



- SINCE 1937 -

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

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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VOL. 37 NO. 1

## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Greetings from your National President and Lois his wife. We hope that each of you had a wonderful holiday season! It is a new year, and I am proud to be the President of NARVRE and excited about the happenings around our country. Almost, daily I see Facebook posts announcing meetings and concerns about the health and welfare of our members. If we are not yet “friends” please send me a “FRIEND” request!

NARVRE is recognized as the “bulwark” (Webster - “a strong support or protection”) for Railroad Retirement benefits. The RRB publishes a strategic plan every four years and on page 6 of the 2022-2026 edition are these words “In addition to current and future customers and other governmental entities, the RRB’s stakeholders include organizations that represent rail labor, retirees, and rail employers. Examples are rail labor unions, the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees and the Association of American Railroads (AAR). [emphasis added]

Ladies and gentlemen, please hold your head up high when talking to railroad friends and acquaintances about NARVRE. Explain to current and retired workers that we are the only organization Chartered by the United States Congress and recognized by the Railroad Retirement Board to PROTECT, PRESERVE and PROMOTE their retirement benefits, now and in the future.

Since May 2022, we have developed a partnership with Jones Granger law firm and TLC Insurance brokers (approved by the Governing Board), and they have sponsored informational meetings nationally with current workers and retirees. The Executive Board is in the process of developing a strategic plan for 2023 to present to the Governing Board and our designated partners. This plan will facilitate starting new Units in 2023 and

continued on page 2

## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

The possibility of a nationwide rail strike has been averted, effective December 2, 2022. The impact of a strike on our nation and overall economy compelled President Biden to call for Congressional intervention, in accordance with the Railway Labor Act (RLA). Last August, the Biden Administration became directly involved to help resolve ongoing contract disputes between major freight railroads and rail labor. A Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) was established in September and thirty days later with no agreement in sight, the White House and Secretary of Labor brokered a tentative agreement that offered the unions a five-year, 24% pay increase and annual \$1000 bonuses. However, on the central issue of sick leave and unreasonable discipline policies, the railroads would only concede to a single paid personal day. In the end, members from 4 of 12 unions (just over half of the rail workers) voted to reject the tentative agreement from the PEB’s Report. As a result, the House acted on November 30th and passed two pieces of legislation,

the first by a vote of 290-137 to impose the temporary agreement and a second bill that would add seven days of sick leave, by a vote of 221-207. The Senate also moved to avoid a strike and passed the House bill imposing the tentative agreement by a vote of 80-15 but rejected the 2nd bill to add sick days by a vote of 52-43. The President then signed the legislation into law, prohibiting any prospect of a rail strike.

The unanimous grievance at the center of this dispute dealt with inhumane working conditions and the need for workers to be able to mark-off on paid sick days to attend to their health and family issues without being punished and possibly fired. Many freight rail problems are fueled by new operating systems under Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). Huge profits from Wall St Hedge Funds come at the expense of employees being cut to reduce costs. Since 2016, the yearly average of those employed on Class 1’s has fallen by 30 percent. The study at the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that by 2017, train lengths grew by 25% for two Class 1 railroads, all are running longer trains, including

continued on page 3



East Liverpool Unit Officers, members and Area 2 Director at Christmas Party and Meeting December 15, 2022. L - R Lee Powell, Secretary Treasurer; Randy (Rocco) Saracco, President; Rose Kosko, Facebook Coordinator; Walt Barrows, Area 2 Director; Eddie Bermin, 2nd Vice President; Jim Toland, Vice President.

## From the National Vice President —

Happy New Year to all our NARVRE members across the country. I sincerely hope you had a festive Holiday Season with your family and friends.

In the new year, the Executive Officers will be working diligently in obtaining new members and establishing new units across the United States. We will be working closely with our Area Directors and Assistant Area Directors at locations where railroad operations are still in existence. We are also reviewing locations where NARVRE previously had NARVRE units. If you are an 801 member and would like to establish a NARVRE unit at your location please contact me or the National Office. Our plans are to also coordinate our efforts with rail

## 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 109 - Thomas Perkovich President Kevin Foley VP Pamela Clemens Secretary Roger Swanson Treasurer John Filter Legislative Rep • TLC Insurance Group • Unit 030 Council Bluffs IA John Billingsly President - Pam Fogle Secretary - Marjorie Ingram Treasurer - Gary Moller - Legislative Representative • Gene Hatfield • Evert Eivens • Victor Sundquist • Rod Ewert • Byron Schuetz • Carl Watson • Felix Perez • David and Linda Williams • Donald Beeler • David Cook • Carl Sanders • John Frasier • William A Madanski • Barbara Sundquist • Linda Peecher • B Perry • Andrew Merrick • Rose Brooks • Mary Acosta • Michael Menz • Barbara Wells • Paul Bond • Paul Biegel • Billy Parker • Mary Windels • Michael Nutter • Glenn Malloy • Larry Bolden • Ronald Jardine • Rita Farrow • Rose Hoemberg • Victor Sundquist • David Corless • Gaylen & Cynthia Kueger • David & Lavonne Blutt • Bob & Mary Lue Russler • Robert Greenfield • Mary Helfrich • Samuel Brewer • Steven Habeck • Robert Hendricks • Joy Schutter • R J Foster • Marion Patrick • James Kostibos • Michael Iannone • Richard Vanaka • Ronald Heltibrand • David Corless

## Memorials

P K Hannah • Randal Burbach • Lawrence R Smith Jr. • Stanley Swierkowski • Nancy J Ryman • Brenda Golden • Bernice Painter

unions. Rail unions represent those who are currently paying into the Railroad Retirement system and we as NARVRE members should support them.

As you may know, at the 2022 NARVRE National Convention, the law firm of Jones Granger was endorsed as the legal firm to handle asbestos and other issues for NARVRE members. Jones Granger has been a friend of NARVRE in assisting with signing up new members and establishing new units. Asbestos exposure may not appear in an individual for years and can result in asbestosis, lung cancer, Mesothelioma, colon cancer, esophageal cancer, pharyngeal cancer, bladder cancer and others. A person who has passed away from cancer has up to three (3) years to file a claim. If any NARVRE member knows of anyone with asbestos disease, please have them contact Jones Granger for a free assessment at 800-231-3359.

I would like to congratulate Chicago Unit

002 on holding their first ever NARVRE meeting on November 15, 2022. Unit 002 officers include: Tim Baker – President, Dean Martinez – Vice President, Mike Kelly – Secretary-Treasurer and Dave Pomrenke – Legislative Representative.

The meeting was attended by Jones Granger representative Jeff Doerr. You can visit NARVRE Unit 002 on Facebook at NARVRE Chicago.

I am hoping most of our NARVRE members have paid their 2023 dues by now. If you have not, please forward your dues immediately to your unit. Units are encouraged to have their call teams contact those members who have not paid, especially those who have not paid their dues in the past few years. Those delinquent members just need to pay the current dues for 2023 to become eligible for the newsletter and other benefits of NARVRE

— **Ron Hylla**  
*NARVRE National Vice President*

## (National President from page 1)

revive some of the established Units that have “senior officers” by bringing in current workers and newly retired members.

As I stated earlier, I take great pride in being your National President and would like to thank Ron Hylla, National Vice President, Phil Steward, National Secretary Treasurer and Gary Faley, National Legislative Director for their support. Also, a special thanks to

former National President Tom Dwyer for his insight into the workings of our government and his sage advice. Your Governing Board composed of we four and the Area Directors seek and appreciate your input as to how we may spread the word of NARVRE to the thousands of Railroad Retirement Board benefit recipients around the country.

— **George Boatwright**,  
*National President*



Photo Above:  
Unit #043 Conneaut, OH had their Christmas Luncheon on December 12, 2022 at the Eagles Club #408 Conneaut, Ohio, where NARVRE meetings are held. The meal was prepared by the Women's Auxiliary Eagles Club #408.

Photo Right:  
NARVRE Vice President Ron Hylla and Jeff Doerr attend the Unit 107 Christmas Party, St Cloud, MN.





## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

### Protect Your Health

My personal physician advised me to drink 80 ounces of water per day. In an effort to start the New Year with good health, I've done some research to validate this expert advice. Up to 60% of the average adult human body is water, making proper hydration critical for proper function. But how much water do you really need in a day?

The following is excerpted from Forbes Magazine:

“Hydration is critically important and dehydration, which occurs when your body loses more water than it takes in, can have many negative effects on your body. So, how much water should you aim to drink in a day? The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies recommends drinking 2.7 liters (or 91 ounces or 11 cups) for adult women a day, and 3.7 liters (or 125 ounces or 15 cups) for men[2]. It's important to note this measurement accounts for total daily fluid rather than plain water. “According to the recommendations, about 20% of daily fluid



intake can come from foods—think primarily water-rich vegetables and fruit—but also other foods and types of meals that are water rich,” says Wendy Brazilian, a registered Doctor of Public Health and nutritionist and author of the Eat Clean, Stay Lean series.

To ensure you are giving your body the necessary amount of hydration, be sure to get as close as possible to the daily recommendations for water intake. Below, read more about 5 important benefits of drinking enough water.

#### 1. Heart Health Cardiovascular disease is

- for Amtrak passengers and shippers - and deteriorating conditions across the U.S. rail network.” Martin Oberman, Chair of the STB, “Over the last six to seven years, through ever increasing pressure from Wall Street, the railroads’ emphasis has not been on growth, rather, the emphasis has been on cutting. Over the previous decade, the five largest railroads had spent \$114 billion to buy back their shares- intended to boost stock prices-rather than using that money to bolster their routes”.

The pressure is on as activist investment managers have filed proposals at the UP and NS to allow shareholders a vote on whether rail workers should get paid sick leave. The filings warn that a weakened railroad workforce will eventually weaken their investments. Current problems, left unchecked, will continue to cause employees to leave the industry. Members of both parties in Congress agree they were forced to act, and problems such as quality-of-work and family issues must be addressed. NARVRE hopes that better solutions will be worked out to keep and return rail employees to work. Railroad Retirement depends on it. Wishing all a safe & healthy New Year,

—Gary Faley,  
National Legislative Director

the top cause of death worldwide, but studies show that staying well-hydrated can reduce the risk of developing heart failure.

2. Brain Health Your brain contains about 73% water—even higher than the rest of your body—and needs lubrication to fire off all those hormones and neurotransmitters

3. Kidney Health Your kidneys may be small, but they’re important, as they remove waste and extra fluid from your body, which helps maintain the right balance of water, salt and minerals. “Water helps the kidneys remove waste from the blood and may prevent the formation of kidney stones

4. Joint Health As we age, it becomes increasingly important to keep our joints in good health, as many seniors have serious mobility issues.

5. Healthy Weight Maintenance, a study in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism found that something as simple as drinking enough water can increase your metabolism by as much as 30%, says Brazilian[4]. In the small study, participants saw this type of increase after drinking roughly 19 ounces of water, which is far less than the recommended daily amount.”

Our National Dues are considered delinquent after February 28, 2022.

If your unit needs assistance filing IRS form 990N, send a check for \$8 to the National Office. The 990N Unit filing deadline is May 15, 2022.

Annual Audit Forms are due February 28, 2022. The report forms are available on our website. Unit officers, if you require assistance with the Audit Forms, Roger Swanson, Chair of the Finance Committee, has volunteered to help. Call or email the National Office and we will put you in contact with Roger for his assistance

#### As a reminder 2022 dues are as follows:

Members associated with a local unit  
Single Member.....\$29  
Couple Member .....\$36

801 Members  
(Not associated with a local unit)  
Single Member.....\$31  
Couple Member .....\$38

#### Our Centenarians

We recognize **Edna I Curtiss** of Newton KS who turned 101 years young on October 1, 2022.

We also recognize **Clara Moore** of Sedalia MO who turned 100 years on young September 13, 2022.

— James (Phil) Steward,  
National Secretary/Treasurer

### (National Legislative Director from page 1)

some that extend for several miles. The GAO also stated that freight rail investment strategies continue to boast train length increases every year. The loss of employees means safety measures and maintenance schedules on tracks and trains are being ignored. The use of PSR continues to anger shippers, rail customers, and other entities as well, such as The National League of Cities and state and local officials that complain to the GAO about the length of trains blocking crossings and traffic jams causing problems for emergency vehicles. Wall Street may not care, but Main Street does (Fortune, June 2021). Today’s PSR models will now run one 3 mile train rather than 3 one-mile trains in order to use fewer workers. STB members have criticized the railroads stating workers have been cut down to the bare-bones using fewer workers to do the same amount of work. Rail Passengers Association (RPA) are worried that this agreement fails to address the real root of harsh working conditions. RPA Jim Matthews, on PSR based investments: “As long as Class 1’s care more about stock buybacks than running a quality railroad, we’ll continue to face long delays

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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## New Medicare Scam Happening Over The Phone: Free COVID Test Kits

**W**e are starting to hear about different scams bad actors are performing related to free at-home COVID test kits. Medicare beneficiaries are being called on the phone and given an offer to have free COVID tests shipped to them if they provide their Medicare number. These offers are bogus. Never give your Medicare number to anyone calling you on the phone.

With this scam, kits don't show up (because the entire call is a false attempt to get you to provide your protected health and identifying information). Another byproduct of these telephone calls is that bad actors can also file claims to Medicare in your name for other services that you never received. They also can "share" your information with other fraudsters, and they also will bill Medicare for services you never received.

These fraudulent activities have happened with Regular (Social Security) Medicare and Railroad Medicare. Our fraud investigative unit (called Benefit Integrity, or "BI") performed data analysis and found that we had a provider billing Railroad Medicare who was under investigation with the Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG). We have started an investigation on that provider, who has billed Railroad Medicare for more than \$60,000 in tests. As you can see, fraud doesn't happen only in one area. It is widespread.

If you have been called and provided

your Medicare number to someone, or if you see services on your quarterly Medicare Summary Notices (MSN) that you are sure you never received, please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, or for the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD at 877-566-3572. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET.

Another great way to keep tabs on your claims is to use our free internet portal, MyRRMed. MyRRMed provides you with access to your Railroad Medicare Part B claims information, along with historical Part B 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. You can reach the portal at [www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed](http://www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed).

Other ways to report fraud:

You can contact the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov](http://www.ReportFraud.ftc.gov) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357). You can read the article on "What to Know About Medical Identity Theft," also found on the FTC website.

You also can reach out to the Medicare Fraud Strike Force by visiting their website at <https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/strike-force/>. There you can find out about recent convictions, other types of scams, and Medicare fraud in general. This entity is part of the HHS OIG.

— *Jennifer Johnson*



Roger Swanson, Unit 109 St Paul MN Secretary/Treasurer and NARVRE Chair of Finance Committee and Joan Swanson, Editor and Publisher of Unit 109 newsletter/Dope Sheet, attending Unit 109 St Paul MN Christmas Party.