

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Four years ago we started monitoring several factors when it comes to membership as it relates to Unit closures in 2015 we had 144 Units while today we are down to approximately 115 Units in 2019. Many of those closures were Units where there was no potential growth as the railroads closed terminals leaving behind just a hand full of people and mostly retirees.

Fast forward to 2019 we see healthy Units with members in arrears not collecting dues for this cycle. This is not a handful of Units but a pattern nationally. If this continues to take place and Units close it will affect the overall structure of NARVRE in the future. We need Units to conduct business such as our convention every two years. At Large members (801) do not constitute a Unit for convention purposes.

We can tell by our records in 2019 that just about every Unit is in arrears with delinquent dues. May I suggest to you to set up a calling committee to reach these members as many of them may have moved, gone to assisted living or moved in with their children. Some may even have passed away and we were not notified.

The excuse of the 2018 convention dues increase is not a valid argument. The increase in dues had to be done or we would have to close up shop in a few years. It should have been done many years back but was neglected. The bottom line is we had to be fiduciary responsible. We all need to do our part and contact the members who have not paid for 2019. It is your organization that needs to be preserved.

— Tom Dwyer,
National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

In keeping with our continued support for two-person train crews, NARVRE recently emailed our members urging them to contact their Member of Congress, requesting that they co-sponsor H.R. 1748, The Safe Freight Act of 2019. This legislation was again introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-AK), who authored and proposed similar bills in the 114th Congress (HR 3040) and the 115th Congress (HR 233). H.R. 1748 will mandate that two certified crew members are required to operate freight trains on U.S. rails, which will help ensure the safety of neighboring communities and freight rail employees. If you haven't made contact with Congress, as yet, please take the time to do so now.

NARVRE Toll-Free to Congress - 877-668-3864 & 668-3866.

In previous articles and emails, we have reported on the adverse proposals and actions of Amtrak's CEO, Richard Anderson, who has directly furloughed and/or affected hundreds of experienced employees by his closings of stations and call centers. NARVRE's membership and overall association have continually supported this national rail passenger train service and the employees that work for Amtrak. We always enjoy any apparent success as an outcome of our work with Congress, and it is always appreciated when members of the House or Senate directly respond in an active manner, and schedule committee hearings in order to ask the hard questions of those in charge. That happened recently in a Senate transportation committee hearing when an Amtrak Vice-President testified on behalf of Mr. Anderson but left the feeling and suspicion that he deliberately avoided key questions without a direct response. One of those questions dealt with the concern that Amtrak's accounting is intentionally obscure and causing false inflation on costs of lines outside of the Northeast Corridor (NEC), even though long-distance and state-supported trains generate more ridership than the NEC, with similar levels of revenue. Accordingly, after the hearing, on April 5th, a bipartisan group of Senators wrote directly to Mr. Anderson, expressing their strong support of Amtrak's entire national network, to include routes that serve small to large size communities and provide critical connections to families and their jobs and travel. They made it clear that Amtrak is subsidized by a bipartisan Congress which acknowledges the entire network to include long-distance and state-supported routes, and is committed to "preserve and expand those routes".

The letter was signed by Senators Tester (D-MT), Udall (D-NM), Bennet (D-CO), Roberts (R-KS), Gardner (D-CO), Moran (R-KS), Cortez Masto (D-NV), Heinrich (D-NV), Manchin (D-WV), Durbin (D-IL), and Sinema (D-AZ).

The letter included many specific questions from the Senators:

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From the National Vice President —

We are now in the middle of the year expecting to have reached all or most members that are delinquent to paying membership dues, but the fact is we are still behind but definitely closer to being in a safe financial condition. I cannot ask or stress enough the importance of bringing up asking all officers of all units to implement recruiting committees to reach out making personal calls to those that are delinquent in their dues. It is important to reach out to only those that have not paid to find out if they are doing okay. Many may have health conditions as it happens every year with our membership. We have made progress throughout the years to maintain a safe number of members and this time we are not stopping. The original small number of retirees and activist did not relent to making this organization grow. So, please continue to make NARVRE strong by reaching our primary goal of NARVRE that is to Promote, Protect, Preserve our Railroad Retirement Pension annuity. As well as to protect our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity, Medicare and Medicaid, Social Security our Tier 1 of our Railroad Retirement, an affordable Health Care and all senior benefits we worked for and paid for by our both our employee and employers during our working-lifetime. We earned those benefits and we expect to collect as we gave up certain concessions in exchange for working conditions and benefits. I continue to encourage all Area Directors to communicate with your respective NARVRE Unit officers to inquire the status of their member-



Fig. 1) Conductor Mr. George M. (Porky) Lewis Jr. was the recipient of the railroader of the year; Fig. 2) Engineer Mr. Jon C. Hurst was honored as the benefactor of the year.

ship. At this time, I want to recognize my most active Area Directors who never fail to bring in new members. Gary Nelson Area 4 Director covering a large area (IA-IL-MN-MO-WI) is always engaged in reaching out to recruiting new members.

On March 11, 2019, Brother Bob Aparicio Area 8 Director was invited to attend NARVRE Unit #061 in Oakland where he was able to meet with the leadership during the regular NARVRE Unit meeting. On March 25, 2019 met with President Dan Hicks of Unit 063 of Tucson AZ. and Chairman of BLET-RC Paul Piekarski who had invited Bob to address their State Legislative Board meeting in San Diego CA. Conductor Mr. George M. (Porky) Lewis Jr. was the recipient of the railroader of the year, and engineer Mr. Jon C. Hurst was honored as

the benefactor of the year. The Silver Spike Jubilee at the Southern Arizona Transportation Museum, that was held March 16, 2019 in Tucson. Met with unit 063 President Dan members conductor Mr. George M. (Porky) Lewis Jr. was the recipient of the railroader of the year, and engineer Mr. Jon C. Hurst was honored as the benefactor of the year.

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



NARVRE Unit 92-Duluth, MN Left to Right: Gary R Nelson, Area #4 Director, Rick Arnold, Sec. Unit 92, Greg Haynes, President, John Zupansic, Treasurer, Terry Anderson, Membership Kevin Heaslip, Vice President

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

This month we sent out new rosters to all units and the response has been tremendous. The average rate of members membership delinquency rate nationally is 29% and from a monetary standpoint calculates to nearly \$88,000 of uncollected revenue! This amount is alarming and would resolve our organization's financial issues. These funds could be used to pay for outreach programs to build membership, allow more officers to travel for unit visitations, purchase recruitment materials, address convention expenses, and pay for advertising.

We are mailing over 1100 notices to 801 members and a few units desiring assistance this month. In past mailings, we received 30% to 50% response from these notices.

Unit officers, as indicated in last month's article, members marked A/L - late status on your rosters are unfortunately not receiving their newsletter and resumption will not occur until dues are made current. As a matter of policy, the National Office will not remove a member from active status until we receive information from the Unit Officers or directly from members wishing to be withdrawn. Before removing a member from the roster, every effort should be made to contact the member via telephone or written communication.

Unit 071 Temple TX President Jay Weak's initiated a new unit Facebook page and we encourage other units to do the same. If you have started a new Facebook page or need assistance please let us know by contacting the National Office.

Finally, we certainly appreciate the generous donations this year large and small. A check for \$50.00 was donated by National Vice President Tony Padilla who is challenging all organization officers to do the same. You can participate in the Officer Challenge by simply making your check payable to NARVRE mail to the National Office.

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



Unit 92 in Duluth, Mn. In spite of a major spring snow storm outside and Good attendance inside the American Legion.



Twila Schworm wife of Lorin Schworm celebrating her 96th birthday with members of Unit 20 Columbus, OH, at the March meeting.



Congratulations to Freda Coleman, pictured at right, celebrating her 96th Birthday. Pictured at left is Margaret Horton long time member and Secretary/treasurer of Unit 63 MS.

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

- On Amtrak's decision to eliminate ticket agents, why did Amtrak calculate totals based on weekly boardings on routes that do not run daily?
- Amtrak's accounting methods used to determine the cost of operating a long-distance service.
- Is Amtrak planning to alter any long-distance train routes?
- Which routes are under consideration for alteration?
- Would any of these routes be altered in such a way that they would fall under the definition of state-supported routes, requiring states to find local operating funds for existing service? What discussions has Amtrak had with states, if any, that lead it to believe that states would be willing to assume this financial obligation?
- What basis does Amtrak claim that demand for long-distance service is down, despite ridership numbers growing?

The Senators closed their letter with an expectation that Amtrak should respond to their questions by April 29, and to a Congress and the law which governs the entirety of Amtrak.

— Gary Faley,
National Legislative Director

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.

Unit 30 Council Bluffs President Orval McGee Secretary Pam Fogle Treasurer Marjorie Ingram Legislative Richard Hancock Representative Gary Moller, in Memory of Members passed - Ben Crowder, George Stastny, Phil Wagner, Ron Hanson, Phil Spoto, Robert Lahey, Carl Smith...

James Mercer • Victor Sundqist • John Karst • Thomas Olsen • M E Michael • Eugene Smith • Peter Faller • George Tait • Stevenson Parrish • John Korte

Memorials

James Lee Banks • Estelle P Jenkins • James Oliver • James Macpherson • Kathryn Ann Begnaud • Tom Eaton • Donald F Burk Unit 173 99 years old

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.

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Medicare Fraud Strike Force Conviction Worth \$1.3+ Billion

A federal jury convicted South Florida Medicare provider Philip Esformes (Miami Beach) of the largest fraud scheme ever charged by the Justice Department. The total amount of the fraudulent claims filed to Medicare and Medicaid was more than \$1.3 billion. The claims were either not medically necessary, not performed, or performed via payments of kickbacks.

Per the Department of Justice: "Philip Esformes orchestrated one of the largest health care fraud schemes in U.S. history, defrauding Medicare and Medicaid to the tune of over a billion dollars," said Assistant Attorney General Benczkowski. "I commend our dedicated prosecutors and law enforcement partners for their professionalism and unyielding pursuit of justice on behalf of American taxpayers and vulnerable beneficiaries who, as a result of Esformes's crimes, were denied the level of care that they needed and deserved."

This case was solved via a joint investigation by the FBI and Health and Human Services—Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) and was brought as part of the Medicare

Fraud Strike Force activities. Medicare Fraud Strike Force teams run investigations in the following areas:

Miami, Florida; Los Angeles, California; Detroit, Michigan; Houston, Texas; Brooklyn, New York; Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana; Tampa and Orlando, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Washington, D.C.; Newark, New Jersey/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Appalachian Region.

Since its beginnings in 2007, the Strike Force has charged almost 4,000 defendants who have filed claims to Medicare and Medicaid worth more than \$14 billion. They investigate claims for both Medicare Part A (hospitals, facilities) and Part B (doctors, non-physician practitioners and some suppliers).

What You Can Do to Help Fight Fraud, Abuse and Substandard Care

While the Strike Force teams target all of Medicare (including providers who also submit claims to Railroad Medicare), you are the first line of defense when it comes to identifying Medicare fraud, abusive billing and substandard care. Here's how you do it:

- Thoroughly read your Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) either in print or online, however you have chosen to receive them. If you spot services that you know were not rendered, please contact our Beneficiary Contact Center (BCC).

- If you or a loved one receives substandard care from a professional or a health care facility (for example, misdiagnosis, medication errors, unnecessary diagnostic testing or surgery, inadequate discharge instructions, poor facility conditions), you may contact the Beneficiary and Family Centered Care (BFCC)-Quality Improvement Organizations (QIOs). They manage all quality of care beneficiary complaints nationally. You may locate a QIO at <https://qioprogram.org/contact>.

To contact the BCC, please call 1-800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET. For the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD at 877-566-3572. We encourage you to visit our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me and our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare.

— Jennifer Johnson