

# LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN *Journal*

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*Proud to  
be American,  
Proud to  
be Union*  
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2-1 majority  
ratifies five-year  
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### LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Your vote matters



Published by the BLET, a division of the Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters



## *BLET President's Message*

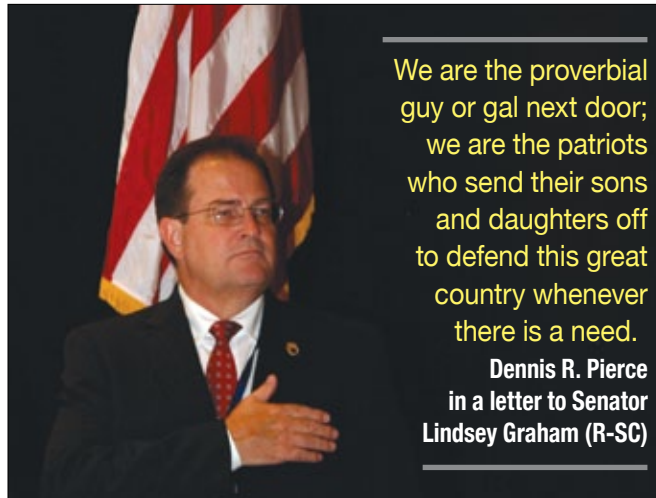
BY DENNIS R. PIERCE, BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT

# Proud to be American, Proud to be Union

**I**n my last newsletter message, I asked all BLET members to join me this year in correcting the political narrative in this country when it comes to the role that unions play in creating and sustaining a strong middle class. In many ways, the reality of the situation is just the opposite of the still reverberating but failed “trickle down” economic policies of the past 30 years. The truth is that a strong Union America and the resulting strong middle class is the only thing that will pull this country out of the recession/depression that we have endured since 2008.

Our challenge is to wake an apathetic America up to the fact that they have been sold a bill of goods by those whose sole purpose is to advance the financial wealth of their corporate backers and contributors. One such example is Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), a regular on the Sunday morning pundit programs. Senator Graham regularly attacks unions as the source of this country's problems, and many in his political circles believe him.

Last year, Senator Graham co-sponsored S. 504, a bill that would make union shop agreements in the railroad industry illegal. In recognition of his attack on one of our basic rights, and to start our 2012 “Proud to be American, Proud to be Union” campaign



**We are the proverbial guy or gal next door; we are the patriots who send their sons and daughters off to defend this great country whenever there is a need.**

**Dennis R. Pierce  
in a letter to Senator  
Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**

to right these misrepresentations, I have penned the following letter to Mr. Graham.

Dear Senator Graham,

My name is Dennis Pierce. I grew up in a conservative home in the Midwest and have been a hard working, taxpaying, patriotic American Union member for almost 35 years. You often at-tack unions, yet I am not sure that you even know what a union really is. A union is not like the corporate benefactors that you represent. Quite to the contrary, unions are not there to make a profit; unions exist to advance the cause of the hard working Americans that they represent. Our shareholders are our members, who unlike their corporate counterparts, work together to ensure that each and every union member gets a shot at the American Dream. That dream is to be paid a fair wage for a hard day's work. That dream is

to have affordable access to reliable health care when our families are ill. That dream is to provide an opportunity for our children to have a better life than we do, and we Union members make sacrifices daily to try and accomplish that.

You should also know that as union members, we represent a cross section of America. We are proud Veterans; we are Boy Scout Leaders; we are active in our Churches; and we are communi-ty activists for good causes all across this great country. We are the educators that teach America's children in their classrooms, we are the neighbors that Americans trust and depend on. We are also the police officers and the fire fighters that America relies on day in and day out. We are the bikers who do toy runs every Christmas for America's most needy. We are the dock workers that load and unload goods for the American people. We provide

the labor to build and maintain the nation's railroads so those goods can get to market. And we are the engineers, trainmen and truck drivers who keep our economy strong by skillfully delivering those goods to the American people. Our children babysit America's children, and because of the fair wages our Unions secure, our children are the students at any number of strong American universities. We are the proverbial guy or gal next door; we are the patriots who send their sons and daughters off to defend this great country whenever there is a need. You can count on one thing for sure: our united fight as union members for our piece of the American Dream is what makes us the patriots that we are. Our willingness to engage in struggles to advance the economic security of our members also appears to be why you fear unions and why you attack unions with misguided comments so regularly.

When you attack unions — as you do on a regular basis — you are attacking each and every one of the American citizens noted above. You are attacking our right to participate in the American Dream; you are attacking the very middle class that made America the great nation that it is. Contrary to your union-bashing rhetoric, that middle class cannot survive and the

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A DIVISION OF THE RAIL CONFERENCE,  
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OF TEAMSTERS

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»» ON THE COVER: UNION PACIFIC LOCOMOTIVES 5329 AND 5330 DRAG A WESTBOUND FRUIT TRAIN UP THE HILL WEST OF LA GRANDE, BETWEEN HILGARD AND MOTANIC, OREGON, ON DECEMBER 9, 2007. (photo: Steve Carter)



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## BLET'S TEAMSTER DELEGATES:

Several BLET members represented our organization as delegates to the Teamsters 28th International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, June 27-July 1, 2011, including National Division officers (front row,

from left) John P. Tolman, Vice President & National Legislative Representative; E. Lee Pruitt, First Vice President; Dennis R. Pierce, National President; William C. Walpert, National Secretary-Treasurer; and Stephen J. Bruno (far right), National Vice President. The BLET

delegates were active participants throughout and some played key roles in the convention process. For example, National President Pierce served on the Teamsters Constitution Committee; First Vice President Pruitt on the Rules Committee; National Secretary-Treasurer

Walpert on the Resolutions Committee and the Sergeant-at-Arms Committee; Vice President Tolman on the Political and Legislative Committee and Sergeant-at-Arms Committee; and Vice President Bruno on the Sergeant-at-Arms Committee. 


## Hoffa elected to fourth term by big margin



**T**eamsters General President Jim Hoffa, his running mate for General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, and their entire slate were elected on November 18 by a wide margin in the 2011 Election of International Union Officers. The Hoffa-Hall Slate defeated their two challengers with 60 percent of the vote.

"The members have spoken," Hoffa said. "This is not just our slate's victory but a victory for all working

Americans who are fighting to save America's middle class. We know it is not workers who are to blame for the crisis facing America — it is the greed and corruption of big business and Wall Street and their bought and paid for puppets in Congress."

C. Thomas Keegel, long-serving General Secretary-Treasurer, announced his retirement earlier in the year, and Ken Hall was then nominated as President Hoffa's running mate. 

# A nickel an hour to strengthen the Brotherhood

## Division 343 hosts annual BLET PAC fund appreciation dinner

**E**ach year, Division 343 (Princeton, Ind.) hosts a dinner for every BLET member who contributes at least \$10 monthly to the BLET PAC fund. They also invite numerous special guests who benefit from the PAC.

“Members of Division 343 have proudly been strong supporters of the BLET’s PAC fund,” said Chris Hubbard, Legislative Representative of Division 343. “Each year, this dinner is held as a way to thank our membership for their participation.”

Brother Hubbard said the Division increased its membership this year and increased its PAC contributions by 20 percent.

Brother Bill Verdeyen, Chairman of the Indiana State Legislative Board, was the keynote speaker at the Division’s most recent dinner, held November 8, 2011.

During his presentation, Chairman Verdeyen explained what it means to give to the PAC fund and how the money is used. He spoke about issues facing the members on both a state and federal level and on developments with high-speed passenger service.

“Under the Hours of Service law, our members can work no more than 276 hours per month,” Brother Verdeyen said. “If a member works just 200 hours a month and gives five cents an hour to the PAC, that’s \$10 per month. Just think of it as a nickel an hour.”



**From left:** Tim Dunn, Secretary-Treasurer, Illinois State Legislative Board; Chris Hubbard, Legislative Representative, Division 343; Bill Verdeyen, Chairman, Indiana State Legislative Board; Pat Randolph, 1st Alternate Vice-Chairman, Illinois State Legislative Board; and Shane Hubbard, Local Chairman, Division 343.

Additional guests included Mark Wallace, 2nd Vice Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Southern Lines General Committee of Adjustment; Tim B. Dunn, Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois State Legislative Board (BLET Division 24); and Pat Randolph, 1st Alternate Vice Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board (Division 512).

A large number of Division 343 members work in pool freight service between Princeton, Ind. and St. Louis, Mo. Most of that run is through the state of Illinois. Both members of the Illinois State Legislative Board in attendance spoke about

concerns facing Illinois and extended the hand of friendship to their Brothers and Sisters in Indiana.

“They let our membership know that we can contact them with concerns even though they are based in Illinois,” Brother Hubbard said. “It’s this type of cooperation that makes our Brotherhood so strong. It was also a key point to the evening — members working together regardless of state, committee, division, or railroad. The fact is we are all members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. The issues we face are the same.”

### Fast Facts

#### 2011 Fourth Quarter Net Income

##### BNSF

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

##### CN

Net income: \$592 million  
Operating income: \$839 million  
Operating ratio: 64.7 percent

##### Canadian Pacific

Net income: \$221 million  
Operating income: \$303 million  
Operating ratio: 78.5 percent  
(CN & CP figures in Canadian dollars)

##### CSX

Net income: \$457 million  
Operating income: \$841 million  
Operating ratio: 71.5 percent

##### Norfolk Southern

Net income: \$480 million  
Operating income: \$800 million  
Operating ratio: 71.4 percent

##### Union Pacific

Net income: \$964 million  
Operating income: \$1.6 billion  
Operating ratio: 68.3 percent

##### Kansas City Southern

Net income: \$96 million  
Operating income: \$150 million  
Operating ratio: 71.6 percent

# BLET recognizes staffer Chuck Anderson upon retirement

**B**LET National Division officers and staff bid a fond farewell to long-serving staff employee and Brotherhood member Charles E. "Chuck" Anderson. Brother Anderson retired effective December 31, 2011, after 23 years of dedicated service to the national union.

Brother Anderson has been a BLET member for 34 years. He began working for the Brotherhood's national headquarters in Cleveland in May of 1988, moving his wife JoAnne and three young sons across country from Oregon to Ohio.

Brother Anderson is a proud member of BLET Division 362 in LaGrande, Ore. Prior to his work at the National Division headquarters in Cleveland, Brother Anderson served Division 362 as Local Chairman and was Vice General Chairman of the former Union Pacific-NW District General Committee of Adjustment.

Prior to the start of his railroad career, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from UCLA in 1973. He began his railroad career as a sectionman on the Union Pacific Railroad in 1976, becoming a switchman in 1977 and moving to engine service later that year. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1978 where he worked in through freight service in mountain territory. He joined the Brotherhood on July 1, 1977.

Brother Anderson has professionally and faithfully served the National Division office in numerous capacities over the past 23 years. He has served as Assistant to the International President, headed the BLET's Information Technology (IT) Department, and served as the Brotherhood's Constitution & Bylaws scholar. He has also planned and organized the Brotherhood's national conventions and has overseen production of the union's Bylaws and Convention Proceedings. Most recently, he has returned to the Brotherhood's IT Department, an assignment he most enjoys



**2011 Convention:**  
Brother Anderson and wife JoAnne.



**1991:** A young Assistant to the President

due to his strong personal interest in the tech world.

His other hobbies include backpacking, camping, cross country skiing, and bee keeping. However, his most enjoyable pastime is spending time with family, especially his granddaughter Esther.

"Brother Chuck loyally served eight different Chief Executives of our Brotherhood with honor and distinction," BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. "For me, personally, Chuck was a great asset and source of institutional knowledge. I thank him for his service and wish him a long, healthy and enjoyable retirement." 📧

## letters to the editor

Dear President Pierce:

I would like to sincerely thank you and anyone involved for fighting for our rights. This has made me very proud to be a BLET member. I have not received a copy of the tentative agreement yet but what ever it is I can cast my vote knowing that we put up a fight. I know that we are looking at the best deal available under these circumstances.

Norman L. Smith  
Division 622  
Alliance, Neb.

Brother Pierce:

I just read your latest article concerning the round of negotiations taking place.

Although I am retired, I have a vested interest because two of our sons work as engineers on the BNSF out of Lincoln, Neb. Both are in Division 98. I do appreciate the fact that you are "telling it like it is." That hasn't happened for a long time. Toward the end of my career, it was very hard to trust anyone in Cleveland.

With the tough decisions to be made in the near future, I am reassured that you are leading the BLET and its members down the best path possible. It has been many years since BLET members can say that their President has their interests at heart.

For that, I am very grateful. Thanks for your efforts and the best of luck.

In Brotherhood,  
Tom C. Hiser  
Division 621  
Wymore, Neb.

President Pierce,

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule and participating in the North Dakota State Legislative Board meeting. Obviously we aren't the biggest board, so this makes guests even more appreciated.

Rod Albrightson  
Legislative Rep., Division 695  
Minot ND

### WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS

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

# Labor fighting back in Wisconsin

## Collect 1 million signatures to remove governor from office

**B**LET members were a part of the petition drive to recall and remove Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker from office, helping to collect 1 million signatures in just 60 days.

There are 4.37 million eligible voters in the state, which was hit hard by Walker's anti-union agenda. Only 540,208 signatures were needed to begin the recall process.

"Collecting 1 million signatures in 60 days over the holiday season and in the depths of a Wisconsin winter is truly an impressive accomplishment," BLET National President Dennis Pierce said. "I thank our Brothers and Sisters in Wisconsin for doing their part and making their voices heard."

Last year, Wisconsin was at the epicenter in the War on Workers. Backed by wealthy out-of-state interests, namely the conservative Koch brothers, Walker led the assault to strip government employees of their collective bargaining rights.



**Wisconsin recall:** Unions protesting out of touch governor




Also last year, Walker frequently leveled criticism at labor for receiving help from out-of-state supporters. Now, however, the hypocritical governor is getting most of his financial backing from out-of-state. Walker has raised about \$5 million to defend his seat, with about half coming from out-of-state sources.

In fact, Governor Walker was not in Wisconsin when the signatures were delivered in Madison, Wisc., on January 17. Instead, he was in New York City hosting a \$2,500 per-person fundraiser, after recently attending similar events in Texas,

Kentucky and Tennessee.

It also came to light that Walker collected \$1 million from just four ultra-wealthy supporters in January, including Stanley Herzog, chairman and CEO of Missouri-based Herzog Contracting Corp., a highway and railroad construction company.

And on the day the signatures were delivered, Walker declined to be interviewed by members of the Wisconsin media. However, he did appear live on the Rush Limbaugh radio show and on Fox News television. 

## IN THE LINE OF DUTY

### BLET mourns six members killed in the line of duty in 2011

**S**ix members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen were killed in the line of duty in 2011.

As previously reported in the Journal, five members were killed in the first six months of the year:

- **JAMES G. HADDEN, 35, MAY 24 (CSX)**
- **CHRISTOPHER L. CARTER, 57, MAY 1 (UP)**



• **THOMAS H. ANDERSON, 48, MAY 17 (BNSF)**




• **THOMAS J. KENNY, 58, MARCH 23 (BNSF)**

- **STANLEY L. WATTS, 43, FEBRUARY 8 (NS)**

The sixth BLET member killed in the line of duty was **BROTHER TODD M. BURCKHARD, 35, ON AUGUST 19, 2011.** The crew van he was riding in was involved in a fatal collision near Frazer, Mont. The crew van was traveling westbound

on Highway 2 when it was struck by an eastbound pickup truck operating in the westbound lane of traffic. He was a member of BLET Division 695 in Minot, N.D. He first joined the Brotherhood on November 1, 2010.

On behalf of the entire organization, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce extended deepest condolences to the families and friends to these fallen Brothers.

"It is our solemn duty as labor leaders to ensure that these Brothers did not die in vain," President Pierce said. "Our organization continues to study these tragic accidents and we will use every resource available to see that similar incidents never happen again." 



## *BLET* *First Vice President's Message*

BY E. LEE PRUITT, BLET FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

# In support of Amtrak and high-speed rail

**I**n the fall of 2012, we citizens of the United States will have the right and privilege to vote for the candidate of our choice in the Presidential election. In the coming months, the National Division will help BLET members to become informed voters. We will use our website, publications, and additional means as necessary to provide factual information about the candidates running for office and the issues that impact our work and livelihoods, so that our Brothers and Sisters can make the best and most well-informed decision possible.

Key rail issues you are likely to hear a lot about are Amtrak and high-speed rail. As Director of the BLET's Passenger Department, these issues are near and dear to my heart.

Amtrak, which marked its 40th anniversary in 2011, is the favorite whipping boy of conservative politicians. As recently as the summer of 2011, Conservatives such as Bud Shuster (R-PA) and John Mica (R-FL) had proposed dismantling Amtrak and auctioning off its property, trains, tracks, and route systems to the highest bidder. These are the same politicians who insist that Amtrak must be a profitable enterprise, even though all other major Amer-



**First VP Pruitt** with GC Bob Linsey at the NS/W&E GCA mid-term meeting in Cleveland

ican transportation systems (highways, airlines) rely on heavy government subsidies to pay their bills... as do other passenger rail systems in other countries throughout the world. This double standard is lost on these ultra-conservative ideologues.

On the bright side, Amtrak announced in October that it had posted record ridership in 2011 — 30.2 million passengers, more riders than any of its previous 40 years of operation. Weeks later, Amtrak set a new ridership record for the Thanksgiving holiday — 720,000 passengers.

In 2012, Amtrak is investing in the first of 70 new electric locomotives and 130 long-distance passenger cars, financed by a \$450 million grant from the federal government. Amtrak is also making other key infrastructure


improvements that will speed up trips and improve its level of service.

So Amtrak is exceeding expectations in spite of attacks from the ultra-conservative politicians, and thanks largely in part to the hard work and dedication of BLET members. Our members ratified a new five-year collective bargaining agreement with Amtrak in January 2012, and I personally thank General Chairman Mark Kenny for all of his hard work and dedication.

It is important to remember that AMTRAK is the largest passenger rail system in the United States and has about 20,000 employees who pay into the Railroad Retirement system. If Amtrak were somehow to become dismantled or replaced by non-union workers, then we would lose about 20,000 rail employees

paying into our Railroad Retirement system. It would be a crippling blow to everyone's Railroad Retirement. Either taxes would go up significantly on the rail workers who remain, or benefits would be slashed for those who are already retired. It's a scary thought. Be sure to think about that when it comes time to vote this fall.

High-speed rail is another political football. It's gotten so bad that Ray LaHood, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, publicly accused ultra-conservative politicians of purposely blocking transportation initiatives for the sole purpose of keeping President Obama from having success. LaHood himself is a former Republican House member from Illinois, so you know things have to be bad for LaHood to call out and speak against his own party.

While Amtrak is an important piece of our organization's stability, high-speed rail represents a potential avenue of membership growth. Our members can rest assured that the National Division will keep our nose to the grindstone when it comes to protecting Amtrak, as we do with all of our members, and we'll keep our eyes on the prize when it comes to high-speed rail. 

While Amtrak is an important piece of our organization's stability,  
high-speed rail represents a potential avenue of membership growth.





## BLET National Secretary-Treasurer's Message

BY WILLIAM C. WALPERT, BLET NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER



# Safety Task Force: Going strong after 23 years

**T**here are many important milestones in the nearly 149-year history of our esteemed Brotherhood. One of those is an important anniversary that will take place in May: the 23rd anniversary of the founding of our Safety Task Force.

The first recorded mention of the BLET Safety Task Force (STF) is in the May 1989 issue of our monthly Newsletter. The STF was formed to “assist federal agencies in the investigation of rail accidents, and determine the correct causes of accidents.”

We were the first railroad union to establish a formal accident investigation team. Over the past 23 years, the STF has made numerous safety recommendations that have been adopted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), leading to changes in operational practices, rules and the adoption of new legislation. Today, the STF remains an integral part of the BLET and plays a vital role in our efforts to make the workplace safer for all railroaders.

STF investigators study all aspects of the accident, including operations and human factors, signal systems, and track structures. Most importantly, the STF studies the accident from the viewpoint of locomotive engineers and trainmen to determine how an accident occurred and how to prevent it from happening again. I



NST Bill Walpert and STF coordinator Carl Fields.

can't overstate how important that is, especially in an industry that is more focused on financial balance sheets than employee safety. If we don't look out for our own safety, then who will?

The motivation in founding the STF in 1989 was the firm belief that by determining the root causes of accidents, we can prevent similar accidents from happening again in the future.

A tragic Conrail accident in 1988 helped spark the formation of the STF. In June of that year, four crew members were killed in a head-on collision in Thompsettown, Pa. The investigative work of BLET members helped the NTSB come to the determination that chronic sleep deprivation, caused by irregular work patterns of the crews, was a major cause of the accident. The fact that the BLET was able to provide such valuable input to the NTSB led to the

formation of the STF less than one year later.

The original STF was chaired by Ed Dubroski in the United States and George Hainsworth in Canada. Other members were Regional Directors Don Bergman (Southwest), Dave Ditzel (Northwest), Mike Grotzinger (Northeast), John Hunter (Canada East), Gary Miotke (Southeast) and Myron Pymak (Canada West).

In its early days, the STF investigated high-profile accidents in Batavia, Iowa (Amtrak), where 80 people were injured in a high-speed derailment; and in Rocky Mount, N.C., where a switch engine hit a standing Amtrak train.

Also during its first year of existence, the STF conducted training and recruitment seminars all across the country at BLET regional meetings. The training focused on the investigation process, the working of federal agencies at wreck sites, and accident

report filing.

In 1993, I became Coordinator of the Safety Task Force. One of my first tasks was to establish a hotline number for members to call to report major rail accidents: (800) 306-5414. It's the same number we still use today.

The NTSB was an enthusiastic supporter of the STF and helped our fledgling investigative team get off the ground. The NTSB invited several BLET investigators to Washington, D.C. to take part in an orientation course to learn about NTSB procedures. Several times over the years the NTSB invited the organization to its D.C. headquarters to help STF better integrate its investigations with NTSB's.

Today, we continue to assist the NTSB with on-site inquiries and submit the results of our own independent investigations to the NTSB and Federal Railroad Administration. The STF gives the Brotherhood a formal and documented means of presenting crew member safety concerns before federal regulators and legislators.

As National Chairman of the STF, I work hand-in-hand with Brother Carl W. Fields, who handles many of day-to-day duties as Coordinator of the Safety Task Force. I look forward to sharing more information with you about today's STF in the next issue of the BLET Journal. 📍



## Guest Columnists

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

### American Jobs Act

**T**he latest news about jobs was good, but it wasn't good enough. America created 200,000 jobs in December, 2011, the sixth month in a row the economy added at least 100,000 jobs. Unfortunately, it will take a lot more new jobs than that to significantly lower the unemployment rate.

That's why we are urging Congress to pass President Obama's American Jobs Act — now. His proposal to create new jobs is made up of ideas that both Democrats and Republicans said they support. Economists agree that Obama's jobs plan will prevent a double-dip recession by increasing economic growth and creating thousands of new jobs. The Moody's rating service estimates it would create 1.9 million jobs.

Republicans in Congress, though, have shown they are more interested in partisan politics than in actually helping their constituents. It's well past time for these obstructionists to recognize that the jobs crisis is an American problem, and they must help to solve it.

Since President Obama introduced the American Jobs Act last September, the bill has been broken into piec-

es. One part of it, "Returning Heroes," has already passed. That measure grants tax credits to employers who hire jobless military veterans.

Much more remains to be done. Congress rejected the President's plan to rebuild our infrastructure and create a bipartisan National Infrastructure Bank. These investments would put Americans back to work modernizing our roads, rail, airports and waterways. These jobs would be covered by Davis-Bacon prevailing wage rates and Buy American provisions.

BLET members know transporting coal and other products across our nation requires a railroad system that is safely equipped and properly maintained. Mandating the Buy American component is another facet of the Obama jobs bill that is key to keeping manufacturing jobs in the U.S.

Our elected officials in Washington would do well to remember that the jobs crisis isn't President Obama's problem. It isn't a Republican or Democratic problem. It's an American problem.

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.

### Unifying our Strength

**T**he year 2012 is an opportunity for us to re-galvanize our support for one another in the rail labor movement. States such as Florida and Indiana have already begun the process of introducing legislation aimed at diluting collective bargaining agreements and unionization. The war on workers continues and I am confident that the members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, and our brothers and sisters in the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, will stand up for the rights of working families.

Last year scores of Teamsters Rail Conference members came out to support the fight for collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin, Indiana, Ohio and elsewhere. It was terrific to see rail Teamsters standing shoulder-to-shoulder with members from other unions, too.

What we did made a difference: There is an active recall campaign for Wisconsin's Governor Walker, and S.B. 5 in Ohio was defeated. However, Indiana has recently introduced more anti-worker legislation and the Florida legislature is poised to strip the jobs and benefits from thousands of workers in their state prisons.

We are going to need every one to help out in the fight to protect workers' rights. So, when there is an opportunity to attend a rally, carry a sign or speak with an elected official, the members of the BLET must do their part and assist. Although your contracts have different provisions for collective bargaining, wages and benefits than other Teamster contracts, the fact is that once legislators start trying to dismantle one set of union agreements, they will soon turn to others.

We stand united under the banner of stopping the war on workers.

#### Visit the Teamsters online

Member benefits & discounts  
Disaster relief assistance

James R. Hoffa Scholarship Fund  
[www.teamster.org](http://www.teamster.org)

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



**John F. 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.



# Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund

Many members do not realize that the elected officers and directors that serve them are BR&CF members who have worked, or are now working, on the railroad. Officers and Directors understand your issues, concerns and needs.



**J.M. Robb • International President**

CN locomotive engineer • Hired 1972  
BR&CF member since 1991 • Elected to first full time BR&CF position in 1999



**K.L. Mayle • Assistant International President**

BNSF locomotive engineer • Hired 1970  
BR&CF member since 1970 • Currently working a road switcher assignment San Bernardino, CA



**J.E. Taylor • International Secretary-Treasurer**

UP locomotive engineer • Hired 1995  
BR&CF member since 1996 • Elected to first full time BR&CF position in 2004



**L.V. Galati • Assistant International Secretary-Treasurer**

NS locomotive engineer • Hired 1974  
BR&CF member since 1998 • Elected to first full time BR&CF position in 2006



**K.E. Holman • Director**

UP conductor • Hired 1970  
BR&CF member since 1972 • Currently working a yard assignment Houston, TX



**J.R. Spivey • Director**

CSX locomotive engineer • Hired 2002  
BR&CF member since 2006 • Currently working extra board assignment Fitzgerald, GA



**R.C. Jones • Director**

UP locomotive engineer • Hired 1976  
BR&CF member since 1994 • Currently working a freight assignment Kansas City, MO

Admission to BR&CF membership requires that you work for a railroad and are a member of a railroad brotherhood or union. The BR&CF is unique. This organization truly belongs to its members, is managed by members and is dedicated to the best interests of members and the rail labor community. Officers and directors collectively have over 222 total years of railroad experience. When we say we speak your language, when we say we know what you contend with every day you are at work, we mean it.

To apply for membership ask a BR&CF member, call 800 233-7080 or visit our web site at [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org).



# BLET members ratify national contract

**B**y a margin of better than 2-to-1, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) approved a new national agreement with the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) on January 5, 2012. The five-year agreement concludes a negotiating effort that lasted more than two years, dating to when the BLET served Section 6 notices on November 2, 2009.

The agreement covers health & wel-

fare and other fringe benefits for over 30,000 BLET members nationwide, and rates of pay and work rules issues for a smaller number. It includes general wage increases of 18.6 percent over the life of the agreement, which compounds to 20.1 percent, and a 1% lump sum bonus payment.

The agreement is retroactive to January 1, 2010, and covers locomotive engineers employed by the following railroads: Alabama State Docks (H&W

only); Belt Railway of Chicago; BNSF Railway (H&W only); Canadian National (H&W only); Conrail; CP Rail-US (Soo Line); CP Rail-US (D&H) (H&W only); CSX Transportation (H&W only); Indiana Harbor Belt; Kansas City Southern System (KCS/L&A, Gateway Western, MidSouth, South Rail, and Tex Mex); Longview Switching; Metra (H&W only); Norfolk Southern (H&W only); Portland Terminal; Union Pa-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 <->

## BLET MEMBERS SIT IN ON PEB HEARINGS



**Front row, from left:** Jim Louis, Gregg Vogel, James Maynard, Ken Kroeger, Dennis Pierce, Frank Portillo, Thomas Haas, Lon Bjerke. **Back row:** Sam Sipich, Steve Facklam, Doug Davidson, Erik Swanson, Wesley Brandenburg, John Fink, Carl Fields, Mike Necessary.

**I**n October, more than a dozen BLET members were in the right place at the right time to enjoy a truly unique and valuable learning experience.

Their weeklong workshop, conducted by the BLET Education &

Training Department, happened to coincide with hearings before Presidential Emergency Board 243 to settle Rail Labor's national wage dispute.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce invited the members to sit in on hearings for a day. The PEB hearings

were in Washington, D.C., while the BLET workshop was held just a short drive away at the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md.

Bill Walpert, BLET National Secretary-Treasurer, and Ken Kroeger, Coor-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 <->

» **RESOURCES ON BLET WEBSITE**

- 2012 agreement
- Agreement synopsis
- PEB 243 hearing transcripts
- Final PEB 243 recommendations

[www.ble-t.org/agreement](http://www.ble-t.org/agreement)



## HOW THE RAILWAY LABOR ACT WORKS

National collective bargaining between rail labor and management is governed by a specific federal law, the Railway Labor Act of 1926. The RLA and its amendments spell out the process of bargaining that eventually leads to each new contract. Negotiations

can take months or years because of the many steps (some of which have time limits while others do not) available to both parties. This flowchart illustrates how rail labor and management reach agreement on rates of pay and work rules.



**STEP 1:** Notice is served under Section 6 of the Railway Labor Act by either part (usually called “Section 6 Notices”).

**STEP 2:** reply required within 10 days sets time, date of initial conference, which must be held within 30 days.

**STEP 3:** Negotiations begin. No time limit.

**STEP 4:** Agreement reached through negotiations. If not, go to Step 5.

**STEP 5:** Within 10 days after conferences end either party

may request National Mediation Board (NMB) mediation or NMB may proffer mediation.

**STEP 6:** If mediation not requested or proffered within 10 days, then parties may exercise self-help (strike by labor or lockout by management).

**STEP 7:** Agreement reached through mediation. If not, go to Step 8.

**STEP 8:** NMB proffer of binding arbitration is offered by NMB or requested by the parties.

**STEP 9:** Agreement reached through accepting binding arbitration. If not, go to Step 10.

**STEP 10:** Self-help (strike or lockout) can begin following 30-day “cooling off period” after NMB notifies both parties that proffer of arbitration was refused.

**STEP 11:** NMB may notify President that it believes dispute will interrupt interstate commerce.

**STEP 12:** President may appoint an emergency board if he/she agrees with Step 11.

**STEP 13:** Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) conducts hearings and issues recommendations to President within 30 days.

**STEP 14:** Agreement reached based on PEB report. If not, go to Step 15.

**STEP 15:** Indefinite strike or lockout permitted after second cooling off period concludes 30 days after PEB issues recommendations. Agreement may be reached.

**STEP 16:** If no agreement, then settlement can be legislated by Congress.

## MEMBERS RATIFY CONTRACT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12 ←◀▶

cific Railroad (H&W only); and Winston-Salem Southbound. It also covers all train service employees on the Texas Mexican Railway.

### PEB hearings

From October 13-20, 2011, the BLET and all other Rail Labor unions involved in this round of bargaining, except one, participated in hearings before Presidential Emergency Board 243. Joint presentations were made concerning wages, health and welfare issues, and vacation time.

Each union also presented argument, evidence and testimony concerning major issues of craft-specific importance to its members. The BLET's presentation sought favorable PEB recommendations regarding numerous issues, including: elimination of the entry rate and the two-tiered pay system; improvement of the away-from-home-terminal meal allowance; immediately increasing the certification allowance to \$10.00 per trip or tour of duty, adjusted for future general wage increases; and improved and enforceable minimum locomotive cab standards.

The BLET's position was supported with an extensive brief, supplemented by six dozen exhibits, and by testimony from BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce. To demonstrate worker productivity gains, President Pierce provided a detailed explanation of how distributive power is utilized, while a video was played showing the behemoth, 9 locomotive / 294-car / 3-mile long train that Union Pacific Railroad operated between Dallas and Long Beach, Calif., in January of 2010.

### Report and recommendations of PEB 243

The PEB's Report was issued on November 7, 2011. On a positive note, the PEB recommended higher wage increases than those obtained by UTU in their contract (which the carriers argued was a "pattern settlement" for BLET), and the wage increases were on

## BARGAINING HISTORY

**BLET national contracts over the past 50 years**

SECTION 6 NOTICE	AGREEMENT DATE
November 2, 2009	January 5, 2012
December 16, 2004	July 1, 2007
Nov. 1, 1999	December 16, 2003
Nov. 1, 1994	May 31, 1996
June 30, 1998	Nov. 29, 1991 (PEB 219 imposed by Congress)
Jan. 3, 1984	May 19, 1986 (Arbitration Award 458)
Jan. 26, 1981	Sept. 29, 1982 (PEB 194 imposed by Congress)
Jan. 20, 1977	July 26, 1978
Sept. 16, 1974	March 6, 1975
Jan. 1, 1973	April 27, 1973
Nov. 24, 1969	May 13, 1971
April 30, 1968	March 10, 1969
May 18, 1966	June 22, 1967
Nov. 2, 1959	June 25, 1964

par with the 2007 National Agreement. The PEB also recommended significant changes to health and welfare changes requested by the carriers, but cushioned the blow by recommending the phasing in of the more costly portions of the changes over an 18-month period, rather than instituting all of them immediately, as the carriers had proposed.

President Pierce expressed frustration with PEB 243's final report. "The 11 unions working in unison made a compelling case for status quo on health and welfare benefits and an even more compelling argument for wage increases greater than those found in the recommendation," Pierce said. "BLET also made very strong arguments for long overdue changes to its craft specific agreements that were documented by substantial evidence, and made it quite clear to the Board that our wage settlements with three of the four largest

Class I carriers and on-property negotiations with the fourth meant that health care cost-shifting would place a tremendous obstacle in the way of obtaining an acceptable settlement. Unfortunately, that is exactly the situation we now face."

### Bargaining in a dangerous political climate

The release of the PEB Report was followed by weeks of intensive bargaining, during which nearly all of the other Unions, one by one, reached tentative agreements. Finally, nearing the deadline for a nationwide strike, the BLET reached the carriers' bottom line. After consulting with and securing the support of the full National Wage Committee, the BLET Advisory Board, and dozens of General Chairmen representing all the involved railroads, President Pierce decided to place

a tentative agreement before the membership.

The agreement largely reflected the recommendations of Presidential Emergency Board 243. However, the BLET's National Wage Committee was able to secure a Flexible Spending Account (FSA) benefit to help offset and significantly mitigate possible increased costs associated with the health and welfare changes. The BLET bargainers also obtained a clarification to PEB 243's ambiguous recommendation that a 1% signing bonus only be paid on an employee's "straight time" earnings.

In the days prior to coming to terms with the carriers, the BLET learned that Congress was poised to prevent the organization from going on strike, which was a major factor in the decision to present the carriers' proposal to the membership.

"Not only was Congress going to prevent us from taking a stand on health

and welfare, but — in the ongoing War on Workers in America — conservative politicians had proposed legislation in place to weaken the Railway Labor Act in a bid to seriously undermine our ability to represent our members."

The legislation to weaken the Railway Labor Act, President Pierce said, would have been tacked onto legislation preventing the BLET from striking while at the same time imposing the base recommendations of PEB 243 on the BLET, without the FSA improvement and the signing bonus clarification.

### Members make the decision

Faced with the threat of Congressional intervention, BLET members stepped up and made their voices heard.

President Pierce said: "I promised you as recently as September that we would put every ounce of our energy into the fight, and I can assure you that my promise has been kept. We have left

no stone unturned, we have played out every scenario, and we have tried to overcome every obstacle the Carriers — and the system — has placed before us.

"I want to thank those who took the time to cast their vote. The BLET is a membership-driven union and our members show their strength every time they get involved," he said. "With the backing of a strong mobilization effort, we had a very solid turnout, considering balloting took place during the holiday season. With almost 70% of those voting casting a vote in favor of the agreement, it also is clear to me that our members took the time to study the issues before making a very careful choice."

### Looking ahead

The new agreement runs through January 1, 2015. The next round of negotiations will begin in November 2014, which is the earliest the BLET can submit its Section 6 notices. ☎



**Just practicing:** Members of the BLET's Strike Committee in Buffalo, N.Y., were ready with picket signs in the event that President Obama did not establish a Presidential Emergency Board on October 6. These Brothers are members of the BLET's Conrail (SAA/CSX-Northern District) General Committee of Adjustment. **From left:** Tom Fay, Vice Local Chairman, Div. 382; Rich Bartela, Secretary-Treasurer, Div. 382; Greg Lund, Secretary-Treasurer, NY State Legislative Board and Conrail GCA, and Div. 421 Legislative Rep; Chris Eleczko, Vice Local Chairman and Sec.-Treas., Div. 421; Bill Nasca, Local Chairman, Div. 421 and Alternate Sec.-Treas., Conrail GCA; Pat Driscoll, Local Chairman, Div. 382, and Vice General Chairman, Conrail GCA; Mike McCrory, Vice President, Div. 382; and John Millerski, member, Div. 382. Thanks to these and the countless Brothers and Sisters who stood ready for action.



# NEGOTIATIONS TIMELINE

## MARCH-APRIL 2009

BLET members participate in Collective Bargaining Survey to help National Division prepare for negotiations

## NOVEMBER 2009

BLET serves Section 6 notices

## JANUARY 2010

Current BLET contract (signed in 2007) becomes amendable under the Railway Labor Act

## FEBRUARY 2010

Negotiations begin; BLET is part of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) for health and welfare negotiations only

## JANUARY 2011

Negotiations stall; RLBC and BLET ask National Mediation Board for mediation assistance

## FEBRUARY 2011

BLET expands participation in RLBC to cover all aspects of bargaining

## JUNE 13, 2011

Mediation reaches an impasse; RLBC asks NMB for release from mediation

## SEPTEMBER 2, 2011

RLBC and BLET reject NMB's proffer of arbitration

## SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

NMB releases RLBC and BLET from mediation, triggering a 30-day cooling off period under the Railway Labor Act

## SEPTEMBER 20

BLET members begin voting to authorize a national strike

## OCTOBER 3, 2011

Strike authorization vote concludes; 97% of members who participated voted in favor of strike

## OCTOBER 6, 2011

President Obama appoints PEB 243 to investigate dispute and make recommendations; strike averted

## OCTOBER 13-20, 2011

PEB holds hearings in Washington, D.C.

## NOVEMBER 5, 2011

NMB 243 issues its recommendations

## DECEMBER 1, 2011

BLET announces it has reached tentative national agreement with carriers

## DECEMBER 5, 2011

BLET formally notifies General Chairman of tentative national agreement

## DECEMBER 16, 2011

Voting begins on tentative national agreement

## JANUARY 5, 2012

Membership ratifies national agreement

## LC WORKSHOP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Director of the BLET Education and Training Department, rearranged the class agenda so members would be able to attend.

"Education and Training is an important cornerstone of our Brotherhood," National Secretary-Treasurer Walpert said. "It was breaking away from the traditional classroom training for hands-on learning at the PEB hearing was a once in a lifetime opportunity."

"Presidential Emergency Board hearing are the pinnacle of the Railway Labor Act, and they happen very rarely," National President Pierce said. "Not very many members get to actually see it in action. These Brothers were given a rare opportunity to see the process of the Railway Labor Act in person, which I know was a unique and valuable learning experience for all involved."

Members from the Local Chairman class attended the hearings on Tuesday, October 17, which was the day Rail Labor unions made their individual presentations.



BLET members at the Education & Training Department's Local Chairman Workshop in Silver Spring, Md., October 16-22, 2011.

**Michael D. Twombly**  
National Vice President

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# Mike Twombly

## Negotiating on the smallest and largest railroads

**F**inance docket 30965. This obscure piece of government bureaucracy may not mean anything to most BLET members, but it's what got Michael D. Twombly started in the union movement.

Finance docket 30965 was the paperwork filed in the late 1980s that transferred the assets of the former Boston & Maine Railroad to the Springfield Terminal. Most of the Brotherhood's veteran officers and engineers at the time left the B&M for jobs at Amtrak or elsewhere, creating a leadership void that needed to be filled.

"It was my turn to step up to the plate," said Twombly. "Things changed so fast that I moved up almost instantaneously. But once you get on this train, it just keeps rolling."

Twombly's train has rolled all the way to Cleveland, Ohio, where he now serves as a BLET National Vice President. In that capacity, he has professionally handled a wide range of assignments, from negotiating first-time contracts for less than a dozen members at one short line railroad, to assisting in on-property negotiations for nearly 7,000 members at the nation's largest railroad, Union Pacific.

"Along the way, I've met and worked with many good Brothers and Sisters, making many friends," Vice President Twombly said. "There is much satisfaction in assisting our excellent General Chairmen to reach good agreements. Reaching agreements on the smallest carriers such as Talleyrand Terminal Railroad and Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway shows that the BLET cares for all its Brothers and Sisters — from the smallest railroad to the largest."

He began his railroad career as a fireman for the Boston & Maine Railroad at the age of 18 on June 30, 1971. He became a qualified locomotive engineer one year later, being set up and set back until eventually being promoted full time engineer in 1977. He joined the BLET on November 1, 1971, and is a proud member of Division 191 in Lunenburg, Mass.

His service to the Brotherhood began in 1987 when he volunteered for the position of Vice Local Chairman. It was then that finance docket 30965 dropped, promoting him to the Local Chairman job almost immediately.

Twombly served as Vice General Chairman under Char-

lie Klimek, his long time friend and mentor, from 1989 thru 1996. He became General Chairman after Brother Klimek left office in 1997.

In 2006, Twombly was elected to the position of Second Alternate Vice President. On May 21, 2008, he was elevated to the office of Vice President following a vacancy on the

Advisory Board. In October of 2010, he was reelected by acclamation to continue serving as National Vice President.


As a Vice President, he's been assigned to assist approximately 30 different short line and regional railroads at various times. He assisted his assigned General Chairmen in successful negotiating sessions on 13 different short line and regional carriers, including first-ever agreements on Talleyrand Terminal and Montreal, Maine & Atlantic.

"There was always a new challenge coming down the road," he said. "The successful defense of a UTU raid on the IC&E during the winter of 1999, the completion of a nine year negotiation on the Union Railroad, and the

successful negotiation and transition from a traditional style agreement to a CN hourly pattern agreement on the DM&IR, just to mention a few."

Vice President Twombly comes from a family with a rich tradition of railroading. His father, Wilbur M. Twombly, hired out on the Boston & Maine as a fireman on February 15, 1948, in North Conway, N.H. Wilbur earned promotion to engineer and became both steam and diesel qualified, retiring in 1990 with 42 years service. His great grandfather Arthur Seavey and great uncle Willis Twombly were both B&M engineers with hire dates in the late 1890s.

Vice President Twombly and his wife Roxane were married April 8, 1972. The couple lives in Andover, Mass., and has one son, Jason (wife Jennifer), and two grandchildren, Jameson, 7, and Julia, 6. Just recently, his son Jason earned promotion to engineer and is running engines for Springfield Terminal Railway.

Vice President Twombly enjoys skiing, fishing, golf, photography and especially baseball — as a younger man, he played amateur ball in the Merrimac Valley Lawrence — Lowell Men's League. These days, he skates at grandson Jameson's hockey practice and plays some golf when time permits. 

### MICHAEL D. TWOMBLY BIO

**Title:** National Vice President

**Railroad:** Springfield Terminal (Former Boston & Maine)

**Member:** Division 191 (Lunenburg, Mass.)

**Background:** Hired out on June 30, 1971. Earned promotion to engineer, 1972.

**Union history:** Vice Local Chairman and Local Chairman, Division 191; Vice General Chairman and General Chairman, D&H/ST GCofA; Elected 2nd Alternate Vice President, 2006; Promoted to Advisory Board, 2008; Reelected by acclamation, 2010.

**Personal:** He and wife Roxane have one son and two grandchildren; played amateur baseball as a younger man.

**Willard E. Knight**  
National Vice President

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# Willard Knight

## Solidarity and teamwork help build a stronger Brotherhood

**B**LET National Vice President Willard E. Knight, a 43-year railroader from the Norfolk & Western and now Norfolk Southern, has spent countless hours at the negotiating table representing BLET members.

His experience has taught him that teamwork can help you get what you want, and that has certainly paid off for the BLET's Norfolk Southern membership.

"I believe in the team concept and that through solidarity and hard work we can and will improve the lifestyle of our members while elevating both their social and economic standings," Vice President Knight said.

Knight helped negotiate some of the most innovative and forward-thinking agreements in the railroad industry. In particular, agreements that have taken the risk of exchanging set general wage increases for profit sharing, which have paid off handsomely for BLET members.

"While serving as General Chairman, I was instrumental in talking the other two general Chairmen into going on-property with our agreement in 1996," he said. "In that agreement we were able to achieve the a bonus system based on carrier earnings, the first of its kind on a Class One. It was a joint effort by all NS General Committees and demonstrated our ability to work together for a common goal."

The bonus system is set up exactly like carrier supervisor bonus program.

"If they make money, we make money," he said.

The bonus program contained in the original 1996 agreement was carried over in follow up agreements in 2000, 2003 and 2008.

"The idea has been well received," he said. "Our members come out way ahead, in my opinion."

His railroad career began in 1969 as a fireman on the Norfolk & Western Railroad in Portsmouth, Ohio. It was during this time that he was taken under the wing of a veteran locomotive engineer.

"As a fireman I worked with BLE Local Chairman Elwood Clemmons," he said. "I saw what he was able to do to help people, and I wanted to following his footsteps."

After earning promotion to locomotive engineer in

1972, Knight joined the Brotherhood on January 1, 1974. He has held continuous membership in Division 511 in Portsmouth, Ohio ever since. After joining the BLET, he was elected Local Chairman of Division 511 in 1979, a position he held until he was elected General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern-Eastern Region General Committee of Adjustment on January 1, 1992.

While serving as General Chairman, he was elected by acclamation to the position of third-alternate vice president at the BLET's First National Convention in 2006. He was promoted to the BLET's Advisory Board on April 24, 2009. At the time, he had served as General Chairman for 18 years.


He was reelected National Vice President by acclamation at the BLET's Second National Convention, in October of 2010, and his four-year term of office began on January 1, 2011.

"I have always given the very best that I have to give in providing quality representation for our members," he said.

Vice President Knight said he was never familiar with short line industry until he was promoted to the Advisory Board. Now he is assigned to assist several, including the New England Central, Indiana & Ohio, Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern, and New York, Susquehanna and Western. He said his job is made more enjoyable thanks to the General Chairmen he works with, including Bob Linsey (Norfolk Southern-Wheeling & Lake Erie); Ben Martin (NEC, NYS&W) and John Karakian (Grand Trunk Western).

"Everyday is a new and valuable learning experience," Knight said. "But the one lesson I see in action every day is just how important the membership is to the strength and success of our Brotherhood."

Brother Knight loves his job, but his favorite past time is spending time with his family and grandchildren. He summed up his life in three words: "Work and grandkids."

He and his wife Teresia Lynne have been married since 1971. The couple has one daughter, Michele (husband Patrick), and two grandchildren: Brady, 10, and Creed, 6. His son-in-law Patrick is a Norfolk Southern locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 511. 

### WILLARD E. KNIGHT BIO

**Title:** National Vice President

**Railroad:** Norfolk Southern (formerly Norfolk & Western)

**Member:** Division 511 (Portsmouth, Ohio)

**Background:** Hired out in 1969; Earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1972

**Union history:** Local Chairman of Division 511 in 1979-1992; General Chairman, Norfolk Southern-Eastern Region GCA, 1992-2009; Elevated to National Vice President, 2009; Reelected Vice President by acclamation, 2010.

**Personal:** He and wife, Lynne, married since 1971; one daughter, Michele (husband Patrick), and two grandchildren, Brady, 10, and Creed, 6; Son-in-law Patrick is a NS engineer and member of Division 511.



# Vote!

We need to make smart choices when exercising our fundamental right



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

**W**e have all heard these statistics, and I have talked about them time and time again as

I have travelled the past year — the top one percent of Americans now controls 40 percent of the wealth in this country; the power of the wealthy one percent and the power of the businesses they control is immense; the middle class is shrinking and the interests of the wealthy are winning.

I am going to add to this list another striking statistic that I heard recently — the economic inequality of the U.S. is currently worse than that of the Roman Empire at its height, a society built on conquest and slave labor, which had a more equitable income distribution with the top one percent only controlling 16 percent of the wealth (according to historians Walter Schiedel and Steven Friesen). This is striking, but not surprising.

What is also striking is that we fail to hear one thing: we, who are not in the one percent, have an advantage — sheer numbers. In a democracy like ours, this is a salient, but often forgotten point. I am not advocating a revolution — the revolution happened 135 years ago.

Every two years, Americans have the opportunity to reshape and redirect our country. Inequality developed not by accident or overnight but over decades and as a result of voting for people who did not represent the issues of working men and women — the 99 percent that we have heard so much about lately, but we can fix it by voting.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR VOTE

**1800: ONE VOTE**  
in the electoral college made Thomas Jefferson President over Aaron Burr

**1845: ONE VOTE**  
brought Texas into the Union

**1867: ONE VOTE**  
decided on the purchase of Alaskan territory

**1868: ONE VOTE**  
prevented President

Andrew Johnson from being impeached

**1916: ONE VOTE**  
in each California precinct re-elected Woodrow Wilson to the Presidency over Charles E. Hughes

**1948: 87 VOTES**  
elected Lyndon B. Johnson to the Senate

**1960: ONE VOTE**  
per precinct made John

F. Kennedy the President over contender Richard Nixon

**2000: 237 VOTES**  
in Florida resulted in the election of George W. Bush to the Presidency

**2004: 129 VOTES**  
declared Christine Gregoire the Governor of Washington in a third and final hand recount

Voting is a fundamental right enshrined in our democratic process — it is the one right that helps us to protect all of the others, and the decisions we make regarding who to vote for are vital to the future. It drives me crazy when people say that who they vote for or simply voting at all does not matter. If you look at the side bar (above), you can see how important each and every vote is. If one vote can have an impact, think of the impact of the “99 percent.”

But it is not only the act of voting that is important. Just as important is who we vote for — we as Americans got ourselves into this inequality mess and we can get ourselves out of it. We, as voters, direct everything from our children’s schools, our public libraries, the state of our roads and bridges to the rights of corporations, workers, etc. when we cast our ballots. Voting for the right candidates has an impact. We have seen the impact

of voting on our country. We see it each and every day.

The decisions we make in the voting booth have direct consequences — both positive and negative. As such, it is very important that we each carefully choose the candidates that we vote for and vote for those who will support working men and women and their families regardless of political party.

In the 2010 elections, many Americans voted for changes to their state and federal officials, and these officials, who seemed great on paper, began to make changes — some creating gridlock in Washington, attacking issues important to the BLET, some attacking labor rights and workers in the state capitols — that the voters did not intend. Since the 2010 elections, the BLET and labor have been working to beat back the consequences of that election. There have been repeated attacks on unions (see Right-



to-Work sidebar, right), workers and issues that are important to our interests like Amtrak funding and privatization. These are fights that we have been beating back for years, but we can stop fighting if only we elect those people who represent our interests.

Look, I do not care which political party a candidate belongs to. The BLET supports candidates who support our issues, and each of us needs to vote for those candidates. In short, we need to elect individuals who will stand up for the middle class and represent our interests. We need to elect individuals who will stand up for safe working environments for all — including those in the railroad industry. We need to elect individuals who will stand up for your right to join a union. We need to elect individuals who will stand up for the future of this country — our children and grandchildren.

We need to see each election as a fight for our future. I, like many of you, want to leave this world a better place for my children. I do not want to see the rights, privileges and standard of living that we have erode to the point that we leave the next generation worse off than we are. Until recently, this dream — the American dream — has been attained for most if not all. Each successive generation has left the world a little better for those who came after. My life is better than my father's and his life was better than his father's. But this is not guaranteed. We need to fight to make it happen, and we can do this by voting. The 99 percent needs to stand up; we need to stand up and make it happen. Vote! 🗳️

## 2012 MAJOR ISSUE: RIGHT-TO-WORK LAWS

**E**fforts to curtail workers' rights are expected to continue and possibly intensify in 2012, with several states and the U.S. Congress pushing for right to work laws.

Right-to-Work, which is currently the law in 23 states, prohibits agreements between labor unions and employers that make membership, payment of union dues or fees a condition of employment, either before or after hiring, which would require the workplace to be a closed shop.

On the federal level, legislation is still pending in the House and Senate. This National Right-to-Work Act is significant because it would, for the first time, amend both the National Labor Relations Act — as the state versions do — and the Railway Labor Act. If the legislation passes, union

members would have to voluntarily pay dues to their union and would no longer be required to join a union — driving down costs for employers in the form of lower wages and benefits nationwide, including those in the rail and airline industry, and in time eliminating collective bargaining agreements under the Railway Labor Act.

The Senate bill, S. 504, at press time had 20 co-sponsors, and the House bill, H.R. 2040, had 72 co-sponsors. While neither has moved in their respective Committees and are not expected to in the 112th Congress, the results of the 2012 elections will be key to the legislation's future.

Movement of legislation on the state level is more likely. Below is a list of states with Right-to-Work threats.

**INDIANA** Indiana became the nation's 23rd Right-to-Work state on February 1. Speculation is that Michigan's legislature could become the next to consider the anti-union legislation.

**MAINE** Governor LePage is once again expected to pursue passage of Right-to-Work legislation in 2012.

**MICHIGAN** Right-wing legislators will once again attempt to pass Right-to-Work legislation along with the repeal of project labor agreements and prevailing wage rates in the state. In addition, there are expected to be continued attacks on public employees, including, but not limited to, teacher tenure reforms and limits on employee benefits.

**MINNESOTA** Despite a Democratic Governor, there is still concern that a

Republican-controlled Legislature will continue to push anti-worker legislation, including Right-to-Work, Paycheck Deception, and attacks on public employee collective bargaining, through the referral process, thereby circumventing the Governor and putting bills directly before voters.

**MISSOURI** Right-wing legislators will once again attempt to pass Right-to-Work and Paycheck Deception bills, among other anti-worker measures. In addition, the Republican-controlled Legislature may also try to pass a legislative referral on RTW to go before voters next November.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE** While efforts to override Governor Lynch's veto of Right-to-Work legislation stalled, there are still concerns that the Republican-dominated

Legislature will once again push RTW. In addition, there may be attacks on public employees, including eliminating collective bargaining.

**NEW JERSEY** There are anticipated attacks on public sector employees, most notably on teachers tenure and school vouchers.

**OHIO** There are potential Tea Party efforts to pass a Right-to-Work constitutional amendment next November.

**PENNSYLVANIA** Following multiple hearings on the issue in the Republican-controlled Legislature earlier this year, there will likely Right-to-Work (for Less) battle in 2012.

**WISCONSIN** There is possible battle over Right-to-Work in 2012 as well as attacks on prevailing wages and project labor agreements. 🗳️

# Issue: Voter Suppression

Over the past century, our nation expanded the right to vote as a basic right of all U.S. citizens and made discrimination, which commonly occurred in the previous centuries a thing of the past. In 2011, however, that momentum abruptly shifted. Ahead of the 2012 elections, a wave of legislation tightening restrictions on voting has suddenly swept across the country. More than five million Americans could be affected by the new rules already put in place this year -- a number larger than the margin of victory in two of the last three presidential elections, according to New York University's Brennan Center for Justice.

State governments across the country passed many new laws making it harder to register or to vote. This year, more than 30 states debated changes to their voting laws. A dozen passed more restrictive rules requiring voters to present state-issued photo IDs, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, although Democratic governors in four states vetoed them. Florida and Ohio will cut nearly in half the number of days for early voting, and Florida lawmakers reversed rules that had made it easier for convicted felons to vote. Ohio's law is on hold and will be on the ballot in 2012 as a citizen's veto similar to the recent SB 5 campaign.

These new restrictions fall most heavily on young, minority, and low-income voters, as well as on voters with disabilities. This wave of changes may sharply tilt the political terrain for the 2012 election. Based on Brennan Center's analysis of the 19 laws and two executive actions that passed in 14 states, it is clear that:

**"The reason these laws are being passed is because their supporters know that voter turnout is a key issue, especially for worker friendly candidates, and they want to limit these voters."**

— JOHN P. TOLMAN

- These new laws could make it significantly harder for more than five million eligible voters to cast ballots in 2012.
- The states that have already cut back on voting rights will provide 171 electoral votes in 2012 – 63 percent of the 270 needed to win the presidency.
- Of the 12 likely battleground states, as assessed by an August Los Angeles Times analysis of Gallup polling, five have already cut back on voting rights (and may pass additional restrictive legislation), and two more are currently considering new restrictions.

## Other means of voter suppression

Changing the voting laws has not been the only means used to suppress voting in recent elections.

Paul E. Schurick, the 2010 campaign manager for former Maryland governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., was convicted in December by a Baltimore jury of four counts stemming from a robocall that prosecutors said was intended to suppress the black vote. The call, which Schurick acknowledged authorizing,

was placed on Election Day to 112,000 voters in Baltimore and Prince George's County, the state's two largest majority-African American jurisdictions. Recipients were told by an unidentified woman that they could "relax" because Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) had been successful. He was convicted under a law that was passed in reaction to previous, similar measures by former Governor Ehrlich in 2002.

## What can be done to stop this?

In reaction to the various laws, in December, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. said that the U.S. Department of Justice would use its full weight to ensure that election laws are not discriminatory. In a speech, he said the laws recently passed by the states are causing many Americans "to believe that we are failing to live up to our of our nation's most noble, and essential, ideals." The Justice Department has the power to enforce the Voting Rights Act which prevents voting laws from being intentionally discriminatory on the basis of race.

"The excuse given by the supporters of these laws is that they were passed to prevent voter fraud, but studies have shown that fraud happens too infrequently to be used as a justification," BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman said. "The reason these laws are being passed is because their supporters know that voter turnout is a key issue, especially for worker friendly candidates, and they want to limit these voters. The right to vote is a basic right in our country, and as these laws are intended to suppress the votes of working men and women, I strongly urge all BLET members to work against this intent by voting in every election." 🗳️





# Blood Pathogens

**A**n issue that many BLET members and most people in the railroad industry have never considered is the possibility of contamination by blood borne diseases or pathogens in the event of an accident or fatality.

It is important to be aware of this possibility if you or a crew member are injured or if a trespasser fatality occurs. Our human impulse would be to help others but it is important to be aware of the dangers of doing so and the proper precautions to take in this event.

Blood borne pathogens are infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). They are spread through contact with contaminated blood and bodily fluids, and can often

survive outside the body for days or hours. The HIV virus cannot survive outside the body for more than 10 minutes dependent on volume, but hepatitis B can be stable in dried blood for up to seven days and hepatitis C can last at room temperature for at least 16 hours but no longer than four days (Center for Disease Control).

According to OSHA, only employees who can reasonably be exposed to contaminated blood are covered by its standards, and issues on the railroad are, with few exceptions, typically not covered by OSHA at all. Exposure is usually not anticipated in a non-medical office setting by OSHA. If an employee is providing first aid or CPR as a Good Samaritan and not as a trained first aider that employee is not covered by the standard. Therefore, if an employee has an exposure incident while acting as a Good Samaritan, the employer is not required by the standard

to provide care.

While some railroads may have policies covering this issue, it is important that everyone take precautions to prevent exposure and ensure that if there was a spill that the materials have been properly cleaned up. If material has spilled onto your skin, it must be thoroughly washed as soon as possible. If it has spilled onto your clothing and soaked through so there was skin contact, the clothes must be removed and skin must be thoroughly washed. If there has been contact with mucous membranes (eye, nose, lips), they need to be thoroughly rinsed. If there is contact with open wounds or cracks in the skin, there is a risk of exposure (Ohio State Biological Sciences Safety Standard).

The BLET does not commonly issue medical advice, but this is an important issue to be aware of. If you have more questions or fear exposure, you should contact your doctor. ☎

## REGULATORY ISSUES

**T**he impact of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 continues to reverberate in the regulatory process with several outstanding issues from that legislation being processed through the Rail Safety Advisory Committee process.

Among the issues still pending from 2011 are: Positive Train Control, Dark Territory, Electronic Device Distraction, and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. Risk Reduction and Fatigue Mitigation were recently accepted as tasks at the full RSAC meeting in December. Med-

ical standards were not a part of the RSIA but are still a pending issue.

**POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL:** After the issuance of a final rule on January 15, 2010, the Association of American Railroads and its members sued the Federal Railroad Administration. As part of the settlement of that lawsuit, several issues were referred back to the RSAC and are currently being deliberated.

**DARK TERRITORY:** The Dark Territory Working Group has met several times in recent months and is working to de-

velop standards for technology in dark territory.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICE DISTRACTION:** This task was accepted on May 20, 2011, to prescribe mitigation strategies, programs and processes for governing the use of personal electronic devices that could cause distractions to railroad employees engaged in safety-critical activities. The working group held its first meeting in October 2011 and will meet again in early 2012.

**CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING:** The working group met its goal of producing rule

language by December 2011. The language will now continue to move through the RSAC process.

**MEDICAL STANDARDS:** The working group met in September 2011 and discussed the various issues in a draft of a proposed rule, but many issues are still pending. The working group will meet again in early 2012.

The BLET will continue to work through the RSAC process on these issues and others, and will also closely monitor the development of other issues as they arise in 2012. ☎

# “It wasn’t ever easy, but we adapted, we survived, and most of us prospered”

**A**fter 44 years on the rails, Brother Christopher D. Pacha safely completed his Last Run on the CP Rail local 910, the old “Nitrin Patrol,” from Ceffco, Ill., to Davenport, Iowa, on September 29, 2011.

Brother Pacha hired out as a switchman on the Rock Island at the age of 18 in September of 1967 at Silvis, Ill. He transferred to engine service as a fireman with a seniority date of May 18, 1968, and earned promotion to engineer on December 19, 1971.

“I worked almost every job between Chicago and Des Moines, Iowa, at one time or another,” he said. “After the Rock was shut down in 1980, I worked two years on the Illinois Central Gulf out of Waterloo, Iowa. The BLE had a very good agreement provision that allowed a lot of us Rock Islanders hire out as engineers. I subsequently became a BLE member.”

Brother Pacha joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1981, and retired as a member of Division 200 (Davenport, Iowa).

“The period of time my career spans has been a tough one for many railroaders of my generation,” he said. “I was furloughed during the Reagan recession in 1982 and spent the next eight years on two regional lines, the Iowa Railroad and the Iowa Interstate in Davenport. I quit the Interstate and hired on the Soo Line in 1990 because they had a superior agreement with the BLE.”

Things stayed tough for him and the organization over the next few years due to numerous acquisitions and buy-outs.

“I stayed on when that railroad was sold to the MRL in 1997 and then again to the anti-labor Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern (DM&E) in



**Enjoying his retirement:** Brother C.D. Pacha at his Last Run on September 29, 2011.

2002,” he said. “When the DM&E took over we had to go back to square one and organize the property all over again. These were pretty tough times for us in the BLE.”

Brother Pacha served the BLET as Local Chairman for many years as the line switched ownership from the Rock Island to the I&M Rail Link and to the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern (IC&E).

“It wasn’t ever easy. We adapted, we survived, and most of us prospered,” he said. “Throughout my career it has been the representation and brotherhood of the BLET that has made it possible for me to make a good living in an ever-changing railroad industry,” he said. “Our pay and

benefits helped to put me, my three children, and now my wife through college. I am now enjoying one of the best pensions in the land.”

He and his wife Lorraine have two daughters and one son: Mary, Claire and Noel.

“A lot of our brothers worked long and hard to get us where we are and to get what we have. I believe our organization is better now than ever.

“Like all rails with a long and varied career there are lots of stories, but one fact that I enjoyed for all of my 44 years of railroading was that I always made it home Christmas eve and I never worked Christmas day,” he said. “My family always thanked me for that.”

# Division 269's John Bove helped Secretary-Treasurer on-line reporting

**B**rother John S. Bove of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.) retired effective October 1, 2011, safely concluding his 31-year railroad career at the Long Island Railroad and ending his many years of dedicated service to the Brotherhood.

Brother Bove hired out in the LIRR's maintenance of equipment department at Morris Park Yard in 1980. He spent 12 years in that department before earning promotion to locomotive engineer in 1992.

He finished the final two years of his career working as a "change engine" engineer out of the Richmond Hill rail yard in Jamaica. Brother Bove's Last Run came working as a locomotive engineer on Montauk train 8700, safely heading two MD30 engines with eight cars between Jamaica and Montauk, and then train 8701 from Montauk to Jamaica.

As a locomotive engineer in 1997, Brother Bove received a special safety award from LIRR management for assisting his fellow train crew members in saving the life of an infant. The boy had fallen under his train at Hewlett Station after slipping out of his stroller while boarding a train with his mother.

Brother Bove is perhaps best known as the "keeper of the books" for Division 269, the largest Division in the Brotherhood. He was elected alternate Secretary-Treasurer of Division 269 in 1994, a post he held for seven years. In 2001, he became the Division's full-time Secretary-Treasurer. He also served the BLET National Division as one of four "special auditors" from December 2007 through October 1, 2011.

During his first few years as alternate Secretary-Treasurer, Brother Bove assisted the National Division during the conversion from the manual paper filing of the monthly reports to the current modernized computer-based on-line reporting system.

"Since Division 269 is the largest



**John Bove receives a retirement plaque** from BLET National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert at Division 269's 44th annual Retirement Dinner on November 5, 2011. **From left:** Kevin Sexton, Division 269's new Secretary-Treasurer; Brother Bove; NST Walpert; BLET National President Dennis Pierce; and Division 269 member and Entertainment Committee Chairman Karl Bischoff.

single Division within the BLET, it made sense to have us involved with the experimentation and trial and error before the system went into effect," he said.

His input led to several changes and adjustment to make the new reporting system more user friendly.

Brother Bove is a third generation railroader. His grandfather, John, worked as a track foreman from 1910 to 1955. His uncle Sal "Sonny" was a locomotive engineer from 1941 to 1977, and his father, Jack, worked from 1947 to 1982 and was General Chairman and International Representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Also, his sister Frances worked for 20 years as a secretary and is now retired.

"I enjoyed operating trains and took great pride in my union work, but nothing can surpass the enjoyment I get from spending time with my three children," Brother Bove said.

His daughter, Jaclyn, 22, who is in college majoring in teaching, Victoria, 19, is at Farmingdale State College pre-

paring to study Veterinary Medicine, and Anthony, 12, hopes to play baseball for the New York Yankees.

Outside of his railroad and union work, Brother Bove is a 31-year member of the North Massapequa Fire Department, having served as Chief from 1994-1996. He enjoys watching baseball, is a Yankees fan, and has umpired baseball games for many years.

Now that he is retired, Brother Bove plans to enjoy life, vacation to warm places in the wintertime, go boating in the summers, and spend more time with his children, family and girlfriend Erin Marie.

"I truly enjoyed working for the railroad, operating trains, and being a proud member of the BLET," Brother Bove said. "It provided for my family for 31 years. I also had the opportunity and served with great pride as a union representative. I worked with some of the nicest union representatives from the National Division through my years. It's a self satisfying job being a union rep... a thankless job... but I loved it." 📍

# Division 269 President Scott Decker retires

**B**rother Scott D. Decker of BLET Division 269 (Long Island, N.Y.) safely completed his Last Run as a Long Island Rail Road engineer on September 16, 2011.

His railroad career spanned 27 years and began when he hired out on June 25, 1984, as a maintenance of way worker for the LIRR. He became an engineer trainee in 1986 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in April of 1988.

Brother Decker was actively involved in the Brotherhood throughout his career. He served as Vice President of Division 269 for two years and then as President from 2005 until his retirement in 2011. As president, he had oversight of various Brotherhood activities, including the annual Division 269 dinner-dance, Christmas party, scholarship fund, and the Bobby McCann Memorial Golf Outing.

A professional and skilled engineer, Brother Decker was presented with a safety award by LIRR management for his on-duty safety record.

Brother Decker followed in the footsteps of his father David, who was



**From left:** LIRR General Chairman Mickey Quinn; Scott Decker; and BLET National President Dennis Pierce.

a locomotive engineer and training instructor. His Brother, David Jr., is a Locomotive Engineer for New Jersey Transit and serves the Brotherhood as General Chairman of the LIRR General Committee of Adjustment. Additionally, his brother Chris is a car inspector for the LIRR.

Brother Decker and his wife, Kar-

en, celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary on December 28, 2011. The couple has two children, Paige and Roy.

During retirement, Brother Decker plans to golf, travel, and spend more time with his family. He also plans to continue his volunteer work with the charity "Angels Without Faces." ☐

# Division 53 engineer Brooks C. Kay retires from NJ Transit

**N**ew Jersey Transit locomotive engineer Brooks C. Kay completed his last run on September 1, 2011, on NJT train #3706. A member of Division 53 (Jersey City, N.J.), Brother Kay hired out as a fireman on the New Jersey Division of the former Penn Central Railroad on June 14, 1971. He joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1973, and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1974.

In 1976, Penn Central was merged into Conrail, and in January of 1983, he worked a brief period for Amtrak before transferring to NJ Transit. ☐



**A veteran engineer:** Brother B.C. Kay, who hired out 40 years ago, is now retired.

# Barney Wilkins a proud 51-year BLET member

**B**rother Barney F. Wilkins marked 51 consecutive years of BLET membership earlier this year. He joined BLET Division 219 in Shreveport, La., on January 1, 1960. Born July 31, 1928, the 83-year-old Brother has spent more than half of his life in the Brotherhood.

Brother Wilkins hired out in 1945 has a machinist helper on the Texas & Pacific Railway in Shreveport, La. He went firing in 1952 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer for the T&P in 1962.

He later worked for the Missouri Pacific Railroad and later Union Pacific between 1952 and 1989. His last run was on March 26, 1989, as locomotive engineer of Union Pacific train 2147 in Reisor, La.

Brother Wilkins proudly served in the Marine Corps during the Korean



**Brother Wilkins:** A decorated Veteran of WWII and Korea.

War from 1950-1951. Prior to that he spent time in Japan from 1945-46. In all, he spent 17 years in the Marine Corps, and received numerous military citations, including: Combat action ribbon, Navy Marine commendation medal, Presidential Unit Citation (PUC), Marine Corps reserve, Amer-

ican Defence, American Campaign medal, Asiatic Pacific, WWII, National Defense, Korean service, Korean PUC, and a United Nations medal.

He is the third generation of his family to have worked in railroad service, father in the footsteps of his two grandfathers, father and mother. Several of his uncles and his brother-in-law also worked for the railroad. In all, he estimates his family has accumulated approximately 450 years of seniority on the Texas & Pacific, Mo Pac, and Union Pacific railroads.

Brother Wilkins and his wife, Wilona Ann, were married on December 23, 1989. He has two children, Gary C. and Sally K. Wilkins.

During his retirement, Brother Wilkins has kept himself busy as a state hand in several plays and theatrical productions. 🎭

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  
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American Dream cannot be achieved on minimum wage. That dream cannot be accomplished when working men and women are deprived of a fair day's pay for an honest day's work and are deprived of affordable health care. That dream cannot be accomplished under your party's imaginary solution called "Right to Work" either. This legislative scam against all working Americans is re-ally "Right to Work for Less," as countless economic studies have proved. Along with corpo-

rate America's out-sourcing of middle class jobs, "Right to Work for Less" is in large part why our economy still flounders. Fewer working Americans — all the while distributing more wealth to the corporate benefactors that control your party's agenda — will not restore the middle class. Nor will it repair our consumer-driven economy.

It is past time for the tone of our debate about the future of this country and its middle class to change. You may be comfortable attacking unions, and in doing so demonizing the hard working Americans that belong to Unions. I, for one, intend to

do everything in my power to ensure that the American people that you claim to represent know the truth about who Union America is and what our goals are. There is too much at stake for America, and most importantly for the backbone of America — the middle class — to allow this one-sided anti-union narrative to continue uncorrected.

Sincerely,

Dennis R. Pierce  
President, Teamsters  
Rail Conference  
National President,  
Brotherhood of Locomotive  
Engineers and Trainmen

**THE FOLLOWING SENATORS ALSO CO-SPONSORED S. 504, AND I URGE EACH BLET MEMBER TO WRITE A SIMILAR LETTER TO ONE OF THEM:**

John Barrasso (WY); Richard Burr (NC); Saxby Chambliss (GA); Tom Coburn (OK); John Cornyn (TX); Jim DeMint (SC); Chuck Grassley (IA); Orrin G. Hatch (UT); Dean Heller (NV); James M. Inhofe (OK); Jon Kyl (AZ); Mike Lee (UT); John McCain (AZ); Jerry Moran (KS); Rand Paul (KY); James E. Risch (ID); Marco Rubio (FL); Jeff Sessions (AL); Pat Toomey (PA); David Vitter (LA); and Roger F. Wicker (MS). 🎭



# “Oh, I didn’t know that you even existed!”



**2011 Southwestern Convention Meeting:** From left, Anita Caruso, Auxiliary National President; Larry Schneider, SWCM chairman; Sereena Hogan, National Vice President; Helen Brand, National Treasurer; Kathy Hurst, National 2nd Vice President; and Teri Fleming, National Alternate Treasurer.



**BY ANITA J. CARUSO**  
BLET AUXILIARY  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

I have been a member of the BLET Auxiliary (formerly known as the Grand International Auxiliary, or GIA) since 1980, and have served as a national officer for over 13 years. I cannot tell you how many times over the years I have heard the statement, “Oh, I didn’t know that you even existed!” I must say that sentence makes me cringe like nails on a chalkboard. It makes me wonder what are we doing wrong; what can we come up with to spread the news that we do exist, complete with a purpose and mission?

The Auxiliary has been in existence over 120 years, yet many BLET families

still have no idea that we are a functioning organization. I cannot tell you how very frustrating this is to those of us who are trying to increase our membership. Without new members, our future is in jeopardy. Without new members, our ability to spread the word about key issues is exceedingly diminished. Those issues include the legislative arena, working conditions on the railroad, the Family Medical Leave Act, the Federal Employers Liability Act, BLET-designated legal counsel, Hours of Service laws, health and welfare benefits, Railroad Retirement, divorce entitlements, or what to do when your spouse is injured, or worse yet, killed in the line of duty.

We currently have 20 active auxiliaries in the United States, with approximately 200 members, and approximately 120 members-at-large. There

was a time back in the early 1900s when we had 600 local auxiliaries and approximately 26,000 members. This is mind boggling to me! I know that times have changed and women are now an integral part of the work force, but I find it hard to believe that the spouses of railroad engineers, whether male or female, have no interest in learning about important information that affects their lives.

We have had many spouses call us after a tragic accident occurs and we do everything we can to help them, whether they are auxiliary members or not. You do not have to be a member to get information from our website or by calling or e-mailing one of our national officers. We are happy to answer all of your questions and, if we do not know the answers, we will find someone who can help you. However, with-



out the support of an active and growing membership, our organization will perish and we will no longer be available to do that.

We have no official office. The home of the national president becomes the “home office” for our organization, and of course that changes each time a new president is elected. Our Executive Council, a core group of five national officers, does the lion’s share of the auxiliary work. Each of us maintains an office within our homes, and we are scattered throughout the United States. We meet a few times a year at the regional conventions and have a yearly Executive Council Meeting to award scholarships, tend to our financial matters, and catch up on old and new National Auxiliary business.

We are very fortunate, especially during this administration, to have the support of the BLET National Division. In compliance with a resolution passed at the 2001 BLET National Convention, the BLET has set aside certain funds to help subsidize our organizing efforts and the work of our legislative matters. They have also been very gracious about allowing us to have some of our official documents, such as our Constitution and Bylaws, printed in their print shop in Cleveland, Ohio. We greatly appreciate their financial support, for without it we would not be able to further spread the word that we do exist and to continue in our efforts to recruit new members and carry on our legislative work. We are happy to provide printed information packets at the venues where we make presentations or to anyone who is interested in learning more about our organization. For those who are interested in learning how to get a local auxiliary started in their area, we have a more comprehensive informa-

“I find it hard to believe that the spouses of railroad engineers, whether male or female, have no interest in learning about important information that affects their lives.”


— ANITA CARUSO,  
BLET AUXILIARY  
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

tional packet that gives specific instructions and the steps that need to be taken to accomplish this. And we are always available to help with this in any way we can.

Our quarterly newsletter is distributed to our members as well as to a number of BLET members who have requested to subscribe to it. The newsletter is also posted on our website. Our National Vice President/National Legislative Representative Serena Hogan is the editor and publisher of the newsletter and does a fabulous job of compiling articles from our national officers, our members, and BLET-designated legal counsel who contribute articles for each edition as well as help subsidize the costs involved with printing and distribution. We feel that our newsletter is informative to everyone connected with

the railroad, even those of you who are enjoying life as retirees.

Our scholarship program is something for which we are immensely proud to raise funds at the four yearly regional conventions. We award anywhere from seven to 10 \$1,000 scholarships each year. To qualify for a scholarship, a student must have one parent who is a member of the BLET and one parent who has maintained membership in the BLET Auxiliary for at least two years. The BLET Auxiliary also administers the scholarship program for the International Western Convention (IWC) each year. As of next year, the IWC will award four scholarships. There is no BLET Auxiliary membership requirement to apply for an IWC scholarship, but the BLET member parent must reside in one of the states that belong to the IWC.

I hope that by reading this you have become more familiar with who we are and what we do, and perhaps your interest has been piqued enough to consider joining our organization. I would love to be able to go through the next year without hearing those words, “Oh, I didn’t know that you even existed!” one more time. Please go to our website, [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net) to find out more about who we are and what we are doing. We would be honored to welcome you into our world and share with you some things that will help you, your spouse, and your family in the process! 

**FOR INFORMATION ABOUT JOINING THE AUXILIARY, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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(402) 330-6348

**VICE PRESIDENT/NLR**  
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**SECRETARY**  
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**TREASURER**  
**Helen Brand**  
(913) 256-2741

**1ST VP/NOC**  
**Gina Forman**  
(765) 432-1050

**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](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)

**PURPOSE:**

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

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1370 Ontario St., Mezzanine, Cleveland, OH 44113-1702

## Plan to attend 2012 BLET regional meetings!



### Orlando, Fla. 85th annual SMA

JUNE 24-29, 2012 Arrangements Chairman Earl Karper,  
ekarper@sma2012.com, [www.sma2012.com](http://www.sma2012.com)

Photo: courtesy Walt Schmidt



### Billings, Mont. 72nd annual IWC

JULY 29-AUGUST 1, 2012 Arrangements Chairman  
Craig Gilchrist, [blecag@nemotel.net](mailto:blecag@nemotel.net) and Co-Chair D.B. Kenner,  
[kennerdb@yahoo.com](mailto:kennerdb@yahoo.com). Photo: Billings Chamber of Commerce/CVB



### Atlantic City, N.J. 74th annual EUMA

AUGUST 19-24, 2012 Arrangements Chairman Matt Kronyak,  
[mcmkronyak@aol.com](mailto:mcmkronyak@aol.com) or (201) 978-6436. Photo: Atlantic City CVB



### Galveston, Texas 77th annual SWCM

SEPTEMBER 9-13, 2012 Arrangements Chairman Jack Sweeny,  
[jsweeny@coastal-link.net](mailto:jsweeny@coastal-link.net) [www.bletswcm.org](http://www.bletswcm.org) Photo: Galveston Island CVB