

# National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

### NOTICE: ARTICLE 5 CONVENTIONS Sections 3. Resolutions

This is to bring to your attention of the following information regarding submission of convention resolutions to the 2020 National Convention to be held May 17-19 in Oakland, CA. The following guidelines must be adhered too.

1. Are typed or printed in duplicate;
2. Contain the signature of the author;
3. Include the date adopted and the Unit number or the Local Unit;
4. Are submitted to the National Headquarters at least seventy-five days (75) prior to the date of the convention which is MARCH 3, 2020.; and
5. May be reworded, combined and/or written in an easily understood form before being presented to the delegates.

### NOTICE COMMITTEES

There are three standing committees for the convention Finance, Resolutions and Bylaws. In the past a night's compensation was provided to Committee members which no longer will be the case in 2020. It has become a big cost to the national organization when you figure in fifteen (15) individuals at the current rate of \$302.97 including tax per night amounts to \$4544.55. Committees will meet at call of the Chair on Sunday, May 17, 2020. As of this time Committees have not been named as Delegates are not all registered. There are vacancies on the committees so delegates will be contacted to serve. Most of these Resolutions can be resolved before you ever get to the convention by the Chair polling his members and finalize the results once you all get there. All delegates need to be in Oakland by May 17 as we start at 4:00 PM.

— Tom Dwyer,  
National President

## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Each year, the Railroad Retirement Board must file a formal request for funding from Congress, which begins the process through the committees until the House and Senate agree on appropriations to sustain their operations as a federal agency. It has been the normal course of business for NARVRE to help get the RRB message to certain committees that the RRB is experiencing a continued erosion of their ability to protect and maintain data. It is imperative that the RRB have the financial resources to transform their outdated IT equipment with modern digital systems. Congress is overloaded with funding requests from hundreds of federal agencies, but the federal expenditures requested for the RRB come solely from Railroad Retirement trust funds and “do not” require appropriated funds from general U.S. Treasury (taxpayer) revenues. Indeed, these trust funds come from railroad employers and railroad worker's payroll taxes to pay railroad benefits and support RRB operations. As rail retirees and constituents, we must continue to remind our Representatives in Congress that the RRB administrative appropriations are not funded by the General Revenue Fund but are funded 100% by accounts (trusts) designated for railroad retirement and railroad unemployment.

I detailed our earlier work on Capitol Hill in the July 2019 Newsletter, relative to NARVRE efforts to get the word out to Congress and push for an increase in RRB administrative and operational funding for FY2020. In October, a joint letter was written to the Appropriation Chairs and Ranking Members of the Appropriation Committees in the House and the Senate, and signed by the Association of American Railroads, and the Rail Labor Division of the Transportation Trades Dept of the AFL-CIO. The letter



Convention 2020 Committee Meeting with National Pres Tom Dwyer

## From the National Vice President —

President Jay Weaks, S/T John Redwine and LR Robert Fulgham of Unit 71 in Temple, Texas invited Area 5 Director G. G. Gonzales and me to address their last Membership meeting of the year to celebrate their Christmas Holiday meeting. There were 94 members in attendance. Temple is one of the most successful and active NARVRE units in Texas.

As we get closer to NARVRE's 42nd National Biennial Convention May 17-19, 2020 at the Waterfront Hotel, 10 Washington Street, Oakland, CA, the Executive Officers continue to reiterate and encourage all our Area Directors and all officers of all NARVRE Units to send Delegates to the Convention to represent their Units.

## 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 56 St Louis • Stevenson Parrish • Victor Sundquist • Terry Stefani • Winston Garth • Jose & Maria Cardenas • Daisy Miller • Jeffrey Schaum • Richard Baker • Jose Cardenas • Charles Thompson • Constance Brail • Daniel Besaw • Joseph Bolduc • Lyle Puffe • Byron Allen • Barbara Sherwood • Paul Green • Richard Dixon • Marvin Spies • Richard Foster\* • Thomas McKinney • Richard Vanaken • David Corless • Glen Malloy

## Memorials

Doyle Wasson former Secretary Treasurer Unit 093 Shawnee, OK • Olivet Fain Jr. • Earnest Radford Jr. • Arnold Braden Jr. • Douglas R. Barton • Harold Burkett • James Denham • James & Mary Rockenbaugh • Bonnie Prior

CONVENTION CORNER: Greetings Convention Delegates and Guests! You can advertise your Unit in our 2020 Souvenir Book and Program which will feature historical articles and local color of the SF Bay Area. Every Unit that advertises will receive a mailed copy of the book. A printable order form is available on the NARVRE.ORG website. If you have not yet received a Convention Registration form, there is a link to that as well. Don't forget, all who postmark before Feb. 15 will be eligible for a free nights' stay at the Waterfront and other prizes. Want an early arrival and Saturday night's stay? Reserve early! This hotel is popular and there are limited 'convention rate' rooms available on 5/16. See you in Jack London Square.



Let's make the 2020 Convention the vehicle to make a bigger effort to recruit new members and to include their spouses. We must go after many of our members who have not renewed to bring their dues up-to-date for 2020. This is a necessary move to keep the organization's budget fluent and out of deficit.

The only way to protect that pension we earned and enjoy, is to remain vigilant and strong as a group to Promote, Protect, and Preserve the Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity from congressional threats to weaken our pension annuity.

As we continue the NARVRE contribution fundraising program I established in 2015, we thank all those that have contributed. It has been one of the most successful fundraisers we have. Your contributions are appreciated to keep our organization strong as we ask that it will be strictly on a volunteer basis with this appeal. Once again, if it is in your heart, make a personal contribution. It can be as a sponsor or recognizing a family member or friend who has a birthday or passed, or simply a memorial dedication of any kind. Please make checks payable to NARVRE and send to our Secretary Treasurer and indicate that it is a NARVRE contribution. Any amount you contribute is appreciated and you will be recognized in our NARVRE Newsletter.

The main function of all Area Directors is to assist Units in their own states to form new Units as we attempt to alert Railroad Retirees of their rights under the Railroad Retirement

Act. Finding new Railroad Retirees is a challenge we must secure. We will continue to stay vigilant and persist to accomplish the goal to achieve our sole purpose to Promote, Protect and Preserve our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity and Railroad Retirement-Medicare and Medicaid. We know that that for years, congress wanted to weaken Social Security benefits for the elderly and abolish healthcare as we know it today. One thing is for sure, NARVRE members have a history of fighting against intrusions affecting the Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity and we are prepared to mobilize to action when necessary. Together and united, we will make a difference. One of our most expensive items is the mailing of our monthly newsletter. Any member who is delinquent in their dues will not be mailed a NARVRE Newsletter.

On another note: NARVRE Area 4 Director Gary Nelson was recognized for the continued work promoting NARVRE as an activist in his area to bring new members to NARVRE. Also I thank President Mark Denton and all the officers and members of Unit 155 in Cleburne, Texas for being active in promoting their membership recruitment. One of our finest activists in the Cleburne Area is George Appleby. He never fails to report on NARVRE activities to promote NARVRE.

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



Gary Nelson attending UTU Local 1000 Holiday Dinner Party in Minneapolis on December 17, 2019 with Larry Svendsen, a Locomotive Engineer.



Holiday Meeting in Temple TX. is G.G. Gonzalez NARVRE Area 5 Director; Temple Senior Member Anita Thompson; NARVRE National VP Tony Padilla.



NARVRE Unit 155 in Cleburne, Texas, had its monthly December meeting and its annual Christmas dinner and gift exchange. NARVRE President Mark Banton presided over the festivities.



## (National Legislative Director from page 1)

was a follow-up to the supporting work of the industry, rail labor, and NARVRE, and pointed out that chronic under-investments in the RRB's administrative and operations budget has severely limited the agency's capabilities and resulted in a woefully under-staffed agency. They spoke about a slow and inefficient agency that exposes sensitive data to cybersecurity risks and an antiquated IT

system that causes a wait time of nearly 345 days to approve or deny a disability claim. The letter stated that without an increase to the budget, it will cause additional delays in processing and wait times, temporary office closures, and delayed beneficiary payments will worsen at a time when the RRB expects its casework and back-load to expand. Finally, they asked that Congress provide the RRB with no less than the earlier stated request of \$135.5 million for FY2020 to adequately address its critical operations,

under-staffing and IT modernization needs. However, bills have now been passed and the RRB Budget for FY2020 remains unchanged. RRB now reports that FY2020 funding is \$123.5 million, of which \$10 M is for IT modernization, or the same average budget (\$113.5M) for the past 4 fiscal years for the RRB administrative budget. The RRB states that this low funding is essentially a budget cut since there have been statutory cost-of-living increases for federal employees as well as increased contract costs. While the RRB and employees are in a tough spot, they feel they're progressing with IT modernization, but at a much slower pace without the necessary funding to move ahead. Their message to all of us is that they will continue to work on the congressional justification for FY2021 but we must first wait for the President to release his 2021 budget. The RRB and all of us will hope for a better result from a White House pattern of inadequate proposals for RRB appropriations. All beneficiaries should be mindful of the under-staffing within the agency and be patient when trying to contact the RRB. And every time we speak with our Congressional member and/or office, please tell them about the RRB, which administers our retirement. Remind them that the most recent 75-year actuarial valuation indicates the RR Trust System is in sound financial shape and can support the necessary IT and HR expenditures. Requests for appropriations to fund FY2020 RRB operations and initiatives would represent 0.08% of RR trust assets. NARVRE will work harder, as must the industry, rail labor, and the RRB in order to get what we paid for from our leaders in the White House and appropriators in Congress. It is always wise that we all work together with our members (constituents) to get a better result. We will keep you posted in the months ahead. Thank you.

Elections are forthcoming. The voting process gets easier every year for seniors... we can contact our city or county clerk's office to check on registration or apply for an Absentee Ballot. Please get the facts relative to electing candidates that will support us, as retirees and American seniors. Good examples for getting the facts and truth on candidates and policies are from [AARP](#), and also the [US Budget Watch 2020](#), published by the bipartisan and non-profit [Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget \(crfb.org\)](#), a concise report on the 2020 general election from serious people that do not work for a political party!

—Gary Faley,  
National Legislative Director

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

As we look ahead to our 2020 convention May 17-19 at Oakland, CA, I'm pleased to report that NARVRE has turned the corner and is in a solid position to move forward. What does "turning the corner" mean?

- Finances: NARVRE finished last year with a surplus for the first time since 2010. NARVRE is not for profit, but we can't keep spending money we don't have and tapping into cash reserves.

- Reporting: We now have reports that enable us to identify members whose dues aren't paid up and develop ways to keep members' dues current.

- Social media presence: Our members tell me that they enjoy keeping up with NARVRE at national and local levels through our new Web site and our Facebook pages.

Now some thoughts about this year's convention:

First, I'd like to thank the Moody Law Firm for its sponsorship of this year's convention. Moody has been a longtime supporter of NARVRE, and I hope you join me in expressing your appreciation when you see a representative of the firm at the convention.

Second, if your unit has not already done so, I urge you to send a delegate, or better yet, a delegation to this convention. If you have ideas about how NARVRE could serve your interests better, the convention is the place to voice them. If you have suggestions about how to reach more potential members, and keep current members active, the convention is the place to voice them.

NARVRE is run by its members, and those members who aren't represented at

the convention have no voice in how NARVRE is run. The units whose members have been represented at the convention have played an important part in putting NARVRE on a firmer financial footing, and in spreading the NARVRE gospel among railroaders.

But NARVRE's work is never done, and I hope you'll join me in Oakland to have your say in how that important work continues.

As a reminder February 28 is the deadline to pay 2020 dues.

— James (Phil)  
Steward,  
National Secretary/  
Treasurer



Unit 166 Springfield Mo Officers at the Informational Meeting conducted October 2019. (L/R) Mondragon Alfonso, President; Steve Taylor, member; Susie Taylor, Secretary; Steve Counts, Leg Rep; Rona Counts, member; Joe Felin, VP. Not pictured: John & Marcia Ratcliff Treasurer.

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## Diabetes Awareness and Treatment Through Medicare

According to the Mayo Clinic, more than half of Americans who are more than 60 years of age have diabetes. In the future, it is expected that number will grow dramatically, as well as the costs to treat this disease. Another source of information, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), says that 30.3 million people currently have diabetes, and of them, 7.2 million are undiagnosed.

All of these statistics are important. If you have not been diagnosed with diabetes, there is a free Medicare preventive service you should take advantage of. You could be one of the silent 7.2 million.

Here are the details:

If you have been diagnosed with prediabetes, you can have a diabetes screening once every six months. Or, you can have one screening every 12 months if you were previously tested but not diagnosed with prediabetes or if you were never tested before.

Some risk factors your provider will look for when recommending the screening:

- High glucose (sugar) levels
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol and high triglyceride levels
- Obesity

Other reasons you may be eligible for

this screening (you must meet two of these items):

You have a family history of diabetes or you have a history of diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes). Another qualifying factor is if you delivered a baby that weighed more than nine pounds. Additional considerations include your age (65 years of age or older) or are overweight.

Medicare also has a model program called the Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program, or MDPP. This program seeks to help beneficiaries with an indication of prediabetes to prevent the onset of Type 2 diabetes. This is done through classroom-setting learning about changing your diet, increasing your physical activity and learning strategies to help you lose weight.

Here are the requirements to take part in this program:

- You are enrolled in Medicare Part B/ Railroad Medicare
- You do not have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD)
- You have a Body Mass Index of 25 or more (23 or more if you are Asian)
- You have not been diagnosed with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes (not

including gestational diabetes), and

- Have at least one of the following within 12 months of the first classroom learning session:
  1. An A1C value between 5.7 and 6.4% or
  2. Two-hour plasma glucose of 140-199 mg, or
  3. Have a fasting glucose level of 110-125 mg

The MDPP includes 16 basic sessions provided over six months to participants in a group setting. After completing the basic sessions, you are eligible for follow-up sessions each month for six months. If you are successful in meeting specific weight loss and attendance goals, you are eligible for maintenance sessions for 12 more months.

If you are interested in this service, talk to your provider to see if you qualify.

If you have questions about your Railroad Medicare coverage, you can call our Beneficiary Contact Center toll-free at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET. We offer a TTY/TDD line at 877-566-3572. This line is for the hearing impaired with the appropriate dial-up service and is available during the same hours Customer Service Representatives are available.

— Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto, GBA