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National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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NARVRE National Office

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Cost – Membership in a Unit or Membership-at-Large

NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Some convention actions that need to be adhered to is that resolutions deadlines are due into the national office by March 3, 2020. Also, those who plan on attending the convention should register with Host Unit 61 in Oakland, CA so to expedite the registration process. If you know you are attending and are not registered please do so.

To those Units who are interested in bidding on the 2022 convention at this convention should be meeting with your Unit to discuss on whether or not you are capable of doing so. Instruct your delegate to be prepared to make a presentation. Your Unit needs to Host by committee not by a few individuals. Please keep that in mind.

The national office needs everyone's cooperation as we are entering the last few months before the convention where a lot of the work is done behind the scene. And to those members who have not paid their 2020 dues yet as well as those in arrears please do so as soon as possible. The membership is the life blood of the organization.

— Tom Dwyer, National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

On February 10, the President released his annual budget proposals which will not be helpful for Amtrak travelers, employees and rail passenger supporters across America. The Trump's proposed FY2021 Budget would cut Amtrak's funding by more than 50 percent as compared to 2020 levels. The budget, delivered to Congress, includes reductions in funding for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to \$325 million from \$700 million, and funding for long-distance trains would decrease to \$611 million from \$1.3 billion. The White House fully intends to phase out all support for long-distance train service. NARVRE will fight back against these budgets designed to destroy rail passenger train service in America. We will again join with a coalition of 33 labor unions and the Transportation Trades Dept, and with the leading support group at Rail Passengers Association, to successfully push back against this absurd idea. All organized advocates will be focused on using the surface transportation re-authorization process in 2020 to improve on the existing law for increased investment funding and expand the entire Amtrak train network system in America. The White House Administration also proposes to slash \$450 billion from Medicare over the next decade, compromising health care access for millions of seniors and vulnerable disabled citizens. According to the Dept. of Health & Human Services, Medicare spending would be cut by some \$450 billion over 10 years, with targets on providers like hospitals and hospice services, and cutting payments for durable medical equipment, such as oxygen tanks (HHS). The cuts to Amtrak are unlikely to get through a Congress with a democrat majority, but the yearly proposals surely reveal the Administration's policy priorities.

As a follow-up to last month's article on inadequate funding for the RRB, the Trump

Administration has again ignored the request for critical funding for the FY21 RRB administrative operations, causing additional staffing issues, due to four years of flat funding.

The U.S. House has released (1/29/20) a framework for a five-year, \$760 billion investment in infrastructure spending which includes \$55 billion for passenger rail service and \$105 billion in transit investments over the next 5 years. These proposals for railroad expenditures would expand train service and upgrade stations, facilities, and rolling stock serving long-distance and intercity passengers. The country's infrastructure has been ignored for more than 7 decades. In 1998, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the U.S. infrastructure a "D"

continued on page 3



Welcome Delegates and Guests! We are looking forward to your arrival in Oakland, California in just two short months. For those who have registered at the Waterfront

Hotel and those who have registered with local Unit #61, you will soon receive a Convention packet highlighting transportation options and other local information assisting members and guests in making travel plans to Oakland and the San Francisco Bay Area. We will include options for getting to Jack London Square efficiently, and entertainment plans we have in store for early arrivals. These will include trips to Fisherman's Wharf and Pier 39 by waterborne ferry service directly from the hotel. The Oakland waterfront is the childhood home of Jack London; author of the most amazing adventure stories of the early 1900's. If any local Unit would like to advertise its 'good will' to the NARVRE family, there is still time! Go to NARVRE.ORG and download the PDF forms for placing an announcement. All Units or businesses doing so will receive a complimentary copy of the Souvenir Book and Agenda. See you in Oakland.



Candy Eckhardt, Retiring Sec/Treasurer, Unit #069, 1/19, 72 years young.

From the National Vice President —

I am sorry to report that NARVRE Reno Oklahoma Unit 145 closed down. Reno, Oklahoma is one of the oldest Units in the country. It had survived because of the perseverance of the dedication



of its leadership. President Bill Webb (above) and all the officers carried the Unit with Barbara and John Higdon as the main promoters. Eight years ago, I became a



John and Barbara Higdon

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.

James Earl White - Mc Comb MS • Anthony Padilla, Unit 30 in memory of the following (3) Eileen Taylor, Vendita Bridges and Bernice Behm • Jeanne Boruta in Memory of Herman Boruta • Mary Richardson in honor of husband Gene Richardson 93 years old July 21, 2020 • Meyers Andrew and Catherine Cheselka, Unit 24 • Garry Savage • Katherine Denz • Daniel Kalsen • Oland Lewis • H.C. Horner • Victor Sundquist • Peter Stronge • John Jarvis • Richard Bernhardt

Memorials

Joanne Fuechtmann • Charlotte T Sawyer • Richard Specht • Richard Saylor • Jim Hunter • Anne B Mahieu, 102 years old, Unit 801 • Eunice Grunberg, 101 years old, Unit 30 • Eileen Taylor • Vendita Bridges • Bernice Behm • George L Folt • Diane Mongenel • Donald Arthur Friauf • Michael Earl Shelton

National Officer of NARVRE as I was first nominated to office in 2012 by Barbara Higdon. I would be remised if I did not mention the older members of the Unit who passed away -- may they rest in peace. While John and Barbara are in fair health they were forced to shut down the Unit 145. We wish all remaining members, good health as they remain members of the 801 Unit.

The Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001, signed into law December 21, 2001, liberalized early retirement benefits for 30-year employees and their spouses. It eliminated a cap on monthly retirement and disability benefits; lowered the minimum service requirement from 10 years (120 months) to 5 years (60 months) of service if performed after 1995, and provided increased benefits for some widow(er)s.

The spouses of such employees are also eligible for full annuities at age 60. Full 60/30 benefits had not been payable since 1983 legislation reduced such early retirement benefits.

A coalition of National Officers from TCU and the twelve major Rail-Labor Legislative Representatives, the Association of American Railroads, lawyers from the designated Law Firms and the Railroad Retirement Board all worked with congressional offices to make this legislation possible.

The coalition worked to create the 60/30 early retirement law that allows for retirement at age 60, with thirty years of service. More importantly, they all worked to create the NRRIT "National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust Fund", better known our trust fund which allows Rail Labor and Management Representatives to manage and

invest the funds of our pension. This results in the best pension investment in the country. Currently it has a balance of \$27.9 Billion in investments and assets that would fund the RRB Retirement benefits for the next 45 and up to 75 years in the future. This is provided that there are no government infringements to our fund by executive order or Congress.

On another note, I would like to thank all the contributions under a program initiated in 2015 which has raised funds for NARVRE and has helped the NARVRE national office to augment the finances while we struggled to maintain our membership. I am glad say we now can report a healthier financial balance. As per our Secretary Treasurer the following are the results of the voluntary contribution program was categorized as a challenge in 2017.

(1) Friend \$50, Silver \$100.00, Gold \$200.00, Platinum \$500.00, and Diamond \$1000.00 with your photo in the NARVRE Newsletter. This program resulted in \$5625 in donations. The total contributions for 2017 was \$16,555.

(2) In 2018 total amounts resulted in \$19,369 which includes \$8,585 closing of OLAN, \$3,057 closing Oklahoma City, and \$1,500 from the Brother of Phil Steward to purchase the new website. Total individual donations \$6227.

(3) 2019 resulted in \$9,176. It was hard to differentiate some donations to the contribution challenges in 2018 and 2019 because designations were not clear. Total donations 2017, 2018, and 2019 were over \$45,000.

With appreciation, let's continue this excellent Program.

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

LegalShield & IDShield in partnership with representatives Lynn Duncan and Emily Neal are a proud supporter of



NARVRE President Tom Dwyer Legislative Director Gary Faley, Lynn Duncan ID Shield, VP Tony Padilla Emily Neal Legal Shield

NARVRE providing comprehensive and affordable legal and identity theft protection services. In 2017 we were able to secure a partnership with NARVRE to provide these valuable services at discounted rates & provide royalties to be paid back from these memberships directly to NARVRE to support endeavors important to the Association and its members.

To see how these services can be of value to you and your family, please visit the NARVRE private member page at legalshield.com/info/Narvre or click on the IDShield link at narvre.us.

Lynn Duncan and Emily Neal, NARVRE LegalShield/IDShield Representatives lduncan@idtsoa.com/eneal@idtsoa.com

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

grade. Twenty years later, that score had climbed only to a “D+”. A consistent statement from the ASCE and other organizations from the field is that the U.S. infrastructure “is falling apart”! Even in our broken and polarized Congress, there is consensus on

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

The 5-year business plan proposed and adopted by the Governing Board in 2017 is paying off in a tremendous way. By reducing costs and expenses, increasing membership dues, receiving donations, increasing usage of social media and developing management reports identifying problem areas, we are happy to report a \$19,000 surplus for 2019!

Alongside our database programmer, we have developed a new management tool that allows our organization to accurately identify late/delinquent members. Additionally, this information was added to unit rosters allowing treasurers the ability to see which members are delinquent as well as the percentages of delinquencies and the total outstanding revenue.

In March 2019, the delinquency rate nationally was 35% with \$93,000 in late membership dues. As I write this article, that has decreased to 14% with \$37,990 in late dues. No doubt we are making progress, but obviously a lot of work still remains. We currently have 10 Units that have a 0% delinquency rate and 26 units with 10% or less. These Units are listed below, We thank all officers nationwide for the concerted effort in addressing this important issue.

To assist in membership recruitment, we strongly encourage that all units create a Facebook page with at least two responsible administrators. If you need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the National Office. Our official Facebook page has 1405 followers, a huge increase from less than 800 members last year. NARVRE National Forum membership has increased to 450 members.

As everyone should know, February 28, 2020 is last day before your 2020 dues become delinquent. We have received a significant number of payments from members meeting the deadline. Unfortunately, this will be the last newsletter some members will receive until their dues are paid to become current. We appreciate everyone’s cooperation and the many donations that have been made.

this issue, and the key committees in the House agree that this Congress must pass legislation. Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-Illinois) has released a commentary on the issue of surface transportation, and how that relates to the entire rail industry. As the Chairman of the House Subcommittee of Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials, he has promised to include a robust rail section to

Roger Swanson, Finance Committee Member, brought to my attention an error in the 2019 Unit Audit Report. The correction has been made and the updated form has been posted in our forms section on our website www.narvre.us. We are sorry for any inconvenience. Thank you Roger for identifying the problem and providing an appropriate resolution.

List of Units and Secretary/Treasurer reporting 0% members delinquent finishing 2019:
Unit 113 Port Charlotte FL - Mary Parker
Unit 059 Boone IA - Steve Bovenmyer/Eddy & Elly Simpson
Unit 179 Ft Dodge IA - Betty Kelly
Unit 162 Centralia IL - Irene Vogel/Charles & Lois Albert
Unit 128 Mount Carmel IL - Malcolm Reeves
Unit 028 Shreveport, LA John & Carolyn Flack
Unit 148 Parsons KS Lois Shrum
Unit 186 Salina/Abilene KS Doyle Reed/Tony Schmitt
Unit 057 Eugene OR - A Coleen Hisay
Unit 039 Stockton CA - Paul Jevert

List of Units and Secretary/Treasurer reporting 1% - 10% members delinquent finishing 2019:
Unit 001 Jacksonville FL - Franklin Johnson
Unit 080 Pensacola FL - Velma Foster
Unit 066 Wildwood FL - Terry Genzen
Unit 151 East Liverpool OH - Lee Powell/Candy Eckhardt
Unit 144 Lorain OH - Josephine Strand
Unit 017 Navarre OH - Lisa Conley
Unit 054 Creston IA - Richard Springer/Lila McCann
Unit 153 Fort Madison IA - Stan Haesigg
Unit 095 Kansas City MO - Florence Thexton
Unit 047 La Crosse WI - Patricia Burr
Unit 154 Marceline MO - Nancy Schreiner
Unit 166 Springfield MO - Susie Taylor/Marcia Ratcliff
Unit 107 St Cloud MN Ron Hylia
Unit 121 Amarillo TX - Neil Henry
Unit 159 Dallas/Ft Worth TX - Steve & Karen Cline
Unit 163 San Antonio TX - Sergio X Perez
Unit 093 Shawnee OK - David & Virginia Kubiak
Unit 123 Fargo ND - Marvin Boser
Unit 115 Wichita KS - Robin Smith
Unit 150 Hutchinson KS - Ron Pauls
Unit 021 Marysville KS - Marilee Adams
Unit 140 Topeka KS - Alda Evans
Unit 074 Auburn WA - Stephen & Katherine Shaben
Unit 082 Nampa ID - June Robertson
Unit 081 Spokane WA - Claudia Rohlinger/Alice Domrese
Unit 048 Sun City AZ - Glenn Bay

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

the overall legislation and re-authorization of surface transportation in the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee (T&I). His District represents Chicago and Northeastern Illinois, and Chrm. Lipinski is well versed of the issues surrounding freight and passenger rail. He has stated that his priorities are for increased funding for critical capitol infrastructure needs on passenger rail systems and to ensure that changes made in the rail freight industry benefit everyone, including railroads, workers and shippers.

Only one federal agency is required to pre-fund their employees’ future retirement healthcare benefits. That is the US Postal Service. In 2006, Congress passed a bill which required the US Postal Service to pre-fund its retiree health benefits program for 75 years (that’s correct...75 years out). However, this burdensome mandate has nearly financially crippled the USPS, running up a \$ 5 billion annual price tag. It is responsible for 92 percent of USPS losses over the last 12 years, and 100 percent of losses over the past seven years. These losses have prompted the USPS to make service cuts and forced the agency to cease any reinvestment’s in itself as it competes with other delivery services. Therefore, Reps P. DeFazio (D-OR), Tom Reed (R-NY) (B. Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and X. Torres Small (D-NM) introduced the USPS Fairness Act (HR 2382) to end this arbitrary and needless mandate. These leaders from both parties and more than 300 Members of the House are co-sponsors of this legislation and understand the critical service provided by the USPS and 600,000 jobs. This bill will protect 6-day shipping, door-to-door service, and delivery to the most remote corners of our nation, and put the USPS on an even footing with every other federal agency. Further, the USPS is banned from lobbying, which places them at a distinct disadvantage with their competition. FedEx spent over \$ 10.1 million on 2018 lobbying, while UPS spent \$ 9.3 million. The USPS Fairness Act (HR 2382) would eliminate the pre-funding requirement. Advocates claim that alone would single-handedly take the Postal Service out of the red, and into the black. HR 2382 passed the House on Feb 5, 2020 and now goes to the Senate for consideration. This is a fairness issue on retiree benefits, and service to our citizens, but it is not related to railroad retirement, Therefore, this is not a directive from this office to contact Congress on the issue. However, our toll-free # for the Senate is available for all members @ 877-668-3864 or 877-668-3866.

— **Gary Faley,**
National Legislative Director

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Medicare's Preventive Service: Depression Screening

On February 2, 2020, groundhog Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow – heralding an early spring. While that's good news for many, not all find feel as cheerful. For those who suffer from and with depression, the thought of being energized by a new spring seems to

ring false for them.

"At the same time as most of us are rolling up our sleeves and spending more time outdoors, others struggle with trying to get into that kind of mode, and counter-intuitively, they feel worse," Harvard psychiatrist John Sharp told the British Broadcasting Corporation, or BBC. "If you're not being carried along with the natural energy of the season it can be really hard."

Medicare covers depression screening in a primary care setting, meaning there are clinical staff (such as a doctor, nurse, physician assistant) who address a large bulk of healthcare needs and who can provide follow-up treatment and referrals. This type of provider does not include emergency departments, inpatient hospital settings, ambulatory surgical centers, independent diagnostic testing facilities, skilled nursing facilities, inpatient rehabilitation facilities and hospice.

This once-a-year preventive service is free, so there is no copayment and the deductible does not apply. You only need to see your primary care doctor to receive this service. And, please,

do not suffer. Don't hesitate to contact your primary care giver today if you feel depressed or are concerned that you may have depression.

If you have questions about Medicare's coverage of depression screening, please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455 or TTY, call 877-566-3572 for the hearing impaired. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. We also encourage you to visit our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me.

We also encourage you to use our free, beneficiary website portal called 'MyRRMed'. MyRRMed provides you with access to your claims information, along with historical Medicare Summary Notices, and a listing of individuals you have authorized to have access to your protected health information (PHI). You can also submit requests to add or change your authorized representatives through the portal. To access MyRRMed, please visit us at www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed.

If you want to read more about Dr. Sharp's interview with the BBC, please visit <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-13546925>

— Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto, GBA



Narvre Unit 140 Topeka. From left to right. Alda Evans Sec/Treas, Jim Brewer, president, John Swain, vice president. These officers were sworn in by Roger Barr, State NARVRE Legislative Representative.