



PUBLISHED BY THE BLET, A DIVISION OF THE RAIL CONFERENCE, INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

BLET MOVES TO PROTECT MEMBERS FROM SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) is working on various fronts to address member health and safety in response to the national COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak that is sweeping the United States as this issue of the News goes to press.

Most notably, the BLET and the SMART Transportation Division (SMART-TD) filed two joint petitions on March 20 urging the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to issue an Emergency Order (EO) to address sanitation issues in the freight and passenger rail industries. And on March 5, the BLET demanded the carriers take steps to protect BLET members, their co-workers and the general public from the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters have also taken actions to ensure that working people are able to perform their jobs in a safe working environment and that sick leave is available to all workers.

BLET, SMART TD PETITION FRA FOR EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS REGARDING COVID-19


On March 20, the BLET and SMART TD demanded that the FRA issue two emergency orders to help stop the spread of COVID-19 among railroad workers: one EO to address freight rail concerns and a second EO for the passenger/commuter side of the industry.

“The employees we represent are essential to the health, safety, and security of the nation. Therefore, it is necessary that the railroads take immediate and appropriate precautions to mitigate against the spread of the virus amongst their workforces, to minimize the exposure of their employees to the virus during the performance of their duties, and that Class I railroads maintain sufficient staffing levels to compensate for reduced headcounts caused by sick employees and family members, as well as to seamlessly handle predicted increases in volume once the virus begins to subside,” SMART-TD President Jeremy R. Ferguson and BLET President Dennis R. Pierce wrote in their petition.

Although emergency relief procedures were activated by FRA Administrator Ron Batory on March 13, many rail carriers have been slow to adopt, or in some cases have neglected to adopt, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. An action plan to help address the potential spread of the coronavirus among rail workers has not been issued by FRA and reports that Class I employees, both administrative and over-the-road personnel, have confirmed or suspected COVID-19 illnesses have been received.

The emergency request from the unions follows a letter their presidents sent on March 6 that requested, among

EMERGENCY ORDER:



“The employees we represent are essential to the health, safety, and security of the nation.”

— SMART-TD PRESIDENT JEREMY R. FERGUSON AND BLET PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE TO THE FRA

other emergency remedial measures, thorough sanitation efforts in railroad facilities and on locomotives to prevent the infection of workers.

The unions’ request includes that freight railroads adhere to CDC guidelines in the following areas:

- Locomotive sanitation
- Sanitation of common areas used by employees
- Monitoring of employee temperatures
- Sanitation of crew transportation vehicles

The unions also seek that accommodations for meals, including long waits for food, be made in the documentation of hours of service reports for away-from-terminal personnel, including an additional 30 minutes to report in response to a call to work.

Procedures on how to handle employees who develop symptoms of the coronavirus requested by the unions re-

flect CDC guidelines, which include isolation, personal protective equipment, transport, and self-quarantine.

Several components of the unions’ passenger rail EO request mirror those requested in their joint freight petition, which includes: locomotive sanitation, common room sanitation, employee temperature observation protocols, away-from-home terminal procedures, crew transportation sanitation, what to do if an employee develops symptoms, and furlough recall procedures. The unions’ petition for a passenger EO also covers: coach/passenger car sanitation standards, sleeper cars, and directives in case a passenger develops symptoms.

Finally, the presidents wrote, 25% of furloughed rail personnel should immediately be recalled to service to deal with anticipated shortages and staffing needs, in accordance with President Trump’s invocation

of the Defense Production Act.

“To standardize and define the best protocols across the industry for the mitigation of the spread of the virus and the protection of employees, these safety precautions need to be immediately ordered by FRA,” Presidents Ferguson and Pierce stated.

BLET URGES RAIL INDUSTRY TO ADDRESS CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The BLET also urged the railroad industry to take steps to protect BLET members, their co-workers and the general public from the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce voiced the Union’s concerns in a March 5 letter to Brendan Branon, Chairman of the National Railway Labor Conference, Chuck Baker, President of the American Short Line and Regional

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RAILROAD WORKERS TO BENEFIT FROM CORONAVIRUS STIMULUS PACKAGE

The needs of railroad workers and their families — including improvements to railroad unemployment benefits — are included in the new 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. 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 unemployment 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 would be split between the Northeast Corridor (\$492 million) and its National Network (\$526 million). The bill also provides \$24.9 billion in grants for various transit agencies throughout the nation.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, who also serves as President of the Teamsters Rail Conference, sent a letter to U.S. Senate and House majority and minority leaders on March 24 asking for special consideration to railroad workers. While many of his requests were included in the stimulus package, the bill does not remove the sequestration requirements set forth in the Budget Control Act of 2011, which are applicable to RUIA benefits, causing an artificial reduction in unemployment benefits.

“I thank members of Congress and the White House for working together across party lines to help all Americans, especially railroad workers, during the current coronavirus pandemic,” President Pierce said. “While I am disappointed that they did not remove the sequestration requirement, we will continue to lobby Congress to overturn this most unjust requirement.”



BLET President’s Message

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Two-person Crew

Bill becomes law in Washington State **pg. 5**

60-day Emergency Waivers

BLET and SMART-TD union leaders demand clarification from FRA **pg. 6**




BLET PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

WHAT WE ALWAYS KNEW: ENGINEERS AND TRAINMEN ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Over the last month or so, lives have been turned upside down for millions of Americans due to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). From work-at-home orders and shelter-in-place directives ... to the closing of schools, restaurants and businesses ... the work lives and home lives of growing numbers of Americans have changed drastically. In ways seen and unseen, the spread of this virus has affected us all.

Many American workers have seen their jobs vanish, but as with all railroad workers, BLET members have seen their jobs become increasingly more important to the nation. We move the products that power our nation and the food that feeds our citizens. We play an integral role in our nation's economy, and without us, our nation would collapse. In many ways, BLET members are the nation's ultimate essential workers.

But then, engineers and trainmen already knew that. For well over a century and half, they have labored in relative anonymity, operating the nation's freight and passenger trains at all hours in all conditions. Their 24/7, 365 day a year jobs are what move the grain that feeds the nation, the coal that powers our homes, the vehicles Americans drive, and the products that stock the shelves of the stores in our great nation.

It is unfortunate, however, that in many cases, certain of the nation's rail carriers still don't seem to understand just how important their employees are to our nation's survival and recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. While some rail carriers have made significant strides in providing a safe and healthy workplace for Engineers and Trainmen, others continue to ignore



the concerns of their employees, and their unions.

That's why we have focused our Union's efforts in recent weeks to demand that the railroad industry provide a clean, safe and sanitized workplace inside all crew rooms, in all locomotive cabs, and at all layover facilities throughout the country. BLET's General Chairmen continue to meet with their respective rail carriers on an almost daily basis in an effort to improve workplace conditions. BLET's State Legislative Board Chairmen continue to work with Government agencies to ensure that the regulatory protective net is preserved.

All the while, it is the BLET rank-and-file membership and Local Division Officers providing the detailed reports of both success stories towards a safer workplace, as well as the cases of what can only be called a blatant disregard for the health and safety of railroad operating crews. Our common goal is to insist that the nation's railroads provide a

safe workplace so that all hard-working railroad employees can do their part to get America through this national emergency. Unfortunately, there are more reports of outright failures to provide a safe and sanitized workplace than there are reports of that being accomplished.

For this reason, I have personally called several Class I CEOs in the past two weeks to let them know where they must work to improve their efforts. Although almost every Class I railroad has issued a policy statement on shared workplace and locomotive cab cleanliness, we know that in application those policies are failing far too often. Our demands towards a clean and safe workplace are threefold.

First, the nation's rail carriers must work harder to get the sick employees out of the workplace so that those employees can start the healing process without the threat of job loss hanging over their heads. In the way of that shared goal are two

decades of attendance policies, now "institutionalized" into the railroads' management style. It is clear that all Americans, and all American corporations, must evolve to survive the pandemic. But it has also become clear that many railroads' institutional distrust of their employees, as evidenced in draconian attendance policies, is in the way of getting the sick employees away from the workplace so that the healthy employees can have some assurance that the workplace will not be where they get ill. It appears that many of the nation's freight carriers have spent so much time chasing after the small number of employees who don't work enough by arbitrary carrier standards that they have forgotten how to fairly treat the vast majority of their employees who are just here to do their jobs. The nation is counting on this latter group, but clinging to policies that prevent sick employees from taking time away from work for fear of termination or financial harm is preventing what should be a shared goal of providing a safe and healthy workplace for the healthy employees to do their jobs.

Second, the nation's rail carriers must work harder to clean the workplace once the sick employees have been given the time off that they need, so that the nation's hard-working "essential" engineers and trainmen can come to work without fear of infection. That includes cleaning all shared on-duty stations, but more importantly, includes providing locomotive cabs, crew hauling vans, and hotels that have been cleaned and sanitized. There is much work to do here, and our General Chairmen are directly forwarding all failure reports to their respective carriers on a daily basis.

Finally, the nation's railroads

must begin the process of properly staffing the industry to meet the nation's needs. In 2019, over 20,000 railroad workers were furloughed, and it is clear an industry running this lean on employees does not have the flexibility to weather this national emergency. Whether it be recalling shop craft employees to sanitize locomotives, or recalling operating crews to backfill for those sick employees who should be out of the workplace healing, the railroads must get away from their Precision Scheduled Railroading job cutting mindset if they expect to do their part to get our great nation through this national emergency.

Having sent letters to the heads of the three railroad industry groups (the National Railway Labor Conference, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association, and the American Public Transportation Association) as well as the Federal Railroad Administration on all of these issues without noticeable nationwide improvement, I must now take these issues directly to each and every railroad CEO, their respective Boards of Directors, their shareholders, and the general public with this message:

Enough with the vague policy talk about "relaxing" attendance policies for those testing positive for COVID-19. Railroad employees are not doctors, and they are not qualified to know if their symptoms are related to the spread of the virus, related to influenza, or even a common cold. If railroads are sincere in their advice that they want sick employees out of the workplace, they must publicly state to their employees that all illness-related absences will be excused during this national emergency.

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66 Our common goal is to insist that the nation's railroads provide a safe workplace so that all hard-working railroad employees can do their part to get America through this national emergency. Unfortunately, there are more reports of outright failures to provide a safe and sanitized workplace than there are reports of that being accomplished. 99

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 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, 2010. ©©



GENERAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE BY JAMES P. HOFFA

THE YEAR 2020 BRINGS BIG RESPONSIBILITY FOR VOTERS

America has begun a very important year in its existence. Over the next several months, voters will decide who they want to lead this country and what they want its future to look like. The process will be tumultuous. But it is a critical decision that will have long-lasting implications for all who call this great nation home.

The Teamsters are taking its role in helping to shape this country's path forward seriously. It's why the union rolled out a plan to get involved early in the 2020 election cycle seven months ago and why it's had members and retirees crisscrossing early primary states as well as general election battleground states all through the summer

and fall to get the candidates on the record on issues that matter most to working Americans.

But it hasn't stopped there. Last December in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the Teamsters hosted a presidential forum. There, several leading contenders shared their views with more than 700 Teamster members and retirees as well as a global audience of millions online about pension reform, expanding collective bargaining rights and other top issues that are important for hardworking Americans.

Now is not a time to be overlooking the labor movement. Unions today are enjoying stronger support than they have in almost 50 years. That's how the Teamsters were finally able to get Congress to end the regres-

sive "Cadillac Tax" on high-quality health plans. There is an understanding by a sizable majority in this country that hardworking Americans deserve retirement security as well as the ability to collectively bargain on the job.

That's why I'm urging everyone to view sit-down interviews the Teamsters have held with several of those seeking the presidency. Go to www.teamstersvote.com and see candidates in their own words addressing the issues working Americans care about!

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT



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Forschen elected Chairman of North Dakota State Legislative Board

Brother Sean M. Forschen was elected by acclamation to his first term as Chairman of the BLET's North Dakota State Legislative Board during its quadrennial meeting in Bismarck, N.D., January 8-9, 2020.

Brother Forschen is a BNSF locomotive engineer and Legislative Representative of BLET Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.). He hired out with the BNSF on February 28, 2005, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer on November 11, 2008. He joined the BLET on May 1, 2013. Brother Forschen was elected to serve the North Dakota SLB as Trustee during the 2016 quadrennial meeting.

Also elected by acclamation during the quadrennial meeting were: 1st Vice Chairman and Trustee Charlie Weick, Division 160 (Harvey, N.D.); Secretary-Treasurer Darin L. Hamre, Division 671 (Enderlin, N.D.); Trustee Terry L. Pauli, Division 69 (Grand Forks, N.D.); and Chad D. Haugtvedt, Division 695 (Minot, N.D.). Brother Weick, the outgoing North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman, did not seek reelection due to his pending retirement. He served two terms as Chairman, winning elections in 2012 and 2016.

BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman represented the National Division at the meeting.

"I am proud to congratulate Sean Forschen and all officers of the North Dakota State Legislative Board, and I thank them for their service to the Brotherhood,"



Officers, members and guests attending the BLET North Dakota State Legislative Board's quadrennial meeting in Bismarck, N.D., January 8-9, 2020. From left: D.B. Kenner, Montana State Legislative Board Chairman; John Tolman, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative; Trustee Chad D. Haugtvedt, Division 695 (Minot, N.D.); 1st Vice Chairman and Trustee Charlie Weick, Division 160 (Harvey, N.D.); ND SLB Chairman Sean Forschen, Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.); Secretary-Treasurer Darin L. Hamre, Division 671 (Enderlin, N.D.); and Trustee Terry L. Pauli, Division 69 (Grand Forks, N.D.).

BLET National Division President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I also thank Brother Charlie Weick for the dedication and leadership he displayed during his two terms as Chairman, and wish him all the best as he nears retirement in the next few years."

Additional BLET members in attendance included: D.B. Kenner, Montana State Legislative Board Chairman, and Mike Muscha, former North Dakota State Legislative Board Chairman. Brother Muscha's wife, Naomi Muscha, was in attendance representing the BLET Auxiliary.

Guest speakers included: Andrew Bushaw, Field Director of the North Da-

kota AFL-CIO; Ross Keys, Representative from the Alliance For A Better North Dakota; State Senator Erin Oban (D-35), Minority Caucus Leader; and State Representative Josh Boschee (D-44), the North Dakota House Minority Leader.

The Board handled regular business and discussed a variety of topics, including the two-person crew bill, which is of great importance to the membership and general public of North Dakota due to the vast number of oil trans that traverse the state via BNSF and CP Rail.

Brother Forschen is a second generation locomotive engineer. His father,

Mike Forschen, worked for the CP Rail from 1978-2011 and is a retired member of BLET Division 160. Brother Forschen and his wife, Shari, have two children: Mariah, 21, and Noah, 15. He is a third generation combat veteran, having served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1998 to 2006 and being deployed to Iraq in 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. His father fought in Vietnam and his grandfather fought in World War II.

The North Dakota State Legislative Board represents more than 530 active and retired members from five different BLET Divisions in North Dakota. ©

SMART-TD PRESIDENT: Facing crew challenges, SMART-TD and BLET will act in solidarity

BLET EDITOR'S NOTE:

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT BY SMART-TD PRESIDENT JEREMY FERGUSON WAS PUBLISHED ON FEBRUARY 20, 2020.

Sometimes it takes something major to happen for people to sit up and take notice. A wake-up call, if you will.

From the standpoint of our national contract negotiations, our union got another wake-up call even before our first session that is scheduled for the last week in February.

On February 11th, a U.S. district judge, who was appointed by President Donald Trump last year, ruled against our union in a lawsuit over crew-consist moratoriums. We're now appealing that decision.

The court ignored the Railway Labor Act strictures with regard to the moratorium provisions which have been upheld for decades. We are being pushed down the tracks where the carriers want this to go.

This fight is not over, and we have another that is about to begin.

There's a lyric that Anne Feeney wrote that gets at the heart of this matter and that unions have embraced: "United, we bargain. Divided, we beg."



We now have a coalition of 10 rail unions about to begin negotiating together in this upcoming round of bargaining. I have been in close contact with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) President Dennis Pierce throughout as carriers have tried to attack two-person crews.

Our two unions are linked in the courts. We're linked in the halls of Congress. We're linked in the locomotive cabs. We are now linked at the bargaining table.

Our attorneys are working together on behalf of both our organizations to fight the ongoing court cases as carriers try to manipulate the system with their deep pockets by attempting to get long-standing precedents and legislation overturned.

Legislative representatives from both our organizations are meeting with members of Congress and state legislatures to get the word on for two-person crew laws. The carriers, however, are using every means to fight to try to get two-person crew laws of seven states thrown out, which we have opposed.

Members from both organizations are sitting in cabs of freight trains staying alert and keeping one another safe through each and every shift, ready at a

"Brothers and sisters, BLET President Pierce and I are united. We will work in solidarity, together, to keep two on the crew as we bargain."

Jeremy Ferguson
SMART-TD President

moment's notice to respond when things go wrong. We need to carry this effort on in crew consist.

BLET President Pierce recently stated in a message to his union:

"I share this information to make it clear to BLET's membership that our proud Union stands with our Brothers and Sisters in SMART's Transportation Division in the fight to preserve two-person crews," Pierce wrote. "Be it on the regulatory front, the legislative front, in court or at the bargaining table, BLET is working with SMART-TD to protect the interests of all operating employees."

I, as President of the SMART-TD, want to make it clear to our union that we stand united with the BLET.

Any attempt to drive a wedge between our organizations in order to get officers and members alike to disregard the goal at hand — preserving two on the operating crew — plays into the carriers' hands. It gets them closer to what they want: Fewer workers, more money in their pockets, a less-safe (cheaper) work environment and weakens all of rail labor. Two unions with members and with leadership going in opposite directions would make it easier for carriers to accomplish their goal of eradicating jobs in favor of their idea of "innovation."

I also agree with President Pierce when he stated:

"The bottom line is this: In order to preserve two-person crews, each Union must protect and preserve its member of those crews. With only a few exceptions, BLET cannot bargain nationally

for Conductors. The same is true in reverse; with only a few exceptions, SMART-TD cannot bargain nationally for Engineers," he wrote. "For these reasons, and regardless of the fearmongering going on, BLET cannot 'sell' Conductor positions to benefit Engineers in national negotiations, and the same in true in reverse for SMART-TD. Again, each Union must protect its half of our two-person crews for all operating employees to prevail."

Brothers and sisters, this is an uneasy time for every member of every labor organization involved in these negotiations as the carriers continue to cut personnel. The operating craft unions have the buzzsaw of technological threats from the carriers aimed straight down the middle of the locomotive cab. Don't be persuaded by the fearmongering that attempts to divide us.

You are going to hear rumors out there. You are going to hear speculation. You are going to have people beating their chests and criticizing decisions made years ago by prior leaders for putting us in what could be a critical — maybe the most critical — moment in rail labor's history with the in-cab role of the conductor in the balance. Ignore all of that noise. We are moving forward, not backward!

This is not the time for anyone to give in to anxiety or paranoia or "what-if" scenarios. When all SMART-TD members put our names on the dotted line to pledge for membership to this organization, we pledged to fight for each other in solidarity. When elected president of

the Transportation Division last August, I took an oath to act in solidarity for the best interest for the organization and for all whom we represent. When I signed our organization on as a member of the 10-union Coordinated Bargaining Coalition, I pledged to bargain in solidarity with those other rail labor organizations in national talks.

All of us need to be focused on the situation that lies ahead and the decisions to be made for the future of rail labor and the crews who operate freight trains. We need to reinforce our lines of defense and prepare to go on the offense by reaching out to the public and to the media. Instead of wondering "what's the union doing for us?" it's time to get to the local union meetings and get involved. It's time for the spouses to join the SMART-TD Auxiliary and get involved. It's time to up your SMART-TD PAC contributions, then get with your state and U.S. legislators, so they hear your voice this election year. It's time to get involved in the SMART Army. It's time to stand strong!

Brothers and sisters, BLET President Pierce and I are united. We will work in solidarity, together, to keep two on the crew as we bargain. We will work together to keep you informed. We know this issue is too important to our memberships and for the public's and our safety not to.

In solidarity,

Jeremy Ferguson
President, Transportation Division

BLET MEMBERS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

By a unanimous vote, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) have ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Great Western Railway of Colorado (GWR).

Ratified on December 30, 2019, the agreement runs through the year 2023 and provides significant upfront wage

increases of 38 percent for locomotive engineers and 40 percent for conductors. Members will also receive 2 percent general wage increases each year throughout the remainder of the contract, and there were no harmful work rule changes.

The negotiating team consisted of BNSF (former ATSF) General Chairman Rob Cunningham, BNSF-ATSF Vice Gen-

eral Chairman Jeremy McFather, Division 256 Local Chairman Mike L. Dunkelberger, and National Vice President Mike Priester.

"I thank the GWR membership for their perseverance throughout the negotiating process," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "I also thank the negotiating team for bringing this round to a successful conclusion."

The BLET first organized the GWR property in 2003. Its members belong to Division 256 in Denver, and they are represented by the BNSF (former ATSF) General Committee of Adjustment for purposes of contract negotiations and enforcement. GWR is an OmniTRAX property headquartered in Denver, Colo. The short line operates over 80 miles of track throughout

Colorado and interchanges with the BNSF Railway and Union Pacific.

"We still have a lot of work to do on the GWR, but this contract made significant strides in bringing up the pay rates on this property," General Chairman Cunningham said. "This should help with the employee retention rates, which have plagued the carrier in recent years."©©

Two-person crew bill becomes law in Washington State

After more than seven years of hard work by the BLET's Washington State Legislative Board and their counterparts within the SMART Transportation Division, a two-person crew bill was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on March 27, 2020.

According to BLET Washington State Legislative Board Chairman Shahrain C.



Allen

Allen, HB 1841 — Establishing Minimum Crews on Certain Trains — passed out of the Washington State House on a Concurrence Vote (64 yea-33 nay) on March 10, 2020. It was then signed by Madame Speaker Laurie Jinkins on March 11,

2020, for its finalization in the House. In its final review in the Senate, the additional signature of Lt. Governor / President Cyrus Habib was added on March 12, 2020.

"It was a team effort and I want to thank all who have supported our efforts over the last seven years," Brother Allen said. "I especially want to thank our members who reached out to their legislators in Washington State. Our Organization's State Legislative Boards, General Committees, mobilization teams and the guidance from the BLET National leadership helped to see us through to this day. With perseverance anything can and will be done."

As written, the bill allows the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to "order railroad carriers to increase the number of railroad employees in areas of increased risk to the public, passengers, railroad employees, or the environment, or on specific trains, routes, or to switch assignments on their road with additional numbers of crewmembers, and may direct the placement of additional crewmembers, if it is determined that such an increase in staffing or the placement of additional crewmembers is necessary to protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public, passengers, or railroad employees,



Led by the BLET and SMART-TD Washington State Legislative Boards, union members turned out in full force to attend the state Senate's Labor and Commerce public hearing in February.

to prevent harm to the environment or to address site specific safety or security hazards."

It has been a long journey, but Brother Allen said he and the members of his Board became more determined to fight for passage of the legislation each time the state legislature failed to act over the past seven years.

"Each year the stakes got higher," he said. "It became imperative to hold the carriers accountable as they relentlessly turned a blind eye to safety. As we experienced year after year, their greed for higher profits became more and more insatiable to the point of compromising safety. It became abundantly clear that we had to make all aware of the railroads' disregard for safe train operations and the risks involved."

Brother Allen said great effort was spent over the last seven years building a coalition to support the two-person crew bill, which included first responders, organized labor, environmentalists, and the general public. In meeting with state legislators, Brother Allen would explain how train crews work in concert with one another, with available technologies, to anticipate problems and to prevent derailments from happening.

"Essentially, trains run through the communities in direct contact with the public. Every effort must be made to ensure these communities are not negatively impacted by the increased length of trains — up to two miles or more in length — as we operate through their backyards. Increased train length and over-reliance on technology senselessly pushes the limits of safety, which endangers everyone and puts our environment at risk. With additional eyes and personnel available, the risk is reduced. The implementation of technology alone is not the final answer or the 'silver bullet' fix to safety that railroad lobbyists would have everyone believe. It is the trained professionals in the cab — in concert with technology — who oversee and safeguard safe railroad operating practices. It is up to locomotive engineers and conductors to readily identify and correct problems — before they occur."

To counter Rail Labor's efforts, the railroad lobbyists did everything in their power to confuse legislators and stifle Rail Labor's forward progress. But the BLET and SMART-TD stayed the course to educate state legislators about railroad safety.

"For the railroad corporate lobbyists, it was all about delay... to kick the can fur-

ther down the road for another year, spending mass amounts of capital to game the legislative process," he said. "Despite this fact, the game-changer was the joint actions performed daily, when educating our decision makers in elected offices, about the duties performed by train crew personnel. The legislators are voted into office by the people, for the people, and they make decisions on behalf of the people. We made sure their moral compasses were pointed in the correct direction. And in a great bipartisan effort, our bill became law, which is scheduled to take effect June 11, 2020."

Washington becomes the most recent state to enact a two-person crew bill. In 2019, state governors in Illinois, Nevada and Colorado signed two-person crew bills in an effort to make train operations in their states as safe as possible.

"I wanted to thank Brother Shahrain C. Allen, the members of the Washington State Legislative Board, and all of our Brothers and Sisters throughout the great state of Washington for their collective efforts in securing passage of this much-needed safety legislation," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "It is my hope that additional states will follow in their footsteps." @

BLET RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS

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Railroad Association, and Paul Skoutelas, President and CEO of the American Public Transportation Association.

"While significant steps are already being taken — for example, by airlines cancelling flights to areas of high infestation and by multi-national employers who are restricting employee travel to such areas — the railroad industry has yet, to our knowledge, to announce any protective measures," President Pierce wrote. "The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen urges all railroads to take two immediate steps that will serve to protect our membership, and the co-workers and the public with whom they have contact."

First, Pierce urges the railroads to suspend their attendance policies and actively encourage sick employees to stay home, in accordance with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Pierce said rail workers who show symptoms of acute respiratory illness should stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (or signs of a fever) for at least 24 hours.

"In order to effectuate this recommendation, all railroads should immediately suspend all non-collectively bargained attendance policies as they relate to all illness-related time away from work, (in place, pending or in dispute) at least until the COVID-19 outbreak is under control," President Pierce wrote. "This step will go far in providing separation between sick individuals and those who are healthy."

Second, the railroads should immediately address workplace sanitation and provide crewmembers with hand sanitizer and high-quality disinfecting wipes.

"When locomotives are serviced, all interior cab surfaces — including the interior of the locomotive nose, bathroom, and door handles and window latches — should be cleansed with a 60%-90% isopropyl alcohol-based surface sanitizer; exterior door handles, grab irons, railings and hand brakes also should be so cleansed," President Pierce wrote. "Similarly, shared computer work stations and crew rooms should be routinely sanitized to prevent the 'community spread' of the virus. Further, crewmembers should be supplied with an adequate combination

of (i) hand sanitizer that contains 60%-90% isopropyl alcohol, (ii) wipes containing at least 4% Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CG) and .5% Benzethonium Chloride (BZC), and/or (iii) wipes containing 60-90% isopropyl alcohol."

Pierce noted that wipes currently provided by some railroads typically contain only 0.1% CG and 0.08% BZC, which are far below the levels required to kill viruses.

TEAMSTER ACTIONS

The Teamsters are demanding that federal, state and local governments, as well as employers, listen to front-line workers in every industry about the actions needed to keep working people safe on the job and to protect our communities. Teamster members have greater job protections than nonunion workers. However, every worker must be provided basic economic security and protections during this crisis.

The Teamsters are active fighting to ensure that:

- Everyone has access to free COVID-19 testing;
- Every worker is provided some form

of paid sick leave;

- Workers are not punished for calling in sick;
- Frontline workers who treat potentially infected populations be provided with the appropriate protective equipment;
- Workers understand that they are entitled to worker compensation benefits if they are infected as a result of their work;
- Those receiving unemployment benefits while affected by COVID-19 are exempt from searching for work during that time.

The Teamsters have established an information resource center at www.teamster.org/covid-19 for members who are seeking additional information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The ongoing situation is fluid, and the BLET remains steadfast in its pursuit of a safe work environment for its members. The best way to stay up-to-date on the latest developments is through the BLET National Division website (www.ble-t.org) and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/BLETNational). @

Pfeifer reelected Chairman of Nebraska State Legislative Board

Pat S. Pfeifer was reelected to his third term as Chairman of the Nebraska State Legislative Board during its quadrennial meeting in Lincoln, Neb., February 24-25, 2020.

A Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Brother Pfeifer is a member of BLET Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.) who first joined the BLET on September 1, 1997. He hired out with the Union Pacific in 1990 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1994. Brother Pfeifer has been an active member of the BLET since that time, serving Division 88 as Legislative Representative, Vice Local Chairman and Local Chairman. He has also served as Local Chairman of Division 388. Brother Pfeifer has been an active member of the Nebraska State Legislative Board for more than a decade, having served as 1st Vice Chairman for two terms (2007-2010 and 2010-2013). He was first elected Chairman at the Board's 2013 triennial meeting, winning reelection by acclamation at the Board's 2016 meeting.

Also elected were: 1st Vice Chairman Kevin C. Howell, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.); 2nd Vice Chairman Adam E. Housman, Division 621 (Wymore, Neb.); and Secretary-Treasurer Brad A. Gerds, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.). Elected to serve as Trustees were: Lance D. Flohr, Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.); Sonny R. Fankhauser, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.); and Adam E. Hausman, Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.). Elected as Executive Board Members were: Travis D. Kuenning, Division 388 (North Platte, Neb.); and G.J. Lupe Gonzales, Division 303 (Morrill, Neb.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; National Vice President Mark L. Wallace; and Director of Regu-



Officers, delegates and guests in attendance at the Nebraska State Legislative Board's quadrennial meeting in Lincoln, Neb., February 24-25, 2020.

latory Affairs Vincent G. Verna.

"I congratulate Brother Pfeifer and all officers of the Nebraska State Legislative Board," President Pierce said. "I thank them for their willingness to serve our Brotherhood, and am confident they will continue to do an excellent job representing the rights and interests of our Brothers and Sisters throughout the proud state of Nebraska."

Special guests included: Dick Crow, Union Pacific-Northern Region General Chairman; Dave Geisler, Union Pacific-Eastern District General Chairman; and Nick Johnson, Arizona State Legislative Board Chairman and Chairman of the BLET National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC).

The delegates conducted business in a professional and efficient manner, mak-

ing various changes to their Bylaws. This was the first time the board held a quadrennial meeting, after having met on a triennial basis for many years.

During the meeting, President Pierce presented retirement awards to Brothers Jeff Vogt, Division 98, and Kevin Potthoff, Division 623. He also presented plaques to Brothers Travis Kuenning, Local Chairman of Division 388, and Lance Flohr, Legislative Representative of Division 622. Brother Kuenning and Brother Flohr accepted the awards on behalf of their Divisions for the membership's outstanding support of the BLET PAC Fund throughout 2019.

The Nebraska State Legislative Board represents approximately 1,200 locomotive engineers and trainmen from eight BLET Divisions. @@



President Pierce (center) presents retirement gifts to Brother Jeff Vogt (left), Division 98, and Brother Kevin Potthoff (right), Division 623.



Brother Lance Flohr (left), LR of Division 622, accepts an award on behalf of Division 622 from President Pierce (right) for the biggest percentage of members in the Nebraska BLET PAC Fund for 2019.



Brother Travis Kuenning (left), Division 388, accepts an award on behalf of Division 388 from President Pierce (right) for the biggest contribution to the Nebraska BLET PAC Fund in 2019.

UNION LEADERS DEMAND CLARIFICATION FROM FRA ON WAIVERS

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) President Dennis R. Pierce and SMART Transportation Division President Jeremy R. Ferguson sought clarification from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) after the agency granted 60-day emergency waiver requests to railroads on March 25, ostensibly to maintain their operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"As you are already aware, SMART Transportation Division, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and other rail labor organizations take strong exception to certain aspects of FRA's seemingly absolute and unconditional approval of such requests," the presidents wrote in a letter to Administrator Ron Batory. "We find the sweeping nature of these approvals alarming, especially in view of the fact that the rules waived are written with the safety of our members, and the general public, in mind."

"Notwithstanding the unfounded nature of some of the carriers' claims in their applications, our immediate con-

cerns are founded in our firm belief that if the carriers understand and apply FRA's waiver to be carte blanche invitation to ignore rules, it will have a substantial chilling effect on safety."

The waivers were withheld from the public docket for a number of days by the agency, which limited the ability of labor organizations to comment and seek a public hearing.

Meanwhile, an emergency order request sought by SMART-TD and the BLET seeking sanitation of areas frequented by frontline rail workers through the course of performing their "essential" duties has not yet received a response from FRA officials.

The waivers grant the Association of American Railroads (AAR), American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) and American Public Transportation Association (APTA) as well as their associated railroad entities the ability to temporarily circumvent established federally mandated requirements for:

- Track inspection
- Operational tests and inspections

- Restrictions on utility employees
- Locomotive and conductor certifications
- Territorial qualifications

The reason cited by carriers in their petition was to cope with potential workforce shortages the railroads may experience during the coronavirus pandemic.

"Petitioners assert that a reduction in availability of employees due to the COVID-19 pandemic will affect railroads' ability to keep freight trains carrying critical goods and materials necessary for the country's welfare operating during this emergency, and that compliance with all Federal railroad safety regulations, with the expected workforce shortage, would significantly hinder railroads' ability to operate," the FRA said in its response granting the waivers.

But thanks in large measure to the railroads' adoption of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) practices, the total employee headcount for Class I freight carriers — including administration/ management, maintenance and transportation crew, as reported by the federal Sur-

face Transportation Board (STB), has been axed by nearly 25,000 people since September 2016, and transportation crew headcounts are down over 18½% since November 2018.

"There is also a concern that the carriers would use the excuse of a 'downturn in business' to artificially create a shortage of manpower to exploit the use of the waivers," Ferguson and Pierce wrote.

Among the most-dangerous aspects of this set of waivers is carriers being permitted to allow employees who are unqualified over the territory and un-certified to operate certain classes of trains as long as Positive Train Control (PTC) technology is present and engaged.

The federally mandated deadline for full PTC implementation is Dec. 31, 2020, and full interoperability among railroads has not been achieved, yet these waivers make the assumption that PTC functionality is sufficient to allow for unqualified crew members to operate over America's railroads.

The FRA waivers of regulations also allow for:

- Verbal quick tie-ups
- Lengthened time intervals for required locomotive maintenance and inspections
 - The movement of defective equipment to the "nearest available" repair location
 - Only 95% operative brakes for trains leaving their initial terminal
 - Trains can travel 1,200 miles without an intermediate Class IA brake inspection
 - Extended haul trains can travel 2,000 miles without an intermediate Class IA brake test
 - The four-hour off-air time is extended to 24 hours, and to 48 hours with FRA permission
 - Transfer test requirements are relaxed
 - The ability to combine two operating trains without additional inspections other than a Class III brake test
 - Relaxation of yard air source testing and calibration requirements, and of requirements for single-car air brake tests
 - Relaxation of required testing and calibration of telemetry equipment @@

News Briefs

POLICE OFFICER SUSPECTS INTERNAL COVERUP BY CP RAIL IN FATAL 2019 B.C. MOUNTAIN CRASH

A police officer probing the death of three Canadian Pacific Railway crewmen killed in a runaway train crash in B.C. in February 2019 alleges he was denied access to key evidence and suspects a "coverup" by the railway. Mark Tataryn was one of three officers with CP Police Service assigned to investigate the derailment of CP Train 301. Tataryn began investigating potential criminal negligence by CP after the parked train suffered air brake failure in the mountains in -28 C temperatures and crashed at the historic Spiral Tunnels near Field, B.C. on February 4, 2019.

"I was ordered to stop investigating," Tataryn told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), saying his superiors prevented him from obtaining key witness accounts. "I would say it was some

type of coverup. I believe it's an injustice. I do believe that there was corporate influence to sway the aspect of the investigation in some capacity." Tataryn said that following the crash, he was instructed by supervisors to keep the investigation narrowly focused on the crew. "I believe that they were looking out for the better interests of the corporation," he said. "I was embarrassed to be a part of this investigation."

The Fifth Estate, Canada's premier investigative documentary program, conducted a seven-month investigation into the accident, talking with witnesses, railroad workers, families and sources within police and government, and uncovered a string of failures in the Train 301 tragedy. The results of their investigation were explored in a documentary titled "Runaway Train," which aired on January 26, 2020.

Locomotive engineer Andrew (Doc) Dockrell, conductor Dylan Paradis and trainee Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer

suffered fatal injuries when their west-bound freight train left the tracks about 1 a.m. just east of Field, B.C., some 124 miles west of Calgary on February 4, 2019. The train, which had three locomotives and 112 cars, left the tracks while crossing a bridge over the Kicking Horse River, plunging some 197 feet to the icy waters below.

(From the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation)

TWO RAILROAD WORKERS RESCUE 5-YEAR-OLD GIRL WHO WANDERED AWAY FROM HOME IN ST. PAUL

A two-person train crew working in St. Paul, Minnesota, rescued a 5-year-old little girl who had wandered away from home in early February. It was an instance where having two people in the cab of the locomotive likely saved a life.

Angie Knutson, a member of BLET Division 369 (Minneapolis, Minn.), is always alert and aware of her surroundings while on duty as a locomotive engineer for the Union Pacific Railroad. Around midnight on Saturday, February 1, she noticed something that didn't look quite right as her train passed through east St. Paul.

"Is that a little kid?" she asked her conductor, Jared Campbell. A split second later they both exclaimed, "It's a little girl!"

Sister Knutson stopped the train while Campbell climbed down to rescue the

child. The 5-year-old girl, Zoey, had gotten lost and was looking for her mother. It was 27 degrees that night and the girl clearly wasn't dressed for the weather, wearing only a light jacket with no hat or gloves. Campbell said she was showing early signs of hypothermia. He brought her into the cab of the locomotive and helped her to warm up while Sister Knutson called first responders.

Police say she had been missing for some time that night. She was eventually reunited with her mother.

While the rail industry pushes to reduce the number of crew members in its pursuit of the all mighty dollar, this story emphasizes Rail Labor's point that technology can never replace the eyes and ears of professional locomotive engineers and conductors working together as a team inside the locomotive cab. The life of a 5-year-old little girl was likely saved that night, thanks to Angie Knutson and Jared Campbell.

(Source: Minneapolis television station KMSP)

CLASS IS EMPLOYED FEWER WORKERS IN JANUARY 2020

Class Is employed 128,311 workers as of mid-January, down 2.41 percent compared with mid-December's level and down 12.45 percent compared with the year-ago employment level, U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) data shows. The STB tracks six workforce cat-

egories, and posted month-to-month decreases. The category of transportation (train and engine) employees was down 4.48 percent from mid-December. On a year-over-year basis, the category of transportation (train and engine) was down 17.33 percent.

(From Progressive Railroading)

RAIL TRAFFIC DOWN IN FIRST EIGHT WEEKS OF 2020 COMPARED TO 2019

For the week ending February 22, 2020, total U.S. weekly rail traffic was 482,690 carloads and intermodal units, down 7.6 percent compared with the same week last year, according to the Association of American Railroads. Total carloads for the week were 232,869 carloads, down 9.3 percent compared with the same week in 2019, while U.S. weekly intermodal volume was 249,821 containers and trailers, down 6 percent compared to 2019.

For the first eight weeks of 2020, U.S. railroads reported cumulative volume of 1,858,165 carloads, down 6.5 percent from the same point last year; and 1,999,804 intermodal units, down 6.2 percent from last year. Total combined U.S. traffic for the first eight weeks of 2020 was 3,857,969 carloads and intermodal units, a decrease of 6.4 percent compared to last year.

(From the Association of American Railroads) @



From left: Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer, Andrew (Doc) Dockrell and Dylan Paradis.

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Photo of the Month: February/March 2020



BNSF INTERMODAL TRAIN: An eastbound Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) intermodal train splits the signals at Sprague, Washington, along the Lakeside Subdivision on May 31, 2019. Photo: by Brother Michael Marra, an Amtrak Auto Train locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 14 in Washington, D.C.



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 January 2020 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; James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship fund event, Los Angeles, Calif.; BLET National Division 2022 convention site visit, Las Vegas.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT E.L. (LEE) PRUITT: National Duties include but not limited to: 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.; James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship fund event, Los Angeles, Calif.

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/Union Track; Pension, STD, 457 plan Trustee; Division, General Committee and SLB monthly Trustee reports; Mtgs. with vendors and financial institutions; Union Track issues, testing, status updates, etc.; James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship fund event, Los Angeles, Calif.; Union Track status call; BLET Auditor training, Independence, Ohio.

VICE PRESIDENT & NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN P. TOLMAN: Assigned to BLET Washington, DC office; General office duties, telephone and correspondence communications, Washington, D.C.; North Dakota State Legislative Board mtg., Bismarck, N.D.; Teamsters Western Regional meetings, Los Angeles, Calif.; The Future of North American Freight Railroad Transportation mtg. w/ TRB, Washington, D.C.; OneRail mtg., Washington, D.C.; Mtg. w/ members of the House T&I Committee and Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Washington, D.C.; Various receptions and office visits with members of Congress and the leadership of both the GOP and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

VICE PRESIDENT MARCUS J. RUEF: Chairman, National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); National Mediation Board (NMB) Advisory Forum-Labor Member; Department Head, BLET Arbitration Department; Assigned to CN-Wisconsin Central, CN-Illinois Central, Indiana Harbor Belt, Metra (Chicago), CP Rail System/US (Soo); Assist GC Semenek w/ Section 6 issues, discipline appeals, and arbitration research, CP, Chicago; NRAB correspondence templates w/ DWD, NRAB, Chicago; Discuss Section 3 funding w/ NMB Chairman Puchala, NRAB, Chicago; CP Section 6 negotiations, Chicago; Assist 3rd Division LM Elvey (BRS) w/ research, NRAB; Work on topical index revisions, NRAB; Assist GC Reynolds w/ discipline appeals, WC, Chicago; Assist GC Semenek w/ Section 6 talks, ISRR, Chicago; NRAB administrative duties, Chicago; Claim review, CP; Assist GC Ball w/ investigation preparation, Tex Mex, Chicago.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE TWOMBLY: Department Head and designated representative of the BLET National Short Line Division (NSLD) and Organizing Department with responsibility for hearings, conferences, appeals, First Division Appeals and all other daily business involving the NSLD assigned railroads in conjunction with Carrier Officers and advancement of BLET organizing strategies and opportunities; NVP assigned to: CN-Grand Trunk Western; Springfield Terminal; Delaware & Hudson;

St. Lawrence & Atlantic; New York Susquehanna & Western; Connecticut Southern; New England Central; Louisville & Indiana; Huron & Eastern; Wheeling & Lake Erie; Tacoma Municipal Belt Line Railroad; National Short Line Division (Local Division 16) railroads; Union Railroad, Belt Railway of Chicago, South Buffalo Railway, Western New York & Pennsylvania and Gary Railway; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; On duty at home office, NVB and NSLB Department Head combined daily responsibilities; NSLD Division 16 monthly mtg. and WNYP claims conference; Springfield Terminal Section 6 negotiations, North Billerica, Mass.; NYS&W Section 6 negotiations, Cooperstown, N.Y.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all BNSF (former ATSF, former C&S, CRI&P, FWD, former STL-SF, BNSF/MRL), Panhandle Northern, Great Western Railway of Colorado; Missouri & North Arkansas, Montana Rail Link, Otter Tail; General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Attend Division 264 mtg. w/ BNSF GC Cunningham, El Paso, Texas; Attend Division 391 mtg. w/ BNSF GC Cunningham, Burlington, Iowa.

VICE PRESIDENT R.C. (RICK) GIBBONS: Assigned to: All Norfolk Southern General Committees (Northern, Eastern and Southern Lines); Chicago, Ft. Wayne & Eastern; Indiana & Ohio (G&W); General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications; Vice President duties; On duty at home office; Mtgs. w/ NS General Chairmen Sturdivant, Dehart and Fannon, regarding various topics, Estero, Fla.

VICE PRESIDENT JAMES P. LOUIS: National Division Department Head, BLET Education & Training Dept.; Department Head of the BLET Internal Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept.; Department Head, BLET Passenger Dept.; Assigned Amtrak; Keolis Commuter Services; Keolis Rail Services of Virginia, LLC; TransitAmerica Services, Inc.; Long Island Rail Road; New York & Atlantic; Metro-North; New Jersey Transit; PATH; SEPTA; Assist Amtrak GC Kenny w/ Keolis contract issues; James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship fund event, Los Angeles, Calif.; BLET National Division 2022 convention site visit, Las Vegas; BLET regional meeting issues and planning, Independence, Ohio; Assist GC McCarthy w/ PATH contract talks, Newark, N.J.; Education & Training Dept. planning and issues.

VICE PRESIDENT MARK L. WALLACE: Assigned to all Union Pacific GCAs (Eastern District, Northern Region (former C&NW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western RR), Central Region, and Southern Region); Utah RR; Longview Portland & Northern and Longview Switching, and Portland Terminal; General office duties, telephone, emails, correspondence, communications, etc.; On duty at home office; UP-BLET mtg., Phoenix, Ariz.; UP-BLET mtg., Chicago, Ill.

VICE PRESIDENT J. ALAN HOLDCRAFT: Assigned to all CSX Transportation GCAs (Eastern Lines, Western Lines, Northern Lines (Bombardier Transportation Services), Conrail Shared Assets/CSX Northern District); KCS-Kansas City Southern/Louisiana & Ark. RR.; KCS-Texas Mexican Railway; KCS-Mid South Rail, South Rail, Gateway Western RR, Illinois Midland (G&W); General office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; Assist GC Driscoll in conference w/ CSX regarding Massena line sale in New York; Assist GC Driscoll in conference w/ CSX regarding Implementing Agreement for employees effected by Massena line sale; Mtg. w/ KCS and GC Spradlin regarding pending arbitration.

PRESIDENT PIERCE MESSAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Now is not the time to quibble over which illness it is that made an employee sick, especially when even getting a COVID-19 test is virtually impossible in many parts of the country. "Sick is sick," and until the nation's rail carriers fairly treat their sick employees, they will continue to come to work, by coercion, eliminating all hope that the healthy employees are being provided with a virus-free workplace.

Railroads must also reconsider their refusals to provide additional paid leave to sick employees so that they can afford to leave the workplace when they are ill. Other transportation companies like J.B. Hunt, whose containers are routinely hauled by the nation's

railroads, have adopted additional paid leave policies for that very reason. Target, one of nation's largest retailers — where the same products that railroads haul are sold to the public — has also adopted additional paid leave policies for its sick employees. Invest in your employees; get the sick people off the property without financial ruin so that the healthy people can get our nation through the pandemic.

The railroad industry must also redouble its efforts to provide all operating crews with a clean and sanitized workplace. Redouble your efforts to provide safe and sanitized transportation to and from trains, as well as ensuring that the lodging facilities provided by rail carriers have improved their sanitation. Requiring

healthy crews to board locomotive cabs that could have been occupied for 12 hours by someone ill with COVID-19, with no tools to clean that cab, is completely irresponsible. Requiring 4 or more crew members to share transportation in a minivan is equally irresponsible, as is forcing crew members to sit in their away from home terminals in questionable hotels with no food available for way longer than their needed legal rest. Conditions are so deplorable in some cases that we are approaching the point of needing hazard pay for those who must work in them.

Ignoring these issues has created a workplace environment that is completely contrary to the carriers' obligation to their employees' health and safety.

The nation's rail carriers must take the actions noted here immediately if they expect to meet the needs of our great nation. The hard-working operating crew members and their unions stand ready to do their part in that effort; it's time for the railroads to step up to the plate and do their part.

This is a difficult time, but I have never been more proud of our membership and our Union. Our members are on the front lines, day in and day out, to keep America stocked with the necessities of life. Their dedication in the face of this rapidly changing situation can only be described as heroic, and I am honored to serve as their National President.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT