

National Association of Retired Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

April 2019

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

We are 14 months away from the 42nd NARVRE National Biennial Convention to be held at the Waterfront Hotel, 10 Washington Street, Oakland, CA. Telephone: (510) 836-3800 Fax: (510) 832-5695 Reservations (888) 842-5333 WATERFRONTHOTE-

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

On February 14, 2019, the House & Senate approved the final seven FY2019 spending bills after nearly five months of short-term extensions and the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. This legislation wrapped up all 12 Appropriations packages and will also prevent anymore shut-downs from occurring through the end of the current fiscal year ending October 1, 2019. As we reported in earlier information, the final funding for rail operations was \$218 million less than the record-setting levels in FY2018, largely due to a drop in funding targeted at the Northeast Corridor. The bill still provides \$1.9 billion for Amtrak, equal to last year, and \$670 million for rail infrastructure improvements. It also includes several key provisions that NARVRE members and all rail passenger advocates fought for...as follows:

- A statement from Congress that long-distance passenger rail is an essential part of the nation's transportation system, specifically for rural parts of the country, and should be retained to ensure connectivity throughout the National Network;
- Requirements to invest in capital

LOAKLAND.COM. Convention dates are May 17-19, 2020.

As in past conventions you will be hearing from the Host Committee as to registration, room rates, meals and other activities taking place during the convention. All Units should be gearing up preparing to send a delegate to the convention. This is our second convention in California the last being in Sacramento, CA in 2014.

Units need to plan in advance financially to send a delegate with raffles, donations, silent auctions or whatever means works for your

Unit. We had members and Units inquiring after the last convention in Council Bluffs, IA as to why the dues were increased as their Unit was not there to participate. Those in attendance make the decisions. It is simple as that. Conventions are a lot of work but gratifying when completed.

All Units will receive instructions from the Host Committee as to registration as we get closer to the convention dates. You can contact Co-Chair Brian Lewis, Unit 61, Oakland, CA at (510) 710-2101 for further information.

— Tom Dwyer, National President



Congratulations to our new NARVRE UNIT 159, Ft. Worth, Texas

Unit 159 recently received their Charter. At a time we have been losing Units due to change in rail operations, we are happy to announce the restart of this Unit in the Dallas/Ft Worth area. Special thanks to our new local officers who were recently elected. L-R are the new officers of the new Chartered Fort Worth Unit #159 sworn into office on February 26, 2019: Dennis Taylor, Assistant Area 4 Director; Daniel Blume, Leg. Rep.; Larry Turner, Pres.; G. G. Gonzalez, Area 5 Director; Jim McKibbins, Vice Pres.; Steve Cline, Sec-treas.; Tony Padilla National, Vice President.

From the National Vice President —

Alert! Officers of Units and Area Directors! We still have a large percentage of members who have not paid their NARVRE Membership Dues. We will be initiating a new program to address the issue of delinquent members. We are now into the fourth month of the year, waiting for the spring to bring forth new life to the political and legislative environment as well as the ambivalent congressional progress. We hope that this season will bring resolve to the future of our senior benefits.

In terms of our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuities, Rail Labor and Management responded to the RRB Inspector General to leave the RRB Trust Fund alone as they disagreed with RRB Inspector General's recommendation to dissolve the Trust. Our organization will continue to be vigilant with our goal to Promote, Protect, Preserve our RRB Pension Annuity.

In April of 2017, we initiated a program to encourage members to make voluntary contributions beyond the regular annual membership dues. We also challenged all officers to match my initial \$50.00 voluntary contribution to augment the coffers of NARVRE. We are proud to say that many members and officers responded with kind contributions. Many far above the challenge. I commit to once again renew the matching challenge with my new \$50.00 contribution to NARVRE once again.

Thank you to those that selected to contribute by memorializing family members who have passed on and those who selected to congratulatory sponsorships dedicated to Unit officer retirements. We appreciate your contribution no matter how small it may be. It serves to keep our organization strong. This is especially helpful in anticipation of the upcoming 42nd NARVRE Biennial National Convention to be held May 2020 hosted by Unit 61 Oakland, California.

Our Area Directors are making efforts to recruit new members and establish new units. I would like to recognize a couple of our Area Directors that are making major strides to expand our organization. Area 8 Di-

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

With the assistance of our database programmer, we have developed a new compelling organization management tool that allows those collecting dues the unique opportunity to accurately identify late/delinquent members. Additionally, this information was added to the roster allowing treasurers the ability to see member totals that show the percentages of delinquencies as well as the total outstanding revenue. Many units have already been proactively addressing the delinquency issue. For example, Unit 165 Moberly MO, led by George and Kristine Wisdom, have been successful in reducing the amounts of delinquencies in their unit by mailing postcard reminders. Other units such as Unit 92 led by Secretary Treasurer John Zupansic, in addition to mailing postcards utilize calling committees to reduce the number of delinquencies. There is only one unit in our organization nationwide, Unit 128 Mt Carmel, IL, that is showing 0% delinquency percentages as their total membership is current. Our National officers commend the great work of this unit. Great Job!

We will be mailing via USPS and emailing rosters to Unit Presidents and Secretary/Treasurers. If you are Unit President or Unit Secretary

rector Bob Aparicio continues to promote NARVRE by making educational visits to units in Area 8. In his most recent trip, he attended Unit #013 of Bakersfield CA with President James Haggard. Area 4 Director Gary Nelson frequently is invited to attend union meetings to recruit new members.

On Feb. 26, 2019, Area 5, Director G. G. Gonzalez promoted the reorganization of Unit #159 in Fort Worth, Texas. I attended and made a

/Treasurer and have not received your unit roster by April 5, 2019 please do not hesitate to request a roster via email or telephone call. Additionally, please remember the members on the newest rosters indicated as A/L or Late will NOT receive a newsletter beginning with the April 2019 issue. Resumption of receiving future newsletters to these late members will be based on when the dues are brought to current status. If your unit needs assistance regarding this matter, contact us.

We strongly recommend all units develop a Facebook page plus join and like our National Facebook pages which are available on our website www.narvre.us. Units after joining post pictures of meetings and other activities along with publicizing meetings time and places. All members who are computer savvy should do the same.

President Tom Dwyer and I are very pleased with the progress of the 2020 Convention Committee which will be hosted by NARVRE Unit #61 Oakland/SF Bay Area May 17-18-19, 2020. More details concerning this event will be revealed in oncoming issues. Not to be redundant we are looking forward to a successful 2020 Convention.

— *James (Phil) Steward,*
National Secretary/Treasurer

presentation about the importance of our goals to protect our RRB Pension Annuity. We had enough members but had no one with interest to become officers. Fortunately, with the help our Assistant Area 5 Director Dennis Taylor, and the perseverance of our Area 5 Director G. G. Gonzales, we succeeded to Charter Unit 159 Ft. Worth with 42 members including officers.

— *Anthony (Tony) Padilla*
NARVRE National Vice President

NARVRE Ohio Biennial State Meeting will be held May 20, 2019 at the Holiday Inn in Strongsville, OH. Speakers will be our National President, Tom Dwyer; National Vice President, Tony Padilla; National Secretary/Treasurer, Philip Steward and National Legislative Director, Gary Faley. We will also have speakers from United Health, Medicare, Railroad Retirement plus Walter Barrows, retired Labor Member of the US Railroad Retirement Board and others. A luncheon will be served compliments of the Moody Law Firm. A block of rooms has been reserved for anyone wishing to stay overnight. For more information or for a reservation contact Ruth Teper, Ohio State President at 216-749-2786 or rbt@cox.net.

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

improvements for the Southwest Chief, and a prohibition on the use of these funds to “discontinue, reduce the frequency of, suspend, or substantially alter” the route;

- Bringing back station agents to any Amtrak station that had a ticket agent position eliminated in FY 2018;

- Congressional direction to Amtrak to improve communication and collaboration with area communities to enhance local jobs, when making decisions related to the staffing of Amtrak stations.

The news for transit was largely positive, with the Federal Transit Agency receiving \$13.4 billion. That's a reduction of \$67 million below the FY2018 enacted level--but

\$2.3 billion above the Trump budget request.

We continue to hear from members with favorable reports on the success of getting their death benefit policies updated as well as collecting benefits from Met Life. Recently, we have been advised that our retiree members can be using an additional number to access Met Life. The latest tip is to use 800-638-6420, and click on Option # 2, which will connect you to the Met Life Claims Dept. We also have been advised that Long Island retirees have a different phone # to call as they have their own Death Benefit contract with the MTA LIRR. The correct # for those retirees is 646-376-0123...Again, this # is only for MTA LIRR employees and retirees. As a reminder, we are still relying on the ground work of NARVRE member Paul Iversen, Unit

92, Duluth, MN. (218-834-5248), for questions and advice on the \$2000 Death Benefit with Met Life Insurance Co. Paul and fellow members have been circulating their information to retirees in and around areas in MN, and since 2016, they've recovered over \$550,000 in death benefits from Met Life. However, the work load has grown enough that Paul and NARVRE put together a packet filled with pertinent information helpful for all affected rail employees. We have urged every Unit to have a designated member to be the point person on this Met Life issue. Packets are still available from Phil Steward @ the Nat'l Sec-Treasurer's office. NARVRE emails and phone numbers are located on the front page of this Newsletter. The packet is key for advice and answers, and especially helpful in our recruiting efforts. Your fellow members and rail retirees will thank you for your involvement.

— Gary Faley,
National Legislative Director



Members attending NARVRE Unit 165 Moberly Missouri. Standing, former National Secretary Treasurer, Joyce Burton, and Wayne Ewing, conducting 50-50 fundraiser.



Guest speakers at the February 11 NARVRE Unit 66, Wildwood, FL meeting were Sumter County Sheriff Bill Farmer and Officer Robert Seimer. Sheriff Farmer presented various safety programs available to the residents of Sumter County. Pictured left to right Officer Seimer, Unit 66 President Donald Lynch and Sheriff Bill Farmer.



Celebrating 100-Years-Young. Happy Birthday to Ruth Coverdale, Unit 20.

Thank you!

We would like to thank all who made donations, both large and small. Your contributions are important to advancing the organizational goals of NARVRE.

Joseph Burns • Unit 77 Decatur IL Officers RC Smith President, Rose Mattix VP, Carol Sincebaugh Secretary Treasurer in memory of Legislative Rep David Hahn • Mary Acosta • Jake Colclasure in Memory of Wanda Colclasure • Alden & Donna Cook • Peter Stronge • Carol French in Memory of Douglas French • Jeanne Boruta in Memory of Herm Bourta • Richard & Helen Zdazenski • John Wotkun in Memory of Richard Wotkun • Stanley Haessig • Alden & Donna Cook • Katharine Denz • Victor Sundquist • Unit 140: President Jim Brewer, VP John Swain, Secretary Treasurer Alda Evans, Legislative Rep Cliff Davis • David Corless • Wayne Haskamp • Catherine Evers • Garry Savage

Memorials

Former Area 1 Director Harold Turner • David Anderson • W J Westcoat • John J Gasior • Louis C Mucha • Robert “Milwaukee Bob” Schlegel • Vermill E Barnes • Jean M Pfahl • LeRoy James King • Helen King • Vina Anderson

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From Palmetto, GBA

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

Welcome to April! Spring showers, May flowers. April is also Alcohol Awareness Month, and for this month's newsletter, I'd like to discuss the Medicare preventive services: annual alcohol misuse screening and counseling.

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) defines alcohol misuse as risky, hazardous, or harmful drinking which places an individual at risk for future problems with alcohol consumption. Their research found that women who consume more than seven drinks per week or more than three drinks per occasion, and men who have more than 14 drinks per week or more than 4 drinks per session, were more likely to have elevated risks for many health problems.

Alcohol dependence is defined as at least three of the following: tol-

erance, withdrawal symptoms, impaired control, preoccupation with acquisition and/or use, persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to quit, sustains social, occupational, or recreational disability, use continues despite adverse consequences.

Alcohol misuse screening and counseling are preventive services you can have each year if you use alcohol but do not meet the criteria for alcohol dependency. This benefit allows for one alcohol misuse screening and, if you screen positive for misuse, up to four brief face-to-face counseling sessions. Medicare will cover the annual screening and counseling when provided by a primary care physician or other primary care practitioner in a primary care setting. You must be competent and alert during the counseling.

These preventive services are

available at no cost to you, if the primary care doctor or other primary care practitioner accepts Medicare assignment.

Have questions?

If you have questions about Railroad Medicare's coverage of alcohol misuse screening and counseling, please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. We encourage you to sign up for email updates. To do so, click 'Listserves' on the top banner on our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me.

We also encourage you to visit our My RR Medicare Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare and to use our beneficiary portal, MyRRMed, which is located at www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed.

— Jennifer Johnson