

Journal

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN

VOLUME 114 | No. 3 | FALL 2011

WWW.BLE-T.ORG

War *on* Workers

BLET fights for members rights PG 7

And

The hidden benefit of Wisconsin's recall elections

**2012
Regional
Meetings**
Something
for everyone
PG 5



Advisory Board Profiles

**Introducing Vice Presidents
Michael D. Priester
and Gil L. Gore**



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BLET AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIPS

Awards total \$9,000 in 2011

FROM THE VAULT

Photo exhibit to honor
workers and families



BLET President's Message

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Setting the stage for 2012

Election Night 2011 saw significant victories for working people in America. A huge majority of Ohio voters rebuked Governor John Kasich and the Ohio Legislature by repealing a law that threatened to rob police, firefighters and teachers of their right to collective bargaining. And voters in Maine thwarted a legislative effort to end their ability to register and vote on Election Day — a right they have enjoyed for over four decades.

More recently, a drive to recall anti-worker Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has begun. Supporters of the recall movement need to obtain 540,000 signatures over a 60-day period, and got off to an auspicious start by collection 50,000 in just the first two days.

While these developments are significant, they represent few, albeit important, victories in the War on Workers that continues to rage throughout the nation. Many other states have taken steps to rob workers of their rights in recent years, and the citizens of those states do not enjoy the right to repeal those laws or recall the politicians who imposed them.

Closer to home, anti-worker Congressmen — led by Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina and Representatives Steve King of Iowa and John Mica of Florida — have specifically targeted the rights of railroad workers by introducing legislation that would



Union chiefs: IBT General President Jim Hoffa and BLET National President Dennis Pierce continue the fight for workers' rights.

amend the Railway Labor Act to impose unfair representation election rules and outlaw union shop agreements. At press time, the BLET also is facing the specter of Congressional action to impose the recommendations of Presidential Emergency Board No. 243, and the possibility that these anti-union provisions may be added as amendments to such legislation.

Meanwhile, there is growing discontent over Washington's inability or unwillingness to take any meaningful action to stimulate a general economy that continues to sputter. Initially a small protest of Wall Street banks, the "Occupy" movement has grown in leaps and bounds over the past month, branching out to scores of large and small cities across the nation. Now this movement — demonstrating opposition to the 1% of Americans who wield a disproportionate share of economic and political power — has begun to link up with the largest unions in the coun-

try in joint protests.

A comparison to the Great Depression identifies some similarities between what is happening today and the reaction of workers in the early 1930s. In 1932, a Bonus Army of 17,000 unemployed World War I veterans and 26,000 family members and supporters set up an encampment in Washington to demand immediate payment of service bonuses they were entitled to under federal law.

President Herbert Hoover ordered the army to clear the veterans' campsite, which the protesters had nicknamed "Hooverville." General Douglas MacArthur commanded the infantry and cavalry forces, supported by six tanks, sent to evict the protesters. The Bonus Army marchers and their families were driven out, and their shelters and belongings burned. Shots were fired during the dismantling of the campsite, and two veterans were wounded and later died.

I was reminded of Hooverville when I visited the "Occu-

py DC" encampment during the PEB hearings in October. While many political pundits portray the "Occupy" movement as little more than 21st Century hippies and malcontents, I can tell you first-hand that a significant portion of the protesters are unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and many American flags were on display at the site.

The growing alliance between organized labor and the "Occupy" movement may foreshadow another similarity between the Great Depression era and the present. In 1930 only 7.4% of the U.S. workforce belonged to a union. Spurred on by legendary labor battles such as the Toledo Auto-Lite strike, the Minneapolis Teamsters' strike, and the San Francisco Longshoremen and general strike — along with the formation of the National Unemployed Council — that percentage more than doubled, to 16.6%, in just five years.

Today, private sector union membership is back down to single digits. Public sector union membership in 2010 was 11.4% of the workforce, which is why they have been singled out by anti-worker politicians and Corporate America, who funds their election campaigns. The ties between America's unions and the "Occupy" movement could lead to a revival in organizing drives and strengthen the one movement dedicated to improving wages, benefits and working conditions for

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»» ON THE COVER: FALL COLORS IN OHIO: LOCOMOTIVE 9344 APPROACHING MILEPOST 613 ALONG NORFOLK SOUTHERN'S COLUMBUS DISTRICT NEAR LUCASVILLE, OHIO, ON OCTOBER 8, 2011. (photo: Geoff Brozny)



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The Advisory Board at BLET National Division headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio, September 14, 2011.



BLET Advisory Board discusses negotiations at September meetings


In mid-September, members of the BLET's Advisory Board held several days of meetings at BLET headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio. On September 14, they took time out of their busy agenda for this group photograph on the stairs leading to the Mezzanine level inside the BLET's Standard Building.

The Board discussed numerous issues of importance to BLET members, primarily the health and welfare aspect of national contract negotiations. They

also discussed contingency plans for a possible national strike, which would have taken place on October 6, 2011, had President Barack Obama not stepped in and appointed Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) 243.

The Board meets on a regular basis throughout the year at locations that are as central and convenient as possible, given the nationwide scope of the Organization. The Board will also convene for conference calls on an as-needed basis, primarily to discuss late-

breaking events and issues.

The Advisory Board is composed of the 11 highest-ranking elected officers in the Organization, and is the chief policy making body of the BLET between conventions. The Board has the authority to make decisions and perform acts and duties on behalf of the National Division that are not in conflict with or otherwise provided for in the IBT Constitution, the Rail Conference Bylaws, or the BLET Bylaws. 

2012 regional meetings offer something for everyone

BLET members looking to combine educational opportunities with family fun should consider attending one of the organization's four regional meetings in 2012.

These multi-day meetings combine the best of the Brotherhood — networking, education and training, and family fun — all in one place. The meetings provide an excellent opportunity for members to reminisce with old acquaintances, make new friends, remember those who cannot be with us, and join together in a way that would make our forefathers proud.

See you in 2012! 🎉



Epcot Center: BLET members can ride the famous Disney monorail to Spaceship Earth at Walt Disney World during the 2012 Southeastern Meeting Association.

Orlando, Fla.

JUNE 24-29, 2012

85th annual SMA

Walt Disney World
Arrangements Chairman Earl Karper (Division 35) is hosting the 2012 SMA at the Disney Coronado Springs Hotel (1000 West Buena Vista Drive, Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830, phone: (407) 939-1000). Visit www.sma2012.com for details. Contact Brother Karper: ekarper@sma2012.com.



Photos: (top and bottom) courtesy Walt Schmidt

Billings, Mont.

JULY 29-AUGUST 1, 2012

72nd annual IWC

Crown Plaza Hotel
Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Craig Gilchrist (Montana State Legislative Board Chairman, BLET Division 298) and Co-Chair D.B. Kenner (Division 195). At the Crown Plaza Billings (27 North 27th St., Billings, Mont. 59101, phone: (406) 252-7400). Contact Brother Gilchrist: blecag@nemontel.net; or Brother Kenner: kennerd@yahoo.com.



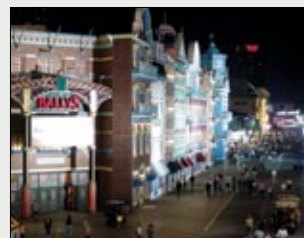
Photos: courtesy Billings Chamber of Commerce/Convention & Visitors Bureau

Atlantic City, N.J.

AUGUST 19-24, 2012

74th annual EUMA

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Matt Kronyak (New Jersey State Legislative Board Chairman and Division 235 Local Chairman), the 2012 EUMA will be at Bally's Atlantic City (1900 Pacific Ave., Atlantic City, NJ 08401, phone: (800) 345-7253, www.ballysac.com). Contact Brother Kronyak: mcmkronyak@aol.com or (201) 978-6436.



Photos: courtesy Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Bureau

Galveston, Texas

SEPTEMBER 9-13, 2012

77th annual SWCM

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Jack Sweeny, Division 776 Local Chairman), the 2012 SWCM will be at the Moody Gardens Hotel (Seven Hope Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77554, phone: (888) 388-8484, www.moodygardenshotel.com). Contact Brother Sweeny: jrsweeny@coastal-link.net.



Photos: courtesy Galveston Island Convention & Visitors Bureau

BLET Local Chairman organizes Charlotte Labor Day parade

On Labor Day 2011, BLET Brother Ben Lee, Local Chairman of BLET Division 166 (Charlotte, N.C.), continued his tradition of organizing his city's annual Labor Day parade.

It's a tough job. Charlotte has the reputation of being one of the more conservative cities in the United States, if not downright anti-union.

Regardless, Brother Lee has volunteered to serve as Parade Chairman for the past several years. In that capacity, he helps organize the event in conjunction with the Charlotte Labor Day Parade Committee and the Southern Piedmont Cen-



Union Proud: BLET Division 166 Local Chairman Ben Lee (left) and participants in Charlotte's 2011 Labor Day parade.

tral Labor Council.

This year, the parade honored the accomplishments of organized labor in the United States and in the Charlotte area. It featured local labor union floats, vehicles, and marchers.

The parade also featured political candidates, bands, car clubs, beauty queens, and other community groups.

The parade was held September 5th at 11 a.m.

Brother Lee said: "Always

remember those who fought, suffered, and died for our worker rights, including the 40 hour week, the weekends, retirement, and healthcare. Please never take it for granted."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked Brother Lee for being involved in his community and said, "Brother Lee should be commended for his efforts on behalf of all working Americans, and for his efforts on behalf of our proud Brotherhood."

Anyone wishing to participate in the 2012 parade should contact Brother Lee, (704) 877-6916 or Laborparade@aol.com. ☺

Building bridges of solidarity

At their summer picnic in July, members of BLET Division 6 in Boone, Iowa, held a fundraiser for fellow railroader and Union Pacific conductor Chuck Spangler.

Spangler, 41, lost his right arm in an accident at the UP yard in Boone on May 23. According to Division 6 Secretary-Treasurer Janet Schultz, the members of Division 6 voted to "bump it up a notch" to try to help Spangler and his family, including his wife and five children (four of whom are under the age of 16).

They invited all railroad employees in their area to the event, including members of UTU Local 306 where Spangler holds membership. Additional BLET Divisions in the area also pitched in, including Division 125 (Clinton, Iowa), Division 656 (Mason City, Iowa), and Division 778 (Des Moines, Iowa).

In all, over 125 members, spouses, children and retirees attended the fundraiser. Through the combined efforts of all involved, the BLET Divisions raised



Building bridges of solidarity: BLET Division 6 Secretary-Treasurer Janet Schultz; RCX van driver Mike Hamner; UTU Local 306 member Chuck Spangler; and BLET Division 6 member Wes Forrest.

several thousand dollars for the Spangler family.

They also recognized BLET Division 6 conductor Wesley A. Forrest and RCX van driver Mike Hamner with plaques of appreciation. Sister Schultz said: "These two guys were on the scene when the accident happened. They were able to use life-saving techniques that doctors said

saved Chuck's life."

Sister Schultz said their goal was to help the Spangler family build a bridge to the next chapter of their lives. At the same time, the members of Division 6 were also successful in building a bridge of solidarity between the BLET and their fellow Brothers and Sisters in other Rail Labor unions. ☺

WAR ON WORKERS UPDATE



BLET continues fight to end War on Workers

Throughout the summer months, BLET members continued the fight to end the War on Workers in the United States.

The most notable event came in early August when BLET members attending the Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) annual convention in Long Island participated in a rally at MacArthur Airport in Long Island, N.Y.

They accepted a challenge from Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), who was the keynote speaker at the EUMA on August 3. At the time, Republican leaders in the House of Representatives were holding hostage a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill as part of the ongoing War on Workers.

The Republicans wanted to force anti-union language into a new FAA reauthorization bill.

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WAR ON WORKERS UPDATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

The new language would have gutted National Mediation Board (NMB) rules governing representation elections, making it unfair and more difficult for unions to organize non-union railroads and airlines.

At the same time, the failure to fund FAA reauthorization caused the shutdown of numerous major airport construction projects across the country and forced 4,000 FAA workers onto the streets without a paycheck.

Congresswoman McCarthy urged BLET members to attend a rally on August 4 to protest the Republican attack on labor, which was hosted by Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) and Tim Bishop (D-NY).

Dozens of BLET members accepted the challenge and made an impressive appearance at the rally. Many of the volunteers were from BLET Division 269 in Long Island, who brought along their spouses, children and other family members to participate in the rally. Other volunteers were BLET members from all across the country who happened to be in Long Island for the EUMA.

BLET First Vice President Lee Pruitt lead the delegation and served as the group's

spokesman. The protest received wide attention by the New York media and Brother Pruitt granted interviews with several newspapers and television stations.

Just days after the rally, Republicans in Washington came to their senses and passed FAA reauthorization language that put workers back on the job and left the NMB's organizing rules intact, thus concluding another battle in the War on Workers. However, the damage had already been done. In addition to 4,000 FAA workers not getting paychecks, the Federal government lost \$200 million in tax revenue; the FAA could not collect taxes on ticket sales because its operating authority had expired.

"This was a small victory for labor in the larger battle to end the War on Workers, but it was very costly for workers and the government," First Vice President Pruitt said. "We are now getting word from Washington that Republicans are up to their old tricks and are again attempting to tamper with the NMB's organizing rules to tilt the scales against labor. This war isn't over and we still have a lot of work ahead of us."



Fast Facts

2011 Third Quarter Net Income

BNSF

Now a privately held company, BNSF does not report earnings as other railroads. Information should be available after press date.

CN

Net income: \$659 million
Operating income: \$938 million (Canadian dollars)
Operating ratio: 59.3 percent

Canadian Pacific

Net income: \$186.8 million
Operating income: \$324.6 million
Operating ratio: 75.8 percent

CSX

Net income: \$464 million
Operating income: \$878 million
Operating ratio: 70.4 percent

Norfolk Southern

Net income: \$554 million
Operating income: \$938 million
Operating ratio: 67.5 percent

Union Pacific

Net income: \$904 million
Operating income: \$1.6 billion
Operating ratio: 69.1 percent

Kansas City Southern

Net income: \$100 million
Operating income: \$182 million
Operating ratio: 66.6 percent*
*rises to 71.3 percent when adjusted for hurricane-related impact

WAR ON WORKERS UPDATE

Wisconsin's recall elections help bring workers together



The Epicenter: Pro-labor protestors pack the state capitol in Madison, Wisc., where the War on Workers ignited in February 2011.



BY PAUL AIRD
1ST VICE
CHAIRMAN
WISCONSIN SLB

What really is the result of what has happened here in Wisconsin? From the cold snowy days of February to the hot Midwest summer, an ideological struggle has taken place not only in Wisconsin, but across this nation. The results of the historic recall elections here may not have produced the desired results, but what I have seen in the last few months has shown me that winning Republican seats in the state senate may not have been the victory we as labor members were ultimately looking for.

The first victory achieved here was that the recall election


even happened! The Middle Class as we know it has been under direct assault by extreme ideology. The fact that the people of Wisconsin banded together to force these recall elections may be the key to winning the battles in the future.

The second victory has been won in Wisconsin's 18th and 32nd Senate districts where Democratic challengers won seats in what were traditionally considered Republican strongholds. This, to me, shows that the "Middle Class message" is being heard and the people are becoming more involved in standing up for their rights.

I still find it amazing the emotions of the protests held in our capitol... who would have thought that unions, with their wide range of opinions, could stand together shoulder

to shoulder with not only each other but also with people from all walks of life.

President Lincoln stated 150 years ago that a nation divided against itself cannot stand. In the same fashion, we too must work to stop those who would divide us against ourselves. The armies of the Civil War reconciled their differences with cannon and bullets. We must arm ourselves with education and a fiery passion to ensure the future generation with the same rights and privileges our forefathers gave to us.

This cannot be accomplished by a small band of officers or leaders in our union. The battle must be fought by every member every day. The survival of our way of life depends on it. Together we can win! 

letters to the editor

Dear BLET:

Thank you for having short term disability coverage in place as it saved me and my wife from dipping into our savings account to cover home expenses. I am disabled and retired now. My short term disability check came every week and the people at the insurance company helped my wife alot last year when I was in the intensive care unit for over two months.

Many thanks to the BLET for this great program.

Sincerely,
William M. Smith
Retired Member
BLET Division 216
Tampa, Fla.

Brother Pierce:

Thank you for holding our ground in this contract dispute. All of our members in Division 202 are engaged

We trust and support your leadership, and that you can always count on us... and what we stand for.

Solidarity Always From All
Members of Division 202,

Wally Czerwinski
BLET Minnesota
Mobilization Coordinator
Legislative Representative
BLET Division 202
Dilworth, Minn.

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS

The Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal welcomes Letters to the Editor. Please include your name, address, BLET Division number, email address, and/or phone number on any submission. We reserve the right to edit your submission for grammar, punctuation, content and space considerations.

Address letters to:

Editor, Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal,
1370 Ontario St., Mezzanine,
Cleveland, OH 44113-1702.
Or email: Bentley@ble-t.org



BLET *First Vice President's Message*

BY E. LEE PRUITT, BLET FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

The power of unionism

Throughout 2011, I once again experienced first-hand the strength of solidarity and the power of unionism. The primary lesson that was reaffirmed, which I hope to share with you in this message, we are all stronger together as a unified group than we are as individuals.

As labor unions, we must work together in order to survive together. It brings to mind the words of John Steinbeck in his groundbreaking novel, "The Grapes of Wrath." In writing about the struggles of migrant farm workers to unionize against the powerful corporate farmers in California, Steinbeck referenced a parable from the Bible when he wrote:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up. Though one may be overpowered by another, two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

In other words, we are stronger when we work together as a group than we are as lone individuals. To prove that point, one needs to look no further than the economic statistics that show how the average union worker has higher pay and better benefits than non-union workers.



Stop the War on Workers: U.S. Rep. Tim Bishop (D-NY) thanks BLET First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt for the BLET's support at a pro-worker rally at MacArthur Airport in Long Island, N.Y.

Additionally, I saw first-hand the pride and power of unionism earlier this year. In February, President Pierce and I had the privilege of joining many BLET members and thousands of other union workers at a rally in Ohio to protest Senate Bill 5. The sight of so many workers from so many different unions and so many different backgrounds was an incredible sight to behold, and one that I will never forget.

Senate Bill 5 was a hateful, anti-union measure that would have stripped Ohio's 360,000 public sector union workers of the right to bargain collectively. The momentum of that early March rally carried our union Brothers and Sisters all the way through November,

when SB 5 was overturned at the ballot box.

One union could not have gotten the job done alone. It took the power of unionism and the collective voice of workers to overcome the attack against them.

In July, we again put the power of unionism into action. At the Eastern Union Meeting Association annual convention in early August, we were honored to hear a speech from Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY). She challenged BLET members to speak out against the political games in Washington. At the time, the Federal Aviation Administration was in the midst of a national shutdown because of partisan gridlock in Washington, D.C.

I was more than proud when dozens of BLET members and their families joined with representatives from other unions to protest at Long Island's MacArthur Airport. Thanks to the power of unionism, the stalemate in Washington ended and FAA reauthorization legislation was passed within a matter of hours.

As with our fight against Ohio Senate Bill 5, we would not have been successful in our NMB battle had it not been for the power of many unions working together. A solitary union struggling alone likely would not have gotten the job done. As Steinbeck wrote, "woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up." ●



BLET National Secretary-Treasurer's Message

BY WILLIAM C. WALPERT, BLET NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mobilizing for strength

In a 2007 Briefing Paper for the Economic Policy Institute, a non-profit, nonpartisan think tank, Richard Freeman reviewed what opinion surveys tell us about what workers want in the form of representation. The findings are extraordinary — and contrary to what you read and hear in the mainstream media.

Among the key findings was that workers want unions more than ever before. In fact, the surveys indicated that a majority of workers would vote for union representation, if they could. In the 1980s, only 30 percent of U.S. workers would vote for a union; in the 1990s, that number was up to nearly 40 percent, and now the latest numbers indicate that the percentage is over 50 percent.

These numbers go a long way in explaining why anti-union ideologues, led by Rep. John Mica (R-Fla.), are pushing to reverse the recent National Mediation Board rule change, allowing for every vote cast in union representation elections as being the only votes counted. Previously, the rule mandated that those who did not vote in an election counted as a “no” vote. The new rule makes union representation voting fair and democratic — something Mica and his cronies oppose when it comes to union elections.

It's not just unions that are under attack from Republican political extremists. Nationwide, several states have ad-



opted prohibitively strict voter identification laws. Extremist politicians extol the virtue of these laws by claiming they ensure that only American citizens vote in our elections. But in reality, they are overly strict and target the old, the young, minorities, and females — in other words, those voters who would normally support Democrats. As Democrats who tend to support union issues more often than Republicans, it is just another attack in the War on Workers.

Why is it that a United States Congressman like John Mica, who sits in the bastion of American democracy, would even consider curtailing unionism? The answer is relatively simple: the power of numbers. When a group of people are united in a common cause, speaking with one loud and clear voice, their power cannot be denied.

The power and voice of the union cannot be more exemplified than our mobilization process. The textbook defini-

tion of mobilization is “the grassroots involvement of the membership.” That is exactly what we are doing with our revitalized mobilization process — involving the membership at every level of the organization. Thanks to the ongoing commitment of the National Division Executive Committee and Advisory Board, the General Chairmen and State Legislative Board Chairmen, we are re-energizing the mobilization concept.

The BLET National Division is meticulously rebuilding and refocusing our mobilization networks. By doing so, we will be able to carry messages throughout the country in record time. We will be able to use our most powerful tool, the voice and strength of a united membership, to send messages to all levels of government, to the Congress, to the railroads—and to the general public — that we are a force with which to

be reckoned.

Our recharged mobilization network enjoyed several victories throughout 2011. We mobilized to help defeat anti-Amtrak legislation that was proposed in Congress. We mobilized to secure impressively high levels of BLET member participation in various get out the vote efforts. And we will mobilize again in the weeks and months to come as our Brotherhood faces many challenges in today's challenging political climate.

As BLET National President Dennis Pierce has said, unionism is not a spectator sport. The BLET National Division cannot do it alone. Your General Chairman cannot do it alone. Your State Legislative Board Chairman cannot do it alone. Your participation is a necessary component of our Organization's success. One of the easiest and best ways you can get involved and get into the game is by participating in the mobilization process.

Looking ahead to next year, I have been encouraged by the participation and interest we've seen at mobilization workshops throughout the year, and the success we've had in our mobilization campaigns this year. Members have welcomed the return of mobilization with open arms and we hope it will continue growing to even higher levels in 2012 and beyond. 🇺🇸





Guest Columnists

BY JAMES P. HOFFA, TEAMSTERS GENERAL PRESIDENT
& JOHN MURPHY, DIRECTOR, TEAMSTERS RAIL CONFERENCE

Protecting our jobs and the Middle Class

I want to congratulate all of the delegates from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) that were able to attend our Convention in June. We could feel the might of Teamster Rail Power reverberate in the hall every day.

Along with your brothers and sisters in the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED), your presence at the Convention helped keep the union's focus on supporting the Obama administration's priority of building a high-speed rail system in America and updating existing rail lines so that they will function for years to come. The administration understands that necessary maintenance work and the crews to perform the work were neglected prior to 2008.

Unfortunately, as soon as the administration announced their support for high-speed rail and track repairs, the Republican party went on the attack. State governors have even tried to return funds designated for high-speed rail to the government and some are trying

to utilize the funds for other projects in their states.

Throughout our union we have sounded a rallying cry to combat corporate-owned politicians and others who do not honor the values of middle class families. The cuts to high-speed rail funding and the slashing of funds that are meant to upgrade existing rail lines are something we cannot and should not tolerate.

In a sign of solidarity, Convention delegates overwhelmingly passed resolutions in support of high-speed rail, funding for Amtrak, rail coalition bargaining and transportation safety. As Teamsters, we know that these issues are important to our brothers and sisters working on rail lines, but we also know that having this work performed by trained, unionized employees is our highest priority.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA
TEAMSTERS GENERAL
PRESIDENT

About the Authors:



James P. Hoffa grew up on picket lines and in union meetings. He is the only son of James R. Hoffa, former General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. On his 18th birthday, Hoffa received his own union card and was sworn in by his father. Prior to becoming Administrative Assistant to Michigan Joint Council 43, Hoffa was a labor lawyer in Detroit for 25 years.



John Murphy has been an Eastern Region Vice President since 1998. He spearheaded merger negotiations with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees and now serves as Director of the Rail Conference. Murphy has also been the Secretary-Treasurer of Local 122 in Boston since 1980.

Uniting Rail Labor for a strong contract

As your President, Dennis Pierce recently said that we can't and won't accept substandard contracts. Fighting for what is best for our members and rejecting an employer's deficient deals is one of the mainstays of any strong labor union. I was proud to see BLET and BMWED delegates at our Convention receive the overwhelming support from all of the delegates for our joint battle with some of the most profitable companies in America, namely the freight rail companies.

"Teamsters Rail Power" and "We Support High-Speed Rail and Amtrak" signs were held high during our Convention by the thousands who participated. This was another indication of the solidarity that all Teamsters feel with their locomo-

tive engineer and trainmen brothers and sisters. The Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition has taken the right route by rejecting the carriers' plan to force a contract on us that was riddled with concessionary language. The reason the RLBC was formed was to unite rail labor unions so that the carriers would have a difficult time negotiating contracts that were unfair. Now, in the latest round of bargaining, the concessionary deal struck with a union that is not part of our coalition proves the point that the railroads always look for the weakest link in labor to force a pattern contract on. We say no way! United and strong we will get a good contract!

The advantage we have is that we remain united within the Teamsters Rail Conference along with the nine other rail unions who are in this fight to win.

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

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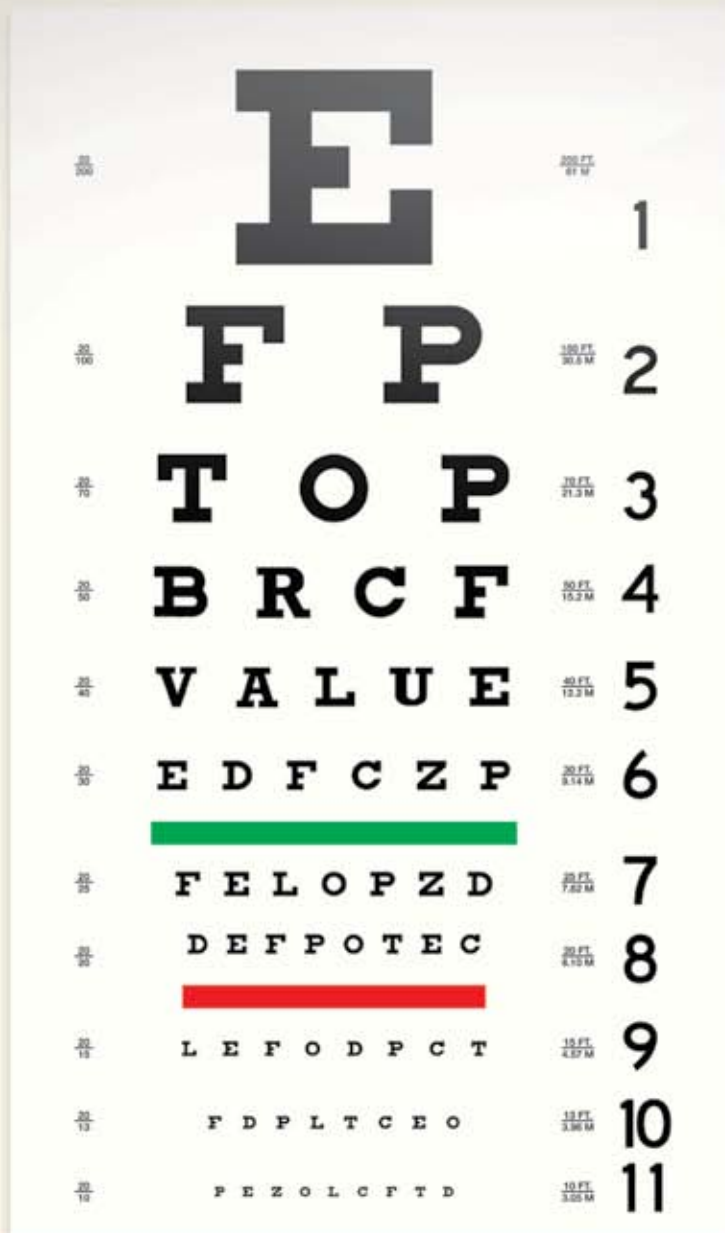
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Honoring rail workers and families

BLET research helps major railroad photography exhibition planned for Chicago in 2013

Jack Delano (1914-1997), a well-known photographer for the Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information during World War II, recorded traditional railroad scenes while documenting in pictures the importance of the railroad industry during wartime. His work helped capture the contributions made by railroaders and their families to the war effort on the home front with imagery that concentrated on the people who did the work of railroading.

While Delano's photographs are seen frequently, the railroad workers and their families have not been recognized. That will be the contribution of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art (www.railphoto-art.org) — identifying the people and telling their stories and the stories of their families for a major exhibition in Chicago in 2013.

Many of Delano's photographs feature past members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the BLET has helped the Center by researching past members featured in Delano's photographs.

As the Center moves toward the exhibition, it is sharing its research, such as details about Jamie W. Edwards and George Burton of the Santa Fe (right), and Joseph F. Stites of the Indiana Harbor Belt (above).

J.W. Edwards (1888-1973) joined BLE Division 458 (Chicago, Ill.) on March 5, 1927, while Burton (1890-1979) was



CLASSIC RAILROAD PORTRAITS

Above: Indiana Harbor Belt Engineer Joseph Stites of BLET Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.) in the cab of his locomotive in IHB's Norpaul Yard (January, 1943).

Right: Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (ATSF) Engineer Jamie W. Edwards of BLET Division 458 (Chicago) and conductor George E. Burton compare time before pulling out of Corwith Yard in Chicago (March, 1943). Edwards and Burton were neighbors who lived across the street from one another in Chillicothe, Ill.

a member of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen.

Edwards and Burton, who lived across the street from each other in Chillicothe, Ill., then a division headquarters and busy railroad town where many families had ties to the railroad. Burton and Edwards, when photographed, and many others, ran trains between Chicago and Chillicothe. After 1991, when trains ran through Chillicothe and the terminal moved to Fort Madison, Iowa, the city declined as a railroad center and some families moved to be closer to their jobs. It's a typical story in the railroad industry.

For the Edwards family, the Delano photo is a cherished possession.

"I know that picture well. I saw it at my grandfather's house. I had it enlarged and gave it to my Dad. It was one of his most cherished possessions. I have the photo today," said John Edwards, grandson of Jamie W. Edwards, the engineer in the 1943 photo.


Jamie's son and grandson followed in his footsteps. His son James (1922-2010) was a switchman-conductor while his grandson, John, was a conductor for 40 years and retired as a UTU member on October 5, 2011.

Joseph Stites joined BLE Division 682 (Hammond, Ind.) on December 3, 1920. He worked out of the Indiana Harbor Belt's Norpaul Yard. He was the only member of his family with a railroad career.

Stites' grandson, Arlie Marx, still proudly has his grandfather's Time Books.

"The earliest run in those was from 1920. He was a fireman for the New York Central," Marx said. "I didn't pin down when he started with the Indiana Harbor Belt. His last entry was August 1959, which should be around his retirement date."

It is the Center's goal to tell more about the human side of railroading with the stories of the people in Delano's photos. The exhibition will be an important record of railroading and its people in Chicago, the railroad center of the U.S.

More photos and stories will be available in upcoming issues of the Journal. 



Michael D. Priester
National Vice President





Mike Priester

Perseverance helps in overcoming many obstacles

Michael D. Priester has faced many difficult challenges over the years, both personally and professionally. With a lot of perseverance and the unfailing help of his family, Brother Priester has overcome them to rise to the position of National Vice President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Perseverance is a word Vice President Priester uses quite frequently when talking about himself and his 40-plus years in the railroad industry.

As a young man, Priester spent nearly every waking hour either in school or working for the railroad. For four and a half years he held a regular position on a nighttime road switch job out of Terre Haute, Ind., for the Milwaukee Road (more formally known as the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad). He hired out on June 6, 1968. And during the day, he was a full-time college student at Indiana State University.

"It was four and a half years confined to little more than work and school," Brother Priester said. "But I was able to pull through thanks to one of my strongest attributes — perseverance."

He graduated with a double major in Criminology and Sociology, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in August of 1974.

In January of 1972, he earned promotion to locomotive engineer and joined BLET Division 754 (Terre Haute, Ind.). He began serving as Local Chairman of Division 754 in 1979.

"When it comes to a good debate or a good argument, there's something in me that gets energized," Brother Priester said. "I put forth what I believe are the absolute best arguments and seek the best solutions for our members."

Through hard work and perseverance, Brother Priester has helped countless engineers over the years. He served as Local Chairman for 20 years before becoming General Chairman of the CP Rail System (U.S.) General Committee of Adjustment in 1999. He also served as first, second and third vice chairman prior to his election as General Chairman. Today, he continues helping even more today as a National Vice President. He rose to the office of National Vice President on January 1, 2011.

But these professional challenges were nothing com-

pared to what he and his wife Debbie faced in their personal lives. In 1997, their only son, Michael, was killed by an underage drunk driver. Mike was only 22 years old at the time, just 18 days from his 23rd birthday. He was struck down in front of his girlfriend just shortly after graduating from Indiana State University.

But Brother Priester persevered. He and Debbie still had their daughter Shannon and took heart in Mike's enduring legacy.

"He was an organ donor," Brother Priester said. "A woman in Indiana received her second donor heart from Michael. His kidneys and one lung were donated to three other people in Indiana."

Brother Priester stands firmly behind the idea of organ donation and encourages all BLET Brothers and Sisters to become organ donors.

"In my family we are all organ donors," Brother Priester said. "Our organs are something we can't take with us, and it's a wonderful thing if they can be used to save another life or lives."


Twelve years later, Mike was smiling down on his dad. An avid golfer,

Brother Priester was enjoying a round with Indiana State Legislative Board Chairman Bill Verdeyen. On what would have been Mike's 35th birthday, Brother Priester had the rare good luck to hit a hole in one on a 140-year, par 3.

Brother Priester and Debbie will celebrate 40 years of marriage on June 10, 2012. They recently relocated to Henderson, Nevada, to be closer to their daughter Shannon, but also to allow Brother Priester to be closer to his BLET assignments.

As National Vice President, he is assigned to the BNSF Railway as well as numerous short lines, including the Montana Rail Link, Panhandle Northern, Great Western, Austin Western, and Missouri & Northern Arkansas railroads.

Given these assignments, Vice President Priester believes that organizing short lines and negotiating good contracts will be a major challenge for the Brotherhood.

"It is difficult and expensive, but bringing more Brothers and Sisters into our Brotherhood can only make us stronger and a more formidable challenge to the 21st Century robber barons of the railroad industry," he said. 

MICHAEL D. PRIESTER BIO

Title: National Vice President

Railroad: CP Rail System/U.S. (former Milwaukee Road)

Member: Division 754 (Elkhart, Ind.)

Background: Hired out on June 6, 1968. Earned promotion to locomotive engineer in January of 1972.

Union history: Vice Local Chairman and Local Chairman of Division 754; General Chairman, CP Rail System/U.S.; Elected National Vice President by acclamation in October of 2010.

Personal: A 1974 graduate of Indiana State University, double major in Criminology and Sociology. Grew up not far from South Bend, IN and is a life-long fan of the Notre Dame basketball and football programs.

Gil L. Gore
National Vice President





Gil Gore

The importance of mentoring our Brotherhood's next generation

What started out as a curiosity in the late 1970s regarding what the Brotherhood was all about has turned into a life's passion for Gil Gore.

His passion to represent BLET members began when Frank Meyer, then-Local Chairman of Division 193 (Gretna, La.), found out that Gore had a good heart — and could type 40 words per minute.

Brother Meyers, along with Vince Pizzolato, former Division 193 Legislative Representative and Louisiana State Legislative Board Chairman, served as early mentors for Brother Gore.

“They planted a seed that has been watered by many people along my career including the former General Chairmen under which I served on our Committee, Morris Royal Sr., Morris Royal Jr., and Bill Slone,” Gore said. “While we did not always agree, these Brothers and hundreds like them such as Brothers Pierce and Pruitt are responsible for watering and fertilizing what started out as a seed that later grew into a tall stout redwood.”

According to Brother Gore, mentoring — an appreciation of our past while cultivating our future — is the most important thing the senior members and leaders of our organization can do to protect our heritage and our future.

“Anything I have ever accomplished in this business emanates from the deep roots tended and nurtured by those who came before me,” Brother Gore said. “Continuing that process is the most important responsibility we as union leaders have, in my humble opinion. The future of our members depends solely on our ability to cultivate the stout redwoods of the future.”

Brother Gore graduated from Weatherford High School in 1967. He was selected to play in the Texas High School Coaches Association's All Start Game in San Antonio in the summer of 1967. He earned a football scholarship to attend Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, where he received various football honors. He graduated from HPU in 1972 with a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in accounting with a minor in government, along with a teaching certificate for the State of Texas.

He hired out with the Texas & Pacific Railroad in New Orleans in 1973. He joined the Brotherhood in 1974 and

was elected Local Chairman of Division 193 (Gretna, La.) in 1980. His toughness in dealing with the carrier led to many successes for BLET members, and as a result, he was reelected Local Chairman by acclamation numerous times over the next 20 years.

In addition to his Local Chairman duties, Brother Gil

was elected First Vice General Chairman of the BLET UP Southern Region GCA in 1986 serving through 1998. In 2000, Brother Gore was elected General Chairman of the BLET UP Southern Region GCA, serving in that capacity until his elevation to National Vice President in December of 2009.

Throughout his career, Brother Gore has participated in every facet of membership representation including arbitration involving discipline, claims, safety and regulatory disputes.

Today as a National Vice President of the BLET, Gore attributes his skills as a union officer to those who came before him. Today, Gore is working to pass his knowledge on to those in the younger generation who one day will fill his shoes.

“I am trying to pay back the mentoring I received in the past,” Gore said. “Mentoring the next generation is what this organization is all about. It's what our members need to protect their future.”

As passionate as he is about the Brotherhood, Brother Gore's true love is with his family.

“My passion and dedication for our Brotherhood is exceeded only by my dedication to my loving family,” he said. “They are the very reasons that I live.”

Brother Gore is currently married to his lovely wife of 31 years, Denise. They currently reside in Harvey, La., and are expecting their first grandchild in April of 2012. Brother Gil is the proud father of two children, Jared and Emily. He dearly loves the families' dog, a Pomeranian named Chloe Bear. His hobbies are cooking, computing, and spending precious time with his family and friends.

Ever the humble, hard-working servant of the Brotherhood, Gore prefers not to discuss his many accomplishments or the accolades he has received over the years.

“It has never been about me, but about the Brothers and Sisters the Lord put me here to represent,” Gore said. ☪

GIL L. GORE BIO

Title: National Vice President

Railroad: Union Pacific (formerly Texas & Pacific)

Member: Division 193 (Gretna, La.)

Background: Hired out in 1973; Earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1974.

Union history: Local Chairman of Division 193; First Vice General Chairman, Union Pacific Southern Region GCA; General Chairman, UP Southern Region; Elected National Vice President by acclamation in October of 2010.

Personal: He and his wife Denise have two children, Jared and Emily. Dearly loves the family's dog, a Pomeranian named Chloe Bear; Enjoys cooking, computing, and spending time with family and friends.

Gridlock

Just another battle in the War on Workers



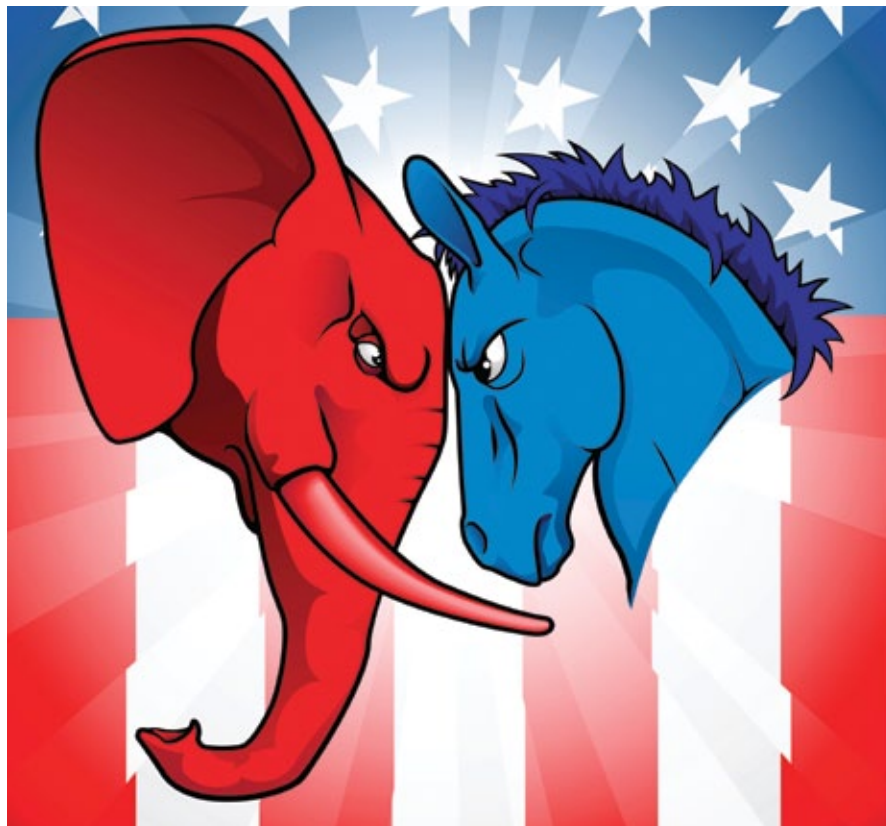
BY JOHN P. TOLMAN
 VICE PRESIDENT & U.S.
 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
 REPRESENTATIVE

Congress today reminds me of a football play where, instead of the quarterback saying, “ready on the right, ready on the left, set, go,” he says “ready on the right, ready on the left, set, STOP.” There is so much partisan bickering, and the two sides do nothing to further the debate but simply stand up and oppose fundamental changes that need to take place for the majority of their constituencies for partisan reasons.

Congress used to be known for the art of compromise, with the opposing sides pushing for their agendas, but eventually coming up with an alternative that both sides do not necessary love but could live with for the good of the country. For more than 200 years, the opposing political parties and factions worked together, in spite of their ideological differences, to craft legislation for the good of the country. Each side would begin negotiations with their respective ideas, and would meet in the middle. This is the way the Founding Fathers intended the Congress to work.

Those with fringe views often contort the words of the Founding Fathers. I believe Thomas Jefferson may have been thinking of the out of control government we have today when he said: “A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned — this is the sum of good government.”

Jefferson perhaps could not have



imagined a Congress that is now comprised mainly of individuals on the far right of the ideological end of the spectrum and the far left, with very few moderates in the middle, who are ill poised for compromise. While this has been building for several decades, it has come to a head as the economy has faltered. Just as the U.S. needs Congress to do something to stem record unemployment and falling financial markets, both sides have dug in to their positions, and are unwilling to budge.

The lack of moderate voices over the past 20 years is partially attributable to the rise of media outlets that cater solely to one viewpoint — whether conservative or liberal. As of right now, the

“Big Six” companies (General Electric, Walt Disney, News Corp, Time Warner, VIACOM, and CBS) own all of these forms of media: cable, TV, print (newspaper, magazines), telecom, and radio. What are all those forms of communication? They are all of the mass media of our society with the exception of the internet. Think of the impact of the fact that six companies owned by six individuals control nearly every flow of communication our society. What you get is a homogenized culture that has been manipulated into consuming forms of media from these six companies, creating partisanship in our electorate. This is borne out in surveys regarding partisanship. According to a recent Gallup

Photo: iStock



STAGGERING STATISTICS

HOW CORPORATE GREED IS RUINING AMERICA

Minimum wage has 1/3 the value that it did in 1968.

1.5 million Americans declared bankruptcy in 2011.

25% of American workers earn a wage that puts them at or below the poverty line.

25% of American children live in poverty.

NAFTA in its first 10 years resulted in a net loss of 879,280 jobs.

Since the year 2000, we have lost 10 percent of our middle-class jobs.

In the year 2000, there were about 72 million middle-class jobs in the United States but today there are only about 65 million middle-class jobs (According to the Census Bureau, median household income in 2009 was \$49,084). Meanwhile, our population is getting larger.

More than half of the U.S. labor force (55 percent) has suffered a time of unemployment, a cut in pay, and a reduction in hours or have become involuntary part-time workers since the recession began in December 2007.

Poll, Republicans who label themselves conservative has risen 10 points since 2002, from 62 to 72 percent.

Because of the lack of moderating voices, for more than a decade, even before the latest economic downturn and partisan gridlock, labor and the middle class have been under attack. The statistics are dire. America's middle class suffers from stagnant wages and family incomes; increasing income insecurity; eroding health care benefits; disappearing pensions. Since the year 2000, the U.S. has lost 10 percent of its middle class jobs, as the economy shifted its focus towards consumer buying power. The minimum wage has one-third the value it had in 1968. Millions of Americans have declared bankruptcy just this year. One-quarter of Americans and American children live below the poverty line.

With the down turn of the economy, both corporations and average Americans should have both shared the burden of fixing the problem. However, despite calling for "shared sacrifice" in their plans, Republican governors and Congress have yet to ask corporations to share the burden of record budget shortfalls. Ultimately, choosing big business over Main Street could undermine the already slow economic recovery.

Instead, they want the middle class and labor unions to shoulder all of the pain and blame. While it took both par-

ties to institute the programs that are blamed for the nation's woes, one party now says we cannot increase taxes on corporations and wealthy who are the beneficiaries of record high level of profits not seen in the United States in more than 80 years. They believe that we cannot eliminate President Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest top 10%, which were extended in the Obama Administration with the hopes of helping the economy rebound through re-investment and job creation. However, this is clearly not the case. According to CNBC in June 2011, the current members of the S&P 500 are sitting on about \$800 billion in cash and cash equivalents, the most ever, even as the unemployment rate has ticked back above 9 percent.

What has occurred is that the rich have gotten richer. According to a study by researchers at the University of California-Berkeley, between 1948-1979 average incomes grew by \$21,000, the richest 10% got 33% of the growth the bottom 90% shared 67% of the income.

Statistics show the vastness of corporate greed: Exxon Mobil had \$19 billion in profits in 2009, and received a \$156 million rebate from the IRS; Bank of America had \$4.4 billion in profits 2010, and received a \$1.9 billion tax refund; General Electric raked in \$26 billion in profits over five years, and got a \$4.1 billion refund from the IRS; Chev-

ron had \$10 billion in profits in 2009, received a \$19 million refund from the IRS; Citigroup had \$4 billion in profits but paid no federal income taxes. Even Warren Buffett (who through his privately held Berkshire Hathaway entity owns BNSF Railway), in a recent Op-Ed in the *New York Times*, called for the rich to pay more in taxes, saying: "My friends and I have been coddled long enough by a billionaire-friendly Congress. It's time for our government to get serious about shared sacrifice."

While these corporations sit on these profits, there are some in this current Congress intent on hurting the middle class and unions. These same politicians want to kill Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Even the Railway Labor Act is under attack. There are two bills in Congress — S. 504 and H.R. 2040 — introduced by members of the Republican Party, co-sponsored solely by other members of the GOP, that would destroy the collective bargaining process under the Railway Labor Act. If that happens, all the contracts we have with the carriers across the nation would be thrown out the window — just as some of the Governors across the United States have attempted to do to public sector unions.

The BLET is determined to protect its members, their families and all workers from these attacks. We have many good friends on both sides of the aisle and have every intention of continuing to make more good friends — people who see, hear and represent the issues of middle class America and the labor unions. However, we cannot sit idle and wait for labor leaders and our friends to rise up. We all have to get involved, and let our voices be heard. We need to leave things better for future generations. As Ronald Reagan said: "Let us be sure that those who come after will say of us in our time that in our time we did everything that could be done. We finished the race; we kept them free; we kept the faith."

We must also keep positive in the face of the enemy and this too shall pass. ☪

Reducing risk

Rail Conference takes the lead on Risk Reduction Programs

Representatives of the Teamsters Rail Conference testified at hearings held over two days regarding the Federal Railroad Administration's proposed rule on Risk Reduction Programs (RRP). Thomas A. Pontolillo, BLET Assistant to the President & Director of Research, and Rick Inclima, BMWED Director of Safety, represented the organizations at the hearings held in Chicago on July 19 and Washington, D.C. on July 21.

Risk Reduction Plans were included in Section 103 of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. The RSIA mandates that the following three categories of railroads be required to develop and implement an FRA approved RRP:

- Class I railroads;
- Railroad carriers with inadequate safety performance, as determined by the Secretary; and
- Railroad carriers that provide intercity rail passenger or commuter rail passenger transportation (passenger railroads).

In their statements, both Pontolillo and Inclima stressed the need for labor participation in the formulation of the plans, echoing the written comments submitted by all other rail labor unions.

"Prior experience with successful railroad industry RRP's — such as the CAB and STEEL programs and the four close call pilots — teaches that the foundation for success is collaboration between labor and management from the inception of the project, through and including every stage of design, development, implementation, evaluation and adjustment," Pontolillo said. "FRA has more than sufficient scientific evidence, reliable data, and agency experience to produce and defend a final rule that satisfies the intent of Congress by

"I am hopeful that the testimony of Brother Pontolillo and Brother Inclima will help enable the FRA to craft a rule along with continued input from Rail Labor with the best possible outcome for rail workers."

— DENNIS R. PIERCE

requiring labor and management to begin RRP consultation immediately upon an expression of interest by either party."

Pontolillo also expressed concern that railroads would not negotiate with labor to come to an agreement on an RRP.

"Our review of the comments from the various industry trade associations and numerous individual railroads confirms that our warnings [in previous comments] on the need to clearly define a railroad's duty under the law," Pontolillo said. "The commenters with a demonstrated history of openness to culture change generally were positive and supportive of FRA's stated goals

and proposals. However, those who continue to cling to the antiquated 'command and control' safety model were uniformly, and nearly hysterically, critical.

"If FRA's failure to prescribe the appropriate and necessary consultation process permits the anti-RRP faction to game the system — by unilaterally developing RRP's, springing them on labor, and being willing to discuss changes at the margins only — then there can be no reasonable expectation for broad safety culture change as a result of the RRP law and regulation."

Pontolillo's comments also touched on other issues including the scope of the rule, legal discovery, and joint operations.

"I am hopeful that the testimony of Brother Pontolillo and Brother Inclima will help enable the FRA to craft a rule along with continued input from Rail Labor with the best possible outcome for rail workers," BLET National President Dennis Pierce said. "That outcome would, in the best possible world, have the input of labor and protect the interests of our members."

The final rule is, by law, to be issued by October 16, 2012. ☐



REGISTER TO VOTE

As Americans, we have the right to let our voices be heard by voting for government officials who will fight on behalf of working families. The first step is registering to vote. To do so, go to: www.teamster.org/content/register-vote-2

HELP US HELP YOU

Support the BLET-PAC! Your voluntary donation to the BLET-PAC Fund is used to help the Brotherhood fight on Capitol Hill for issues that impact your job, your retirement, your family and your future. www.bletdc.org/action/PAC/



BLET names Vince Verna Director of Regulatory Affairs

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce announced on July 29 that Vincent G. Verna has been named the organization's Director of Regulatory Affairs, effective August 1, 2011.

Brother Verna, 41, joined BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.) on November 17, 1995. Immediately prior to his appointment, Brother Verna served as Local Chairman of Division 28 and Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board.

"I am proud to welcome Brother Verna on board and I know he will do an excellent job representing our members in this important position," President Pierce said. "I have every confidence that our Brotherhood will benefit from the high level of professionalism, enthusiasm and experience he brings to the position."

In his new role, Verna will represent the BLET on numerous collaborative endeavors, such as the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) with the Federal Railroad Administration. He will also represent the interests of BLET members in all regulatory matters, including those before the Department of Transportation, National Mediation Board, National Transportation Safety Board and the Transportation Security Administration, among others. He will also prepare the union's responses to various agencies' proposals for rulemakings and proposed rules, and will prepare responses to petitions for waiver from compliance with FRA regulations. He will be headquartered at the BLET's National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C.

Brother Verna fills the position previously held by Stephen J. Bruno, who was elected BLET National Vice President effective January 1, 2011.

Brother Verna hired out in 1994 as a brakeman for the Southern Pacific



Welcome aboard: President Pierce and Vince Verna

Railroad in Los Angeles, Calif. He transferred to engine service in March of 1995 in Tucson, Ariz.

He became actively involved in the Brotherhood almost immediately, serving as Alternate Legislative Representative of Division 28 in 1995, and as Vice Local Chairman in 1999. He continued in both positions until becoming Division 28's Legislative Representative in 2006 and full-time Local Chairman in 2008. He was reelected Local Chairman in 2009. Brother Verna also began serving as Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board in 2008, a position he was reelected to in 2009.

Since 2006, Brother Verna has been active on the RSAC Locomotive Standards and Operating Practices Working Groups. He has worked with past Regulatory Affairs Directors Bob Harvey, Tom Pontolillo and Steve Bruno to help formulate regulatory positions that ad-


dress the needs of BLET members.

In August 2008, he gave a presentation to the Locomotive Standards Working Group to address extreme temperatures inside the locomotive cab.

Brother Verna is proud to be a third generation railroader. His father Fred retired as a conductor from UP in 2010 after 48 years of service.

Also, his great uncle was a conductor for the Penn Central and Southern Pacific.

He holds a Bachelors Degree in History from California State University at San Bernardino (1994) and a Master's Degree in Legal and Ethical Studies from The University of Baltimore (2003).

Brother Verna currently lives in Tucson, Ariz., with his wife, Julie. The couple will be relocating to Washington D.C., in the coming months. When he has spare time, he enjoys reading, art, writing, recording music and traveling. 

Vincent was determined to become an engineer

It's been a long enjoyable ride for Brother Gordon Vincent of BLET Division 14 (Washington, D.C.), who made his last run as an Amtrak engineer on January 4, 2011, operating Northeast Regional No. 93 safely and on time from our nation's capitol to Richmond, Va. "One way or another, I was going to be an engineer," he recalled.

His dogged determination to become a locomotive engineer, like the Los Angeles to Bakersfield crews he befriended as a Lancaster, Calif. youth in the 1960s, resulted in his relocation from coast to coast a couple of times.

After serving his country for four years in the US Navy, Gordon flew to Philadelphia, Pa., at the suggestion of railroad writer Jim Edmonston to apply for a job on the Penn Central Railroad's New Jersey Division. He established his seniority as a fireman on November 26, 1974. After successfully completing school in Wilmington, Del., he earned promotion to engineer on December 9, 1977.

Assessing his future at Conrail after it assumed operation of bankrupt Penn Central, Brother Vincent applied for employment with the Santa Fe in August of 1978, gaining expertise running unit coal trains between Denver and Pueblo, Colo. until October 1981, when he was finally able to transfer home to California. There, he became a BLE member on February 1, 1982.

When Amtrak began direct employment of its train and engine crews in the mid 1980s, Vincent began working between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, Nevada, as well as up the coast to Santa Barbara, Calif. Always a leader, Brother Vincent was selected by Amtrak for special training by EMD and Bombardier, to in turn tutor his fellow engineers on the operation of F59 locomotives and commuter cab cars.




Safe and on time: Brother Gordon Vincent completed his Last Run for Amtrak on January 4, 2011. He hired out with Penn Central on November 26, 1974.

On the morning of October 26, 1992, he operated No. 100, the first Metrolink train from Moorpark, Calif. His life came full circle when in January 1994; he ran the first train out of his hometown of Lancaster to Los Angeles since pre-Amtrak San Joaquin service was discontinued in 1971.

Brother Vincent bid back east in July 1994 when Amtrak began operating Virginia Railway Express (VRE) commuter service into the Washington, D.C. suburbs, and was a regular on the Fredericksburg line until 2010,

when a competitor assumed VRE operations. For the last year, Vincent worked north from Richmond into Washington on an early morning run, and back at night.

What does Gordon Vincent plan to do after reaching retirement when so much of his time has been spent traveling? Travel, of course. "I like traveling here and there — when I want to," he said.

(Article and photo submitted by BLET Division 14 Member Doug Rid-dell) 

'Cactus Jack' of Phoenix a fourth-generation railroader

After 40 years on the railroad, Brother Jack L. "Cactus Jack" Caratachea of BLET Division 123 (Phoenix, Ariz.) has retired from the Union Pacific Railroad as of August 4, 2011.

Cactus Jack hired out as a laborer in Southern Pacific's Maintenance of Way department in Buckeye, Ariz., in 1970. He went firing in 1980 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer for SP in 1985.

Brother Caratachea has been a proud BLET member for the past 31 years. He joined BLET Division 28 (Tucson, Ariz.) on June 1, 1980 and then transferred to Division 22 in 1983 before settling into Division 123 in Phoenix on July 1, 1986.



Jack L. Caratachea: His son Troy represents the Caratachea family's fifth-generation with the railroad.

An Army veteran, Cactus Jack served in the 75th Rangers, Airborne, from 1968-1970 in Fort Carson, Colo.

He and his wife Diane have two children, Troy and Travis, and six grandchildren. His son Troy is in the

UP maintenance of way department out of Phoenix, Ariz., while his brother Robert is a production supervisor for the UP in Phoenix.

Cactus Jack is a member of American Legion Post 61 and various other veterans groups. During retirement, he plans to become more active in veterans affairs through the American Legion and the VA hospital.

Brother Caratachea is particularly proud of his family's railroad legacy. He is a fourth generation railroader and is proud that his son Troy represents the fifth generation.

Cactus Jack said he has enjoyed the people he has worked with over the years and that he will miss them during retirement. 🍷

HONOR ROLL

The family that railroads together

Brother Robert E. Struck of BLET Division 171 (Hoboken, N.J.) achieved Honor Roll status by marking 48 consecutive years of BLET membership on April 1, 2011.

Brother Struck, 80, hired out on the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad in Patterson, N.J., in 1950. He went firing for the Erie Railroad on January 15, 1951, and earned promotion as an Erie locomotive engineer on November 1, 1959. He joined the Brotherhood of April 1, 1963, and has held continuous membership ever since.

Through mergers and acquisitions Brother Struck eventually became a Conrail locomotive engineer. At Conrail he was the head of the engineers' safety committee, and helped form Conrail's first engineers training school.

During America's bicentennial in 1976, Brother Struck suggested to Conrail that it paint three of its engines in a patriotic color scheme.



Robert E. Struck and his wife Lois on their 50th wedding anniversary, September 27, 2008.

Brother Struck safely completed his last run in February of 1990 as a passenger engineer between Suffern, N.Y. and Hoboken, N.J. His retirement became effective in March of 1990.

Brother Struck and his wife Lois have two children, Karen and Glenn. He enjoys traveling during retirement,

visiting his son and grandson in Hawaii twice a year while also visiting his daughter in Arizona. He also enjoys golfing and boating.

He comes from a proud railroad family, and they once appeared in a New York Daily News feature story.

His wife's grandfather, William Jacob Brown, was engineer for the Erie Railroad in the 1920s. His wife's father, William Henry Brown, was an Erie Lackawanna locomotive engineer from 1922 to 1967. His father John N. Struck was an Erie Lackawanna conductor from 1945-1975. His brother Kenneth was an Erie Lackawanna conductor from 1960-1990.

"At one time my father-in-law was an engineer," Brother Struck said. "I was the fireman, my father was the conductor and my brother was the brakeman on a passenger assignment from Waldwick, N.J. The New York Daily News did an article on us and the headline was, 'The Family That Railroads Together.'" 🍷

Wheeling & Lake Erie Local Chairman Steve Fogle retires

Brother Steve T. Fogle of BLET Division 292 (Beach City, Ohio) completed his Last Run for the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway at Yorkville, Ohio, on March 31, 2011.

Brother Fogle hired out on the Norfolk & Western Railway in Brewster, Ohio, on June 12, 1969. He became an employee of the Wheeling & Lake Erie when the Norfolk Southern sold that portion of its lines.

At the time of his retirement, Brother Fogle

was serving as Local Chairman of Division 292 for the engineers and as the Vice General Chairman for the Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/W&LE General Committee of Adjustment.

“Brother Steve was a tenacious advocate for all Wheeling & Lake Erie engineers and trainmen,” said General Chairman Bob Linsey, Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA. “He leaves behind big shoes to fill and I wish him nothing but the best during his retirement.”



A tenacious advocate: Now retired, Local Chairman Steve Fogle spent many years fighting for the rights of BLET members at the Wheeling & Lake Erie.

Div. 316's Abernathy proud of injury-free career

Brother Robert K. Abernathy of BLET Division 316 (Atlanta, Ga.) safely completed his Last Run on November 27, 2010, bringing to a conclusion his 34-year injury-free railroad career.

Brother Abernathy is a charter member of BLET Division 316 in Atlanta. He hired out with the Southern Railway in Atlanta in July of 1976 as a brakeman. He was fired for the Southern in June of 1978 and earned his promotion to locomotive engineer on August 1, 1980. He initially joined Division 305 on May 1, 1982, prior to transferring membership to Division 316 in Atlanta on May 1, 1983.

An active and loyal member of the Brotherhood, Abernathy began serving as Vice President of Division 316 in 1995, a position he held until 2002, when he began serving as Division President. He also served as Division 316's Delegate to the BLET's Second



R.K. Abernathy: A founding member of BLET Division 316 in Atlanta.

National Convention in Reno, Nevada, in October of 2010.

His Last Run was as locomotive engineer of Norfolk Southern coal train WNIT between Cleveland, Tenn., and Cedartown, Ga., on Nov. 27, 2010. His retirement became effective on Dec. 1, 2010. He was honored by Norfolk Southern as Employee of the Month

and received an honor pin from the railroad recognizing his 30-year injury-free career.

Brother Abernathy said he enjoyed his railroad career and was proud of the hard work by his fellow Brothers and Sisters in Division 316.

“On July 10, 1987, the Norfolk Southern DARS program helped me to get my job back and to move on to the best life anyone could ever have,” he said.

Brother Abernathy and his wife Sheryl have two children (Kevin and Kristi) and four grandchildren (Bryce, Kylie, Cohen and Sam). He is a Master Mason and enjoys spending time with his grandchildren and on the farm.

During retirement, he said he plans to stay healthy, travel, and — most importantly — to make up for the time he lost away from his family throughout his long railroad career.

Chip Syme retires after 40-year railroad career

Brother J.E. “Chip” Syme of BLET Division 735 (Canton, Ohio) successfully completed his Last Run as a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer on October 29, 2009.

Brother Syme hired out on the former Penn Central Railroad in Cleveland, Ohio, on June 14, 1969. He worked out of various locations over his 40-year railroad career, including Minerva, Ohio and Alliance, Ohio. As a Conrail locomotive engineer he worked out of Canton, Ohio, Crestline, Ohio, and Conway, Pa. At the end of his railroad career, he worked for Norfolk Southern on a run between Conway, Pa. and Toledo, Ohio.

He joined BLET Division 735 in Canton, Ohio, on May 1, 1980, serving as the Division’s President for the past 10 years.

Brother Syme’s son and son-in-law are both Norfolk Southern engineers.

“My most memorable experience was getting to train my son, John, and son-in-law, Dave Hendricks, as engineers,” Brother Syme said.

John is a member of BLET Division 735 (Canton, Ohio) while Dave belongs to Division 325 (Wilkinsburg, Pa.).

Brother Syme has remained very active since his retirement. In 2010, he and his wife logged over 400 miles on their bicycles. He has also spent time exercising his firearms while performing volunteer work at his church.

“I’m thankful for the good contracts the BLET has provided me over the years,” he said.

“Congratulations to Brother Chip on his retirement,” said BLET General Chairman Bob Linsey, Norfolk Southern-Northern Lines/W&LE GCA. “He was a dedicated union Brother who you could count on to always attend Division meetings. He will be missed.”



An active retiree: Brother Chip Syme and his wife logged over 400 miles on their bicycles after he retired in 2010.

The BLET publishes **Last Runs for members who have retired**, and recognizes members with 40 years or more of membership in Honor Roll articles. If you are planning to retire soon, please let us know! For details, contact: John Bentley, Editor, Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal, Email: Bentley@ble-t.org, 1370 Ontario St., Mezzanine, Cleveland, OH 44113-1702

PRESIDENT PIERCE MESSAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 <->

the 99% that includes every BLET member.

But overcoming the terrible conditions of the Great Depression involved more than workers and their unemployed brothers and sisters voting with their feet and their voices. They also voted on Election Day. They kicked the representatives of the 1% out of office and replaced them with legislators bold enough to enact legal rights for workers, such as the Railway Labor Act, and social benefits for workers, like the

Railroad Retirement system.

The challenge facing all American workers — and those participating in the “Occupy” movement — is whether we will expand our fight from skirmishes like the S.B. 5 repeal and the Walker recall into an effort to take back the government so that it represents the true “job creators” ... the workers whose consumption equaled 70% of gross domestic product when the Great Recession started. If we don’t do that Corporate America will continue to take away our rights and attack our wages.

Although one party generally supports labor more

regularly than the other, this cannot always be a partisan fight. We need to find and support those candidates who support our agenda regardless of their party affiliations. It is truly time that the working people of America take back their government and insure that it works for the people, not just for the corporations.

Over the next 11 months we will be buried in a blizzard of political propaganda. The Supreme Court’s shameful ruling in the *Citizens United* case, which opened the door to unlimited anonymous campaign contributions, will make the upcoming election

cycle the most expensive in American history.

Taking back our government will require cutting through the deluge of distractions, distortions and outright lies coming our way. It will take an active, informed, critical, and thinking electorate. Join me as we move forward. Sort through the misinformation and find the facts. Find the candidates that will truly work for working class Americans. I will do everything in my power to do just that, and I will continue to tell it like it is as we work together to protect and preserve the working class of this great country.



BLET Auxiliary awards \$9,000 in scholarships



BY LINDA D. MAHER
BLET AUXILIARY NATIONAL SECRETARY

The scholarship program in one of the most important endeavors the BLET Auxiliary takes on each school year. The Auxiliary in conjunction with the BLET regional meetings has awarded nine \$1,000 scholarships for the 2011-2012 school year.

It would be next to impossible for the Auxiliary to take on this task each year without your help. Thank you for all of the raffle tickets you bought along with your “mulligans” at the golf tournaments (we as golfers all know how important those are!). We also thank the members who have so graciously funded annual memorial scholarships and our Auxiliaries that make yearly donations along with money collected from Auxiliaries for memorial donations.

We work extremely hard each year to collect funds to subsidize this program as it is fully-funded by the proceeds of fund raising projects.

We appreciate all the BLET does for us in making this program one of the most cherished gifts that we give to our students who benefit immensely from their generosity.

This year the International Western Convention (IWC) authorized the distribution of four scholarships. The Auxiliary administers the yearly scholarships for the IWC. We receive applications, which have the same requirement qualifications as our scholarships, with one exception. The parents of the IWC applicants do not have to be a member of the BLET Auxiliary in order to be eligible to apply.

Congratulations to all of this year’s winners! 🍀

APPLY FOR NEXT YEAR’S AUXILIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program provides \$1,000 scholarships to the sons or daughters of both Auxiliary and BLET members, with at least two years of concurrent membership. Requirements to qualify for a BLET Auxiliary scholarship also include the applicant’s acceptance or enrollment in an accredited university, college, or institution of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character and personal achievement.

Established in 1981, the scholarship program was set up with a strong financial base and the number of scholarships awarded continues to grow with each passing year.

Recently, several Regional Meeting Conventions have donated one or more scholarships to the Auxiliary in addition to donations from BLET State Legislative Boards, General Committees of Adjustment and the BLET National Division. Individual Auxiliaries and members have also held fundraisers to help, or have donated gifts for raffles.

Deadline for the 2012-1013 scholarship program is April 1, 2012.

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APPLICATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM YOUR LOCAL AUXILIARY SECRETARY, OR BY VISITING: WWW.BLETAUXILIARY.NET



BLET AUXILIARY 2011-2012 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



MARK WILLARD
EUMA "LEONA A. LOUIS
MEMORIAL" SCHOLARSHIP

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth R. Willard, Mark is a sophomore at Calvin College. His father is a CN/Grand Trunk Western engineer and member of Division 122 (Port Huron, Mich.) and his mother is an Auxiliary Member-At-Large.



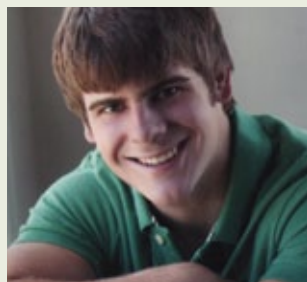
ADAM J. TIPPERY
SWCM SCHOLARSHIP

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Tippery, Adam is a freshman at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. His father is a UP engineer and member of Division 183 (Omaha, Neb.) and his mother is a member of River City Auxiliary 12.



BROOKE SWITZER
IWC SCHOLARSHIP

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ricky Switzer, Brooke is a junior at Eastern New Mexico University. Her father is a BNSF engineer and member of Division 811 (Clovis, N.M) and her mother is a member of El Capitan Auxiliary 811.



ALEXANDER G. EVANS
SWCM "JOHN & BRENDA
CASTEEL" SCHOLARSHIP

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Evans, Alexander is a sophomore at Pittsburg State University. His father is a KCS engineer and S-T and LR of Division 527 (Pittsburg, Kan.) and his mother is a member of Helen Gould Auxiliary 235.



KATELYN E. EVANS
SWCM SCHOLARSHIP

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jim Evans, Katelyn is a junior at Pittsburg State University. Her father is a KCS engineer and S-T and LR of Division 527 (Pittsburg, Kan.) and her mother is a member of Helen Gould Auxiliary 235.



of Division 174 (Stevens Point, Wisc.).



JACQUELINE SHRADER
IWC SCHOLARSHIP

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Shrader, Jacqueline is a senior at the University of Arizona. Her father is a BNSF engineer and member of Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.).



RACHEL MCWILLIAMS
IWC SCHOLARSHIP

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robby L. McWilliams, Rachel is a freshman at California State University, Fresno. Her father is a UP engineer and member of Division 664 (San Luis Obispo, Calif.).



JAMIE M. SHRADER
IWC SCHOLARSHIP

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Shrader, Jamie is a freshman at Pima Community College. Her father is a BNSF engineer and member of Division 134 (Winslow, Ariz.).

ABOUT THE AUXILIARY:

The BLET Auxiliary exists to support the interest and welfare of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) Auxiliary and railroad families, especially the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and the organizations of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference, our members and their families throughout the United States. Learn more about joining the Auxiliary at: www.bletauxiliary.net

PURPOSE:

The overall purpose of the Auxiliary shall be to provide support and promote issues that effect the health, safety, welfare and quality of life of railroaders and their families, to promote higher education with the families of its full members, to give assistance to widows, widowers, sisters and brothers, when needed, especially during times of duress, and to render assistance whenever and wherever needed to further our mission.



BLET FELA Directory

AS OF NOVEMBER 23, 2011

Our union has designated attorneys who are qualified to serve as counsel for BLET members in accordance with the Federal Employers Liability Act (FELA)

governing workplace accidents. In the event of an injury or death and before reaching any settlement with a railroad, members or surviving families should contact an attorney listed to get competent advice concerning their legal rights under the FELA. In addition,

if you or any members of your family have questions concerning medical malpractice, product liability or other types of injury cases, please don't hesitate to contact one of these law firms for a consultation concerning your rights and remedies. ☎

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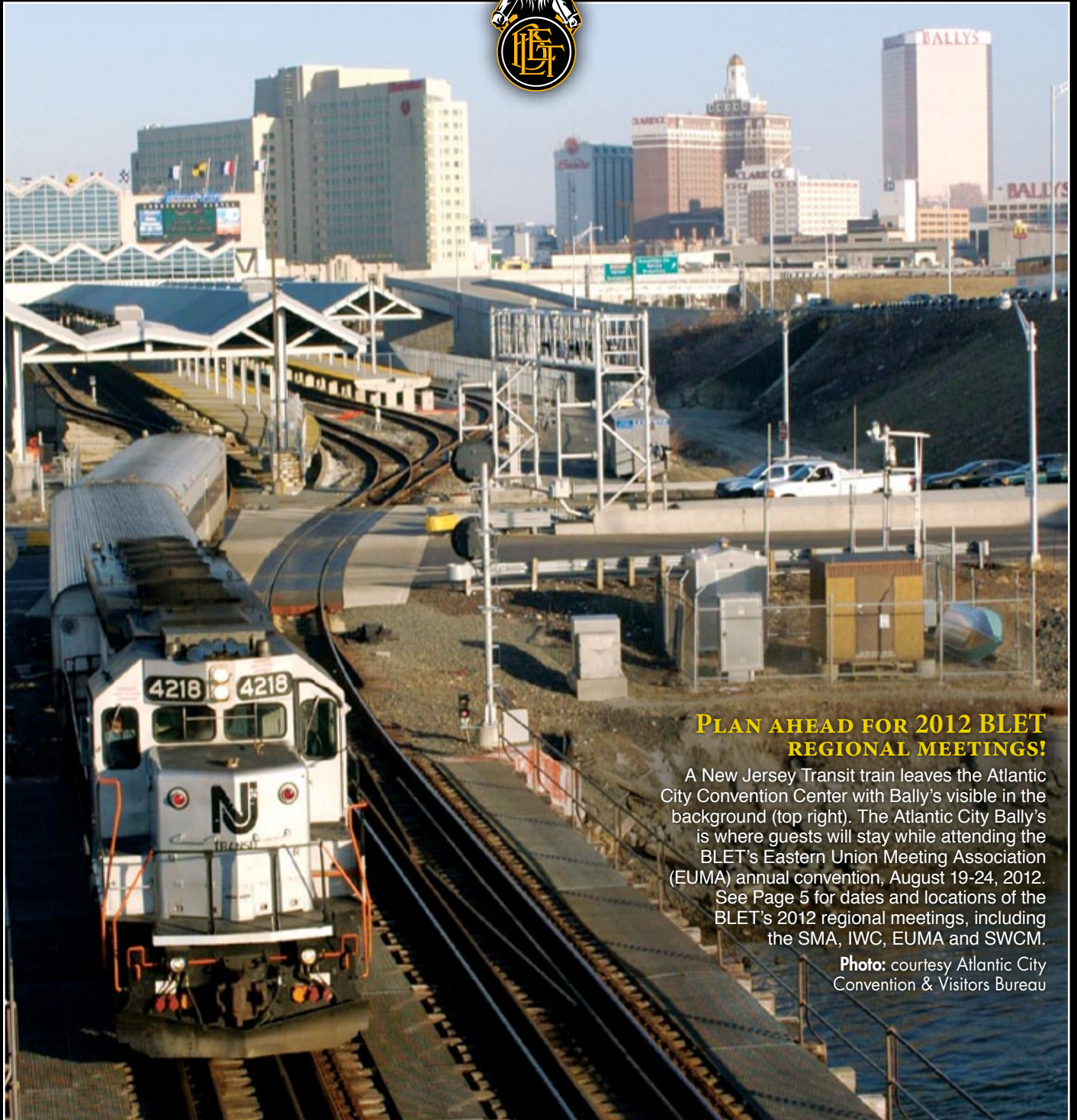
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PLAN AHEAD FOR 2012 BLET REGIONAL MEETINGS!

A New Jersey Transit train leaves the Atlantic City Convention Center with Bally's visible in the background (top right). The Atlantic City Bally's is where guests will stay while attending the BLET's Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) annual convention, August 19-24, 2012.

See Page 5 for dates and locations of the BLET's 2012 regional meetings, including the SMA, IWC, EUMA and SWCM.

Photo: courtesy Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Bureau