

The daily benefit rate is \$72, so the 6.9 percent reduction in railroad unemployment and sickness benefits will reduce the maximum amount payable in a 2-week period with 10 days of unemployment from \$720.00 to \$670.32.

Certain railroad sickness benefits are also subject to regular tier I railroad retirement taxes, resulting in a further reduction of 7.65 percent. Applying the 6.9 percent reduction to these sickness benefits will result in a maximum 2-week total of \$619.04.

These reductions are required under the Budget Control Act of 2011 and a subsequent sequestration order to implement the mandated cuts. The law exempted social security benefits, as well as railroad retirement, survivor, and disability benefits paid by the RRB, from sequestration.

When sequestration first took effect in March 2013, railroad unemployment and sickness benefits were subject to a 9.2 percent reduction. This amount was then adjusted to 7.2 percent in October 2013, 7.3 percent in October 2014, and 6.8 percent in October 2015, as required by law.

In fiscal year 2015, the RRB paid \$12.2 billion in retirement and survivor benefits to about 558,000 beneficiaries, and net unemployment-sickness benefits of \$83.2 million to approximately 25,000 claimants. ©

IMPORTANT OPEN ENROLLMENT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE BLET MEMBERS AND RETIREES

If you are a BLET member, retiree, spouse or dependent, and entitled to Medicare Part A and/or enrolled in Medicare Part B, you are eligible for the TEAMStar Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program (PDP). You are eligible for this program regardless of your health history or the drugs you are currently taking.

The enrollment period for TEAMStar Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program runs from October 15, 2016 to December 7, 2016. We hope you will take advantage of this affordable prescription drug plan, which enables BLET members to save as much money as possible.

The TEAMStar Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program is a voluntary Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program that meets the federal government requirements for creditable coverage. It is not available to the general public and is designed to help Medicare eligible BLET members, retirees and their spouses or dependents reduce their prescription drug costs and insure them against high prescription drug expenses in the future. This program was introduced in 2006 and thousands of Teamstar retirees have chosen to enroll since the program's inception.

Enrollment packets will be arriving in the mail soon. If you didn't receive an enrollment packet or need another one, please call the number listed below and you will be sent a packet. Don't wait! The open enrollment period is for a limited time.

ENJOY THE FOLLOWING TEAMSTAR PART D PROGRAM BENEFITS:

- **COMPETITIVE UNION GROUP RATES** — TEAMStar Medicare Part D is not available to the general public. The rates and benefits are set by your union.

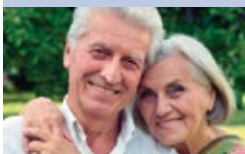
- **UNION PREFERRED PRICING** — certain Preferred Generic drugs are available for as low as \$2 at a Union Preferred Pharmacy.

- **COVERAGE OPTIONS** — three unique plans that offer different levels of security to Teamsters.

- **COVERAGE THROUGH THE DONUT HOLE** — if you select the Platinum Plan you can get coverage for most generics at a low copay after you get to the Coverage Gap.

You can get more detailed information, and also register for the program, at www.teamstarpartd.com or call (866) 524-4173. ©

Open Enrollment Period Begins October 15, 2016!



The International Brotherhood of Teamsters is proud to announce the open enrollment period for the TEAMStar Medicare Part D Program. This annual open enrollment period will begin on October 15, 2016 and end on December 7, 2016.

Teamster retirees and spouses who are currently enrolled in Medicare Parts A and/or B qualify for TEAMStar Medicare Part D coverage. Enrollment packets will be arriving in the mail soon. If you didn't receive an enrollment packet or need another one, please call us and we will send you one. Don't wait! The open enrollment period is for a limited time.

Enjoy the following TEAMStar Part D Program benefits:

- **Competitive union group rates** — TEAMStar Medicare Part D is not available to the general public. The rates and benefits are set by your union.

- **Union Preferred Pricing** — certain Preferred Generic drugs are available for as low as \$2 at a Union Preferred Pharmacy.

- **Coverage Options** — three unique plans that offer different levels of security to Teamsters.

- **Coverage through the donut hole** — if you select the Platinum Plan you can get coverage for most generics at a low copay after you get to the Coverage Gap.



RRB financial reports

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is required by law to submit annual financial reports to Congress on the financial condition of the railroad retirement system and the railroad unemployment insurance system. These reports must also include recommendations for any financing changes which may be advisable in order to ensure the solvency of the systems. In June, the RRB submitted its 2016 reports on the railroad retirement and railroad unemployment insurance systems.

The following questions and answers summarize the findings of these reports.

1. WHAT WERE THE ASSETS OF THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT AND RAILROAD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEMS LAST YEAR?

As of September 30, 2015, total railroad retirement system assets, comprising assets managed by the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust and the railroad retirement system accounts at the Treasury, equaled \$26.3 billion. The Trust was established by the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 to manage and invest railroad retirement assets. The cash balance of the railroad unemployment insurance system was \$108.9 million at the end of fiscal year 2015.

2. WHAT WAS THE CONCLUSION OF THE 2016 REPORT OF THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT SYSTEM?

The conclusion was that, barring a sudden, unanticipated, large decrease in railroad employment or substantial investment losses, the railroad retirement system will experience no cash-flow problems during the next 25 years. The long-term stability of the system, however, is still uncertain. Under the current financing structure, actual levels of railroad employment and investment return over the coming years will largely determine whether corrective action is necessary.

3. WHAT METHODS WERE USED IN FORECASTING THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT SYSTEM?

The 2016 report projected the various components of income and outgo of the railroad retirement system under three employment assumptions, intended to provide an optimistic, intermediate and pessimistic outlook, for the 25 calendar years 2016-2040. The projections of these components were combined and the investment income calculated to produce the projected balances in the railroad retirement accounts at the end of each projection year.

Projecting income and outgo under optimistic, intermediate and pessimistic employment assumptions, the report indicated no cash-flow problems occur throughout the 25-year projection period under any of the three employment assumptions.

4. HOW DO THE RESULTS OF THE 2016 REPORT COMPARE WITH THE 2015 REPORT?

The projected tier II tax rates for each calendar year are either the same or higher than in last year's report. (Railroad retirement payroll taxes, like railroad retirement benefits, are calculated on a two-tier basis.) The projected combined account balances are

lower at the end of each year.

The unfavorable comparison with last year was due to overall unfavorable economic and employment experience, with the largest impacts resulting from declining employment and actual investment return of approximately 0.2 percent falling below the expected investment return of 7 percent in calendar year 2015.

5. DID THE 2016 REPORT OF THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT SYSTEM RECOMMEND ANY RAILROAD RETIREMENT PAYROLL TAX RATE CHANGES?

The report did not recommend any change in the rate of tax imposed by current law on employers and employees.

6. WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS OF THE 2016 REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE RAILROAD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEM?

The RRB's 2016 railroad unemployment insurance financial report was also generally favorable. Even as maximum benefit rates increase 36 percent (from

\$72 to \$98) from 2015 to 2026, experience-based contribution rates maintain solvency. No new loans are anticipated even under the pessimistic assumption. Unemployment levels are the single most significant factor affecting the financial status of the railroad unemployment insurance system. However, the system's experience-rating provisions, which adjust contribution rates for changing benefit levels, and its surcharge trigger for maintaining a minimum balance help to ensure financial stability in the advent of adverse economic conditions.

Under experience-rating provisions, each employer's contribution rate is determined by the RRB on the basis of benefit payments made to the railroad's employees. Even under the pessimistic assumption, the report predicted that the average employer contribution rate remains well below the maximum throughout the projection period.

A 1.5 percent surcharge is in effect in calendar year 2016. Under all three employment assumptions, the report proj-

ects a surcharge of 1.5 percent in 2017 and 2018, with a surcharge of 1.5 percent predicted for 2019 under the pessimistic assumption and likely under the intermediate and optimistic assumptions.

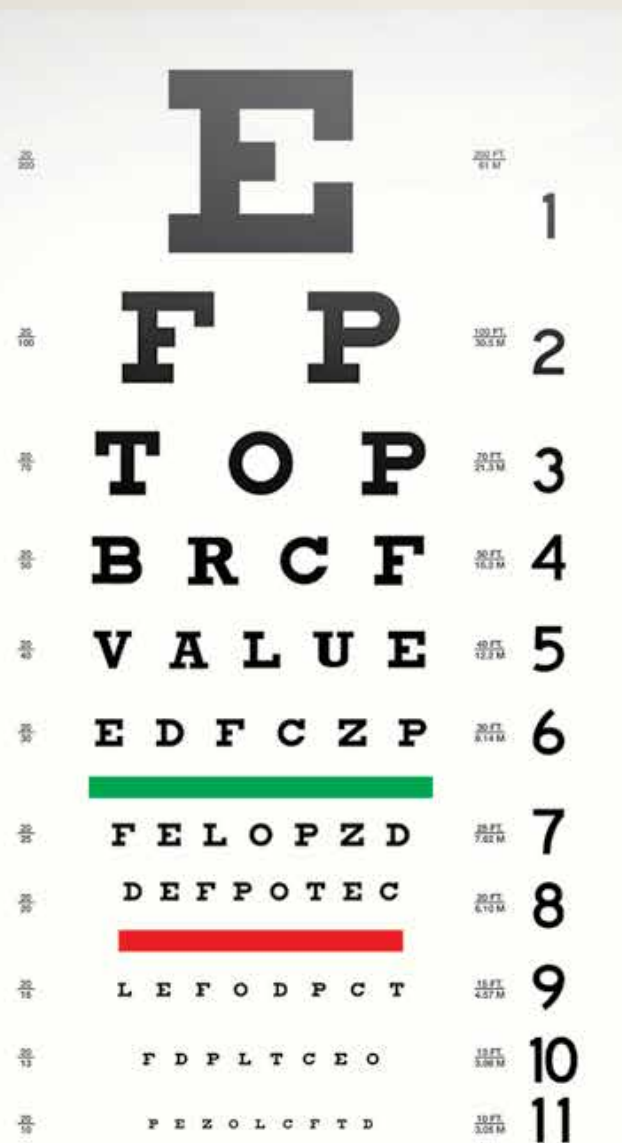
7. WHAT METHODS WERE USED TO EVALUATE THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE RAILROAD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEM?

The economic and employment assumptions used in the unemployment insurance report corresponded to those used in the 2016 report of the retirement system. Projections were made for various components of income and outgo under each of the three employment assumptions, but for the period 2016-2026, rather than a 25-year period.

8. DID THE 2016 REPORT ON THE RAILROAD UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEM RECOMMEND ANY FINANCING CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM?

No financing changes were recommended at this time by the report. ©©

FOCUS ON VALUE



Daily Benefit Level	\$100 (\$102*)	\$150	\$200 (\$201*)	\$220	\$250
BR&CF	\$38.00	\$57.00	\$76.00	\$83.60	\$95.00
LECMPA (*)	\$59.50	\$87.50	\$117.25	Not available... you will pay less per month with BR&CF for more daily benefits	
SMART - UTU	\$81.00	\$121.50	\$162.00		

The BR&CF is the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences. We are affordable. You could save up to \$1,032 each year on a \$200 benefit level. A BR&CF membership offers you the best price, value and service. To apply for membership... act today... ask a BR&CF member where you work for an application or visit our web site at www.brcf.org or call us toll free at 800 233-7080.





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Brotherhood Of Locomotive Engineers And Trainmen**

7061 East Pleasant Valley Road
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Photo of the Month: September 2016



FROM THE VAULT: In late July of 1958, the Norfolk & Western Railroad made the switch to diesel power and abandoned its Class J steam locomotives for pulling passenger trains. The 4-8-4 locomotives were constructed at the N&W's Roanoke Shops between 1941-1950, and were considered "spry and youthful" when they were replaced by diesels. The Class Js are long reputed to have been the highest-capacity four-axle steam engines ever fabricated. Their 70-inch driving wheels gave the impression that they would not be able to handle the hilly terrain found throughout the N&W system (given that many contemporary locomotives had driving wheels that measured up to 84 inches). However, the Class J locomotives confounded the critics and pulled the railroad's most prominent passenger trains with speed and remarkable reliability. **Photo:** BLET Archives



Are you a photographer? The National Division's Public Relations Department, which produces the Newsletter each month, has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their

images to the "Photo of the Month" section of the Newsletter. If you'd like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email: Bentley@ble-t.org.

Please note only high resolution images can be used. Members are also encouraged to review their employer's policies regarding the use of cameras and other electronic devices while on duty.

Advisory Board July 2016 Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members' activities are published monthly:

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division Office, Independence, Ohio; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Correspondence and telephone communications; Supervision of Office Administration; General Supervision of Special Representatives; President, Teamsters Rail Conference; Policy Committee, Teamsters Rail Conference; Vacation; Teamsters 29th International Convention, Las Vegas, Nevada; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; National Division Advisory Board mtg., Chicago.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: Short-line Organizing Dept.; Trainmen's Dept.; National Publications Committee; National Legislative Board; Teamsters Rail Conference Policy Committee; PRAC; and National Negotiations; National duties, Independence, Ohio; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; Advisory Board mtg., Chicago.

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER STEPHEN J. BRUNO: General supervision of Accounting Dept., Record Dept., Online Services Dept., Tax Compliance Dept.; Safety Task Force; PAC and FEC reports and filings; Implementation and training for BLET membership database; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Publications Committee; Passenger Dept.; National Bargaining Committee; IBT Human Rights Commission; ND office work, Independence, Ohio; Union Track implementation and training; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; Advisory Board mtg., Chicago; IBT convention, Las Vegas.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications; Coordinate content of NLO website; Weekly PAC committee and legislative mtgs.; Maryland State Legislative Board inaugural convention, Frederick Md.; Food Research Action Committee annual benefit dinner, Washington, D.C.; BNSF/MRL GCA mtg., Las Vegas; IBT convention, Las Vegas; Various functions for Representatives and Senators, Washington, D.C.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Vice Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Arb. Adv. Forum; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to Illinois Central, Wisconsin Central, Indiana Harbor Belt, Belt Railway of Chicago, Metra, GRR and Illinois RR; Holiday; Study dockets; Referee Meyers DL (IC), NRAB, Chicago; Assist FVP Pruitt and GC Craddock w/ IFC mtg., IC, Homewood; Assist GC Semenek, Craddock and Balonek w/ PLD mtg., Metra, Chicago; Assist GC Craddock w/ claims conf., Metra, Chicago; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; Mtg. w/ NMB Chief of Staff Rainey, re: Section 3 issues, NRAB, Chicago; 1st Division NRAB arbitrator utilization project, NRAB, Omaha; Vacation; Referee Meyers DL (WC), NRAB, Chicago.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE TWOMBLY: Assigned to all Union Pacific GCAs (Eastern District, Northern Region (former C&NW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western), Central Region, Southern Region; Tacoma Belt RR, Utah RR, Longview Portland & Northern NO & Longview Switch, Portland Terminal; On duty at home office; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; UP-Western

Region PLB 7228, Chicago; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; UP-Western Region conference, Louisville, Colo.

VICE PRESIDENT GIL GORE: Assigned to all CSX; Grand Trunk Western; Union Pacific-Southern Region GCA special assignment; Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) issues, CSXT; General office duties, paperwork, correspondence, emails, telephone calls, etc.; Holiday; Vacation; CAPS conference call; Inward-facing camera conference call, all CSX GCs; Meal allows and WLC roster, safety, conference call; CSX codification and wrap-up mtgs.; Jacksonville; Operation Red Block mtg., Detroit.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Great Western; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; M&NA contract negotiations w/ GC Thurman, Springfield, Mo.; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; Vacation; BLET-BNSF Safety Summit discussions, Fort Worth; PLB 7477 w/ GC Holdcraft, Chicago; PLB 7383 conference calls w/ Arbitrator and BNSF.

VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS: Assigned to: Kansas City Southern (MidSouth Rail, SouthRail, Gateway Western, Illinois & Midland), Texas Mexican Rwy.; CP Rail System/US (Indiana Southern, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern); Springfield Terminal (St. Lawrence & Atlantic, Delaware & Hudson), Cedar River, Louisville & Indiana, Huron & Eastern; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Assist GC Semenek w/ issues on DM&E, CP, Soo Line; Soo Line contract issues, GC Semenek; Huron & Eastern issues, GC Ladrig; Assist GC Craddock w/ issues on Illinois Midland, Mid South; Illinois Midland negotiations w/ GC Craddock, Springfield, Ill.; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Silmon; Assist GC Moore with issues on Springfield Terminal and D&H; Vacation; KCS issues, GC Spradlin; Louisville & Indiana RR issues, GC Hogan; BLET regional meeting, Chicago.

VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS: Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern; New York, Susquehanna & Western; New England Central; Connecticut Southern; Western New York & Pennsylvania; Indiana & Ohio; RSAC/RSIA Fatigue Management Group; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; IBT convention, Las Vegas; BLET regional meeting, Las Vegas; W&LE mediation w/ GC Dehart, Wilmot, Ohio.

VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS: Assigned Amtrak; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Metra; Union Railroad; National Division Department Head, Education & Training Dept.; National Division Department Head, Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Union Track mtgs.; LIRR Section 6, assist GC Sexton; BLET regional meeting planning; Division 373 meeting w/ GC Decker, Trenton, N.J.; BLET regional meeting, Chicago; Contract talks w/ GC Decker, NJ Transit.

**Dave Decker reelected
NJ Transit General Chairman**

David C. Decker was reelected by acclamation to his third term as General Chairman of the New Jersey Transit General Committee of Adjustment at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in Raritan, N.J., on September 8, 2016.

Brother Decker is a New Jersey Transit locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 272 (Dover, N.J.). He hired out in 1988 as a trainman, earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1990, and joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1990. In 2008, Brother Decker was elected

1st Vice Chairman of the GCA, then served two years as General Chairman beginning in 2010 following the retirement of Rich Darcy. He was reelected by acclamation to continue service as General Chairman at the GCA's quadrennial meeting in 2012.

Also reelected by acclamation to their second consecutive terms were: Vice-General Chairman James P. Brown, Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.); Secretary-Treasurer George S. Petrie, Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer H. Lorraine DePugh, Division 53 (Jersey City, N.J.). Appointed to serve

as the Audit Committee were: Robert M. Davia, Division 272 (Dover, N.J.); Thomas Haas Jr., Division 171 (Hoboken, N.J.); and David F. Ziegler, Division 53 (Jersey City, N.J.).

GCA delegates at the meeting were: Local Chairman David F. Ziegler, Division 53 (Jersey City, N.J.); Local Chairman Thomas Haas Jr., Division 171 (Hoboken, N.J.); Local Chairman Robert M. Davia, Division 272 (Dover, N.J.); and Local Chairman James P. Brown, Division 373 (Trenton, N.J.).

"I offer my congratulations and thanks to Brother Decker and all officers of the New

Jersey Transit General Committee of Adjustment," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "Brother Dave and all his GCA officers have guided the membership of this GCA through a prolonged negotiating process, which resulted in a ratified contract in July. This reelection by acclamation displays the excellent job this committee does to represent our NJT Brothers and Sisters."

The BLET's New Jersey Transit General Committee of Adjustment represents approximately 425 active members in four different Divisions. ©