

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



NARVRE National Office  
Phone Toll Free: 1-800-551-2588  
6819 Crumpler Blvd, Suite 200 • Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940  
Email: [NARVRE@gmail.com](mailto:NARVRE@gmail.com) • WEBSITE: [www.narvre.us](http://www.narvre.us)  
Published ten times a year  
Cost – Membership in a Unit or Membership-at-Large

NARVRE NEWSLETTER

September, 2020

VOL. 34 NO. 8

## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Why has the United States Postal Service (USPS) become the whipping boy in presidential politics? The postal service is a constitutionally dedicated arm of the federal government. The debate going on whether or not absentee or mail in voting is more efficient than going to the polls during a pandemic and the public appears to agree that mail in voting is the way to go.

The postal service has requested a \$25 billion appropriation now caught up in politics and there are several law suits before the courts demanding so as cuts are being made to the agency by recently appointed Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and approved by the Postal Service Board of Directors. Financial restraints on USPS go back to 2006 when the Congress required the agency to pre-fund their employee retiree health care benefits. There is nothing in the postal service appropriations to pay for those future benefits.

The House of Representatives passed a bill with the \$25 billion recently and the Senate should as well. If the president vetoes the bill an override should be made. I believe the votes are there on this issue. Voting should never be an issue for the American public.

— Tom Dwyer, National President

## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

COVID-19 has given us plenty to worry about prior to casting our ballots in the November General Election. Unfortunately, voters are now wondering if absentee ballots (AB) and the mail-in voting process will be adversely affected or if the US Postal Service (USPS) will be able to handle the increase in election mail this fall. Postal office officials state that they will assuredly handle the increased volume of election mail deliveries this fall. That said, President Trump and his campaign continue to declare that the increase in mail-in ballots will allow for foreign based massive fraud that will delegitimize our November election. Those statements are always countered and criticized as being misleading and false by election experts in the field, the Federal Election Commission (FEC), and other government agencies that refer to these claims as baseless and without evidence. As information, on 8/13/20, a federal judge, appointed by Pres. Trump, gave the president's campaign one day to turn over evidence to support its claims of widespread mail-in voting fraud or admit that it doesn't exist (PA. US District Ct.). The 2020 pandemic has created massive, unprecedented challenges for state and county election officials just two months ahead of the November General Election. And, this health crisis has rapidly accelerated the move toward remote voting out of health and safety concerns. Recent primary elections demonstrated just how much, with some states seeing AB requests increase tenfold, and experts predict an even greater surge in AB requests this fall. However, postal workers, union leaders and even the newly appointed Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, all agree that the USPS can handle the high volume of mailed ballots just as they handle their busiest times with Christmas and Mother's Day deliveries. Critics of remote voting have



The Rock Island Reunion in Shawnee, OK, held each year, has been cancelled due to COVID-19. Hope to see you back next September/October 2021.

Virginia Kubiak Secretary Treasurer Unit 093 Shawnee OK

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## From the National Vice President —

As we begin to enter the final quarter of the year, Area Directors should try to reach out to officers of their respective units to make sure they continue to keep up with assisting Unit officers to continue to promote our membership. Here I am reminded of our Area 1 Director George Boatwright to whom I give a great compliment for his efforts to persistently keeps up communications with their respective Unit officers in his area in spite of not meeting because of the COVID19 that keeps Units from having in-person meetings. I also give accolades to Area 8 Director Bob Aparicio and Area 5 Director G. G. Gonzalez for their work they do to stay in communications with their Area Unit Officers. All in their own way stay committed with their duties. I ask all Area Directors to be creative and take time to find ways to reach their membership during these trying times. Also take time to evaluate yourselves and be prepared to make a commitment to continue to work diligently to the primary goal of Promoting, Protecting and Preserving your Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity not only for cur-

rent NARVRE members already receiving a Railroad Retirement pension, but also to protecting the future Pension Annuity of future retirees. As stated before, your main function as Area Director is to monitor Units and be in contact with the officers to promote and cultivate the membership in their respective units to increase membership; but, the most important function is to establish new Units in areas where there are no Units. Try to reach those retirees that have said, "I never heard of NARVRE before." This is especially true where there are clusters of retirees not yet

explored. When you find where these groups exist, we cannot afford not to go get them but also, noting that we cannot go on a goose chase because the expense does not justify it. NARVRE would exhaust our finances if we did not exercise caution in these areas where you want to travel. But it easier said than done, the mission to attaining new members to recover loses of members is a losing and exhausting job, so we must employ the most reasonable means to reach new members.

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

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

This Labor Day marks NARVRE's 83rd anniversary of protecting, preserving and promoting Railroad Retirement.

An excerpt from chapter 11 of Mary David's book, History of NARVRE, reads, "On Labor Day September 6, 1937, Railroad Employees from nine states met in Louisville, Kentucky, and laid the foundation for an association of retired railway employees. Employees with thirty years of service were eligible to retire from the railroad. The founder and first president was J. L. Stark.

This historic two-day meeting, held in conjunction with the annual Labor Day celebration of railway unions, was in the Hotel Seelbach. It was the consensus of those in attendance that a "pension association" be formed in response to the newly passed Railroad Retirement Act of 1937 since there were still concerns about who was covered under the act and how benefits would be derived.

The states represented were: Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New

York, Illinois, Georgia, and Wisconsin."

Our annual membership renewal campaign begins in October. As usual, 801 members (members associated with a local unit) will receive an invoice with a membership card and a self-addressed envelope to send their dues in the form of check or money order to the National Office. We will also be mailing the three required reporting forms to all unit Secretary -- Treasurers. These include Membership Reporting Forms, Officer Election Reports, and Annual Audit Forms. Each of these forms are available for download on our website [www.narvre.us](http://www.narvre.us) to be utilized by those who choose. The deadline for these forms to be submitted is February 28, 2021. Membership cards and unit rosters will be available upon request.

We are in unprecedented times and the constantly changing COVID-19 situation in our country and around the world leaves us uncertain of what is to come. We hope that you and your loved ones are taking the proper

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## 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.

(Includes corrections from last month's issue) Mary McMearty in loving memory of husband Daniel McMearty • David Corless • Myrtle Bryant • Victor Sunquist • Clayton Dunn • Lyle Dehn • Robert McInnes • Unit 165 In Memory of Lloyd Deierling • Victor Sundquist • David Corless • Paul Johannis • Unit 74 In Memory of Charlie Quimby • Billy and Sandra Parker • Donald Rupp • Stanley Haessig - In memory of Dorothy Elizabeth Steward, mother of Philip Steward, NST, Mike Steward, Pres Unit 095 KC, Joan Newbill, Member Unit 30 Council Bluffs IA

## Memorials

(Includes corrections from last month's issue) Dale V. Drew, Sr • Charles Henry Nadeau Jr • Rose Marie Gibson • Ken Brooks • Phil Reardon • Robert Campbell • Steven R Prouty former UTU Local Chairman and Legislative Rep • Barbara Thornburg • Delores J Schmidt • Phyllis Branch • Kevin Penne • Thomas Basco • Nick DeRose • William Hinton



Santa Fe GE Dash 8-40C Nos. 921 & 835 with train G-KCCO1-11 at east end of Ponder, Texas  
Engr R.J. McKay; Brkmm M.W. McDaniel; Condr D.R. Walker  
August 13th, 1993 -- Photo by R.J. McKay

## National from page 2

precautions and staying safe. All NARVRE Officers are urged to prioritize the collection of late member's dues within your units. It is suggested to do so by email, mailing postcards or statements, making personal calls and organizing calling committees. We certainly stress that every attempt is made to contact these members prior to taking them off the rolls.

Please remember any late member renewing between July 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 will be credited membership through December 31, 2021.

Membership national dues are:

- 801 Members at Large (Members that are NOT associated with a local unit are considered 801 Members at Large.)
- Singles \$26
- Couples \$33
- Unit Members (Members associated with a local unit may receive a discounted price. This discounted rate does not include local unit dues that might be included at the discretion of that unit.)
- Singles \$23.50

- Couples \$30.50

New members joining NARVRE for the first time that pay their dues AFTER July 1 are paid through the remaining current year and through the end of the next year. For example, if a member joins on July 1, 2020, they are paid through 2020 as well as 2021. Again, this is for new members; ONE TIME ONLY.

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

We recognize Unit 001 Jacksonville Treasurer Franklin Johnson who reported this month, August 2020, 26 renewals and 18 NEW members for a total of 44 members. Thank you and your team for this great effort

## (National Legislative Director from page 1)

made exaggerated claims that ballots could be mailed to inactive voters, people could vote more than once, or voters could be intimidated into voting a certain way outside the privacy of the voting booth. These claims have all been discounted by experts from the FEC, and other non-profit organizations in the election information business, and regard them as “grossly irresponsible attempts” to defame and limit public confidence in mail-in voting. The fact is that large-scale postal voting has been used safely for many years in several states, and electoral officials of both parties have moved to increase vote-by-mail procedures in light of the threat posed by COVID-19. They also direct election authorities to ensure that in-person voting is safe and accessible, for instance, by allowing early voting and extending voting hours on election day, as voting by mail has become an essential component of democratic practice in 2020. It has already been the primary means of voting in five states—Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah, and Washington before the pandemic, and the percentage of voters who choose to cast ballots by mail in other states has grown over time, with virtually no fraud documented (Freedom House).

The two political parties continue to argue over their proposals on relief aid that should be considered due to the continual effects of COVID-19 on Americans and the economy. The USPS is front and center in the daily news, mainly due to the importance of our postal service as it pertains to the livelihood of seniors and most Americans, and the delivery of our mail, our medicines, and products that help us run our lives, especially during the course of a pandemic that limits our capabilities and access to the normal duties of homeowners and their families. We should continually urge Congress to do the right thing and attend to

the duties of their jobs. The Senate needs to address emergency aid legislation that has passed the House of Representatives. We're all aware that they don't agree on the content of the House bills, but the Senate has an obligation to negotiate those differences, especially during a pandemic. Citizens (voters) expect Congress to pass emergency legislation meant to help their constituents and the country during abnormal times, due to events beyond their control. Emergency extensions to unemployment benefits have expired for millions, immunity from evictions are running out, and yes, the USPS needs lots of reform, and that should start with proper funding. Congress is Constitutionally bound and obligated to allocate proper revenue for the USPS. The argument about the immediate need of financial aid for the USPS, as reported in the hearings, is not central to 2020 elections and the increase to mail-in ballots. The new Postmaster General has stated that the money from the CARES ACT last spring is still available and will see the USPS through the General Election. Beyond that, Congress

needs to negotiate the tough issues surrounding the postal service, in order to protect six-day delivery and all of the services the USPS provides, while protecting 670,000 American postal jobs. If you like your postal service and want to keep it, contact your Members of Congress and Senators. Ask for the consideration of recently House passed legislation (8-22-20) \$25 billion in funding that will cover USPS operations (USPS leadership asked for \$75 Billion last April). Billions have been allocated to giant mega-businesses hit hard by COVID-19. The USPS has also been hit hard financially, and Congress should discuss how they can and should help. Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell should bring the bill up for consideration and address their differences. He's aware that the House bill had 27 Republicans vote in favor, for passage... making it a bipartisan passed piece of legislation. The Senate is derelict in their duties when they ignore this issue... it's not a joke! It is a serious public interest.

— **Gary Faley,**  
*National Legislative Director*

Santa Fe SD40-2 No. 5066 with Engineer L.D. Bohannon on Extra 5066 East at Davidson, Texas taken from Extra 2274 West, train 405 W-5 on June 24th, 1982. Photo by R.J. McKay.



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**National President**  
Thomas Dwyer  
11304 Norway St. NW  
Coon Rapids MN 55448-3269  
763-757-1501 FAX 763-767-5794  
tdwyertcu@aol.com

**National Vice President**  
Anthony "Tony" Padilla  
303 Black Cap Run  
Buda, TX 78610-4978  
Home: 512-523-8465  
Cell: 512-552-8703  
tonypadillatcuam@austin.rr.com

**National Secretary-Treasurer**  
James (Phil) Steward  
6819 Crumpler Blvd, Ste 200  
Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940  
1-800-551-2588  
narvre@gmail.com

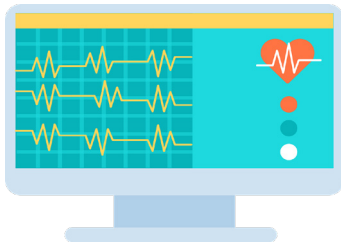
**National Legislative Director**  
Gary M Faley  
6324 Calkins Road  
Flint, MI 48532-3207  
810-733-7256  
faleyg@comcast.net

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED  
AND VETERAN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES, INC.  
6819 Crumpler Blvd, Ste 200  
Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940  
SEPTEMBER, 2020

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# Medicare Expanded Telehealth Services



**T**elehealth is a Medicare approved healthcare service between a provider and a patient via a telecommunication system (such as by phone or video chat). It's been a covered service for more than a decade, focusing on rural areas where appropriate care may be hard to come by. Patients would be "seen" via a communications medium at a Medicare-approved location (not their homes), and the provider and the facility they were "seen" at would receive payment for the service.

Let's fast forward to today. The model I just described has changed. As of March 6, 2020, providers can perform "office" visits and other expanded services via telecommunications to a beneficiary at their home. Regulations require that the provider (your doctor, a physician assistant, nurse practitioner, etc.) have an interactive audio and video communications system for use

in this service. An "office visit" is another term for a "doctor's visit;" however, visits completed through telehealth can also include emergency department visits, initial hospital and nursing facility visits, and hospice visits. Telehealth services also include psychotherapy, services for substance use disorders, certain physical, occupational and speech-language pathology services, and many others.

The expansion to allow for telehealth services in a patient's home are part of Medicare's response to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) starting on March 6, 2020. Many Medicare patients are more vulnerable to this disease, based on their medical conditions and age. As such, the expansion of telehealth services makes sense for both the provider and the patient. This has been especially important as many provider offices were closed or were not accepting in-person visits with beneficiaries. Providers are still required to perform the service in a Medicare-approved location, such as a physician's office, skilled nursing facility or hospital.

Seema Verma, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and a member of the White House

Coronavirus Task Force, said that this expansion of services "represents a seismic shift, initiating a new era of healthcare delivery in America," per CMS. (To learn more about Administrator Verma's comments, please visit the CMS website at [www.CMS.gov/Newsroom](http://www.CMS.gov/Newsroom)).

If you have a telehealth service, Part B coinsurance and deductible apply. You pay 20% of the Medicare allowed amount after your Part B deductible has been met. These costs are the same as if you had an in-person visit. If you have a preventive or screening service, for which the Part B coinsurance and deductible do not apply, you will pay nothing. Be sure to watch your quarterly Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) to be sure the charges are correct as many providers are learning how to bill for these services in real-time. If you notice any discrepancies, or you are asked to pay more than you would for an in-person visit, be sure to call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET when Customer Service Representatives are available. We also encourage you to visit our website at [www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me](http://www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me).

— Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto, GBA