



- SINCE 1937 -

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER, 2023

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Best wishes to all the members of NARVRE as we recover from the “long hot summer of ‘23”! Here we are in September that means it’s only eight months until we meet in Kansas City, MO for our 43rd Biennial Convention. Plans are being made and executed by Unit 095 to make this our largest and most successful meeting ever. Each Unit’s part in the success of the coming gathering is your commitment to have a voting delegate elected and present on May 13-15, 2023. Each member of NARVRE is cordially invited to attend and listen to the slate of speakers invited to enlighten and educate all of us on matters that effect railroad retirement and our well-being.

Each of you who are receiving this newsletter have made a commitment to PROMOTE, PROTECT and PRESERVE Railroad Retirement by having paid your 2023 dues. Now is the time to continue your support of NARVRE by remitting your annual 2024 dues of \$29 for a single member or \$36 for a couple.

Members of the Executive Board and Area Directors continue to travel to various locations to hold informational meetings to educate railroad retirees and current workers about NARVRE. Thanks to Area 4 Assistant Area Director Dennis Van Dyke from Unit 154 for suggesting and preplanning a regional meeting in Marceline, MO for October 18, 2023. Several leaders of NARVRE will be there and hopes are to revitalize and bolster the “tri-state” area of IL, KS, and MO.

I recently talked with a Unit President who stated he has spoken with numerous current workers, and they thought they had to be retired to join NARVRE. This is a misconception that we are continuously attempting to educate railroaders on. The “Veteran” workers who are every day risk-

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FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

NARVRE has been an active association for over 85 years, with a membership that has worked to keep the lines of communication open to our Representatives in Congress. When certain issues arise that demand our attention, it is incumbent on us to remind our elected officials that they have an obvious responsibility to their railroad constituents back home in their Districts. The membership has been busy, having to contact Congress on different issues that threaten rail jobs in the industry and proposals to gut Amtrak and devastate operations and employment levels at the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). To address the most recent threats that come directly from the Republican House, NARVRE is aligned with a coalition of rail labor and rail industry advocates (and RRB colleagues) to redress the proposed FY24 cuts in Amtrak funding as well as the RRB. Keep in mind that an agreement between the Speaker of the House and President Biden was enacted last June to avoid a federal debt default by adjusting federal funding levels back to FY 2022. As example, the RRB FY22 budget was \$124 million. However, the House Republicans reneged on their agreement and now propose to slash RRB funding back to levels from FY 2008. They now have proposed to cut

the RRB FY24 budget down to \$103 million, which represents a \$25 million reduction from the current FY 2023 levels of \$128 million. As detailed in our May Article, the RRB ideally needs 880 employees to operate efficiently. At \$103 million, the RRB will not have enough funds to pay the salary and benefits of the current 725 employees, and a rough estimate indicates the agency will need to reduce staff by 167 employees. Disruptions in service to that degree will affect anyone connected to the RRB, so it’s necessary that NARVRE members respond and advise Congress that the RRB cannot operate and service their beneficiaries with 558 employees. Further, as reported last month, Amtrak is also on the House Republican’s agenda as they have proposed to cut Amtrak’s budget by 64% or \$876 million. Amtrak estimates that 10,000 employees would be furloughed if these funding levels were to take effect, and those numbers would only add to the overload and backlog of an already understaffed workforce at the RRB. On behalf of the RRB, we need to make contact with our own Representatives in Congress and make our position clear. **We are urging Congress to oppose the drastic cuts for the RRB in the House spending bill and request they support the higher responsible budget proposals in the FY24 Senate bill. Please**

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NARVRE INC. Where it all began Labor Day, 1937, in Louisville, Kentucky.

From the National Vice President —

NARVRE members, we are on the eve of membership renewal for 2024. NARVRE would encourage every unit to begin preparation for their renewal drive. If you have not established a membership renewal committee, it is suggested you form one. Your success in membership renewal can only be measured based on your preparation and follow-up with members. I would like to challenge all NARVRE units to achieve a 100% membership renewal for 2024.

I recently received an amazing letter from a NARVRE member from Fresno CA Unit 060. Mr. D. L. Hefferman, 86-years young, commented about the history of his father during the Great Depression and the difficulty of establishing the Railroad Retirement Act in 1937. It was at the same time NARVRE was created to Protect, Preserve and Promote Railroad Retirement. Brother Hefferman further comments about NARVRE, stating, "It (NARVRE) really is an important part of my life and should be for anyone who ever worked on the railroad." This statement should be a testament for all of us. Thank you, Brother Hefferman for you letter.

NARVRE will be holding a Regional Informational Conference in Marceline MO on October 18, 2023 at the Walsworth Community Center located at 124 East Richie. The conference will begin at 9:00 AM. Speakers will be your NARVRE National Officers, Walt Barrows (former Labor Member to the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board and

NARVRE Area 4 Director), representatives from Jones Granger Law Firm, TLC Insurance Group, Palmetto GBA, Care Insurance and Diamond Tours. I would like to thank NARVRE Area Director Gary Nelson and Assistant Area Director Dennis VanDyke for their assistance in planning the conference. All NARVRE members are invited to this conference. Pre-registration for the conference is required by emailing Dennis VanDyke at dennismarceline@gmail.com.

Along with the conference in Marceline MO, your National Officers will be busy in

the upcoming months with visits to Roanoke VA, Chicago IL, Cedar Rapids IA, Joliet IL, Roseville CA, Barstow CA, Lacrosse WI and more. At many of these locations and more, units are struggling to obtain new members to take over leadership roles in NARVRE. It is imperative each NARVRE unit take steps to secure new members willing to become actively involved in NARVRE. Your NARVRE unit's survival depends on it.

— **Ron Hylla**

NARVRE National Vice President

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

use the following to connect to your Reps Office on Capitol Hill *202-224-3121*****

Earlier this month, we reported that rail labor unions and rail management sent a joint letter to the House and Senate leadership supporting a higher budget for the RRB agency. The letter addresses many key facts, pointing out that false information was used to help pass the House bill, "under the guise of lowering federal spending". That ploy from House Republicans was intentionally misleading and false! This united letter, signed by the Association of American Railroads (AAR), American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA), and Transportation Trades Dept, AFLCIO (TTD) makes it clear that the majority of funding for the RRB comes from payroll taxes paid by railroad employers and railroad workers. The letter to the House leadership is insistent and instructive, making it clear that no other taxpayers pay into RRB funds and the RRB does not receive any funding from the U.S. Treasury. Therefore, caps on RRB spending "do not reduce the deficit or slow federal spending". Further, the House proposals to cap funding

would only serve to force the RRB to cut staff and reduce service to hard-working railroad employees and retirees. If this sounds familiar, it's because the same types of intentional and misleading statements were used in the Paul Ryan FY Budget proposal in 2012. This is yet another reminder that our work here, as members, is not done. We need to respond to this latest and targeted assault on railroads, rail employees and railway retirees. The mission for NARVRE members is to join with the coalition and **urge Congress to remove this draconian limit on the RRB's administrative funding and support the Senate bill**, which maintains FY23 funding levels and allows the agency to maintain its current employment levels and continue providing essential service to over 530,000 beneficiaries as well as 200,000 active railroad employees relying on these benefits.

Many of you receiving legislative emails from this office may find this information repetitive, but we have many members that only receive this Newsletter. Any member desiring to receive periodic information from this office can send me your email address and consider it done.

— **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.

Victor Sundquist • Barbara Sunquist • Arnold Marrotta • David Corless • Peter Strong • Jones and Granger Law Firm • Mrs. Myrtle E Bryant in Memory of Thomas J Bryant • Mrs. Sharon Phillips in Memory of Bill Phillips

Memorials

Candy Eckhardt Former Secretary Treasurer (closed) Unit 069 Beaver Valley PA merged into Unit 151 East Liverpool OH • Frederick W. Dougherty, Sr. • Margaret I Dougherty • Victor Gelking • Carlyle James Maxwell • William Valentine • Mildred Dearden • Jack Jussila • Susan Henry • Donnie Fuller • Lawrence Jackson • Ragland Cooper



Old and New bridges. Lake Pend Oreille, ID, east of Spokane, WA.

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

As I have written in the past with respect to the origin of our great organization, it is an honor to revisit and quote from the Yellow Book authored by former National Secretary Mary David.

September 4, 2023, marks 86 years ago it all began. Labor Day of 1937 is the day that NARVRE was first organized. 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." "At this historic meeting in Louisville the six rail unions represented were: The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers, The Order of Railway Conductors The Order

of Railway Trainmen, The Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen The Brotherhood of Railway Carmen" After filing Articles of Incorporation in 1938, the Association was to be non-political and was not to be operated for profit.

Packets will be mailed to all Unit Secretaries, Treasurers, Governing Board, and Assistant Area Directors. The large envelopes contain newly updated Unit reporting materials. These include Membership Reporting Form, Officer Election Form, and Annual Audit Form.

Any dues collected between now and the end of the year will be credited through December 31, 2024. National dues rates for members associated with a local unit are \$29.00 for singles and \$36.00 for couples. 801 (members not associated with a local unit) rates are \$31.00 for singles and \$38.00 for couples.

Again, you will find an insert advertisement for TLC Insurance Group. Whether you are deciding on your first Medicare plan or interested in switching your plan and exploring other options, Medicare can be confusing. This is where TLC can be of assistance. TLC's professionally trained staff will listen to your needs, explain all your options, and help you find and choose the Medicare plan that suits you best. This program is strictly voluntary and has no obligation to our members. If you decide to utilize their services, the member must contact them. They will not contact you unless you provide your contact information to them. Additionally, their representatives will upon your request visit your unit. Several units have invited TLC to speak to

their membership with positive feedback reported.

Finally, we are celebrating our partnership with Jones and Granger Law Firm which officially began last year at the 2022 National Convention in Oakland CA. The Jones and Grainger law firm was selected by the Delegates at the 2022 National convention the official law firm to represent the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc. in asbestos related diseases has shown interest in providing support for future NARVRE conventions. This arrangement will be reviewed by Jones and Granger Representatives and National President and National Secretary Treasurer every two years with NARVRE officials making recommendations to the Governing Board.

We are pleased to report that the sponsorship of most of our membership initiatives which includes those meetings and conferences indicated in National Vice President Ron Hylla's column in this publication, since the 2022 convention, has been outstanding. We have gained 545 new members including a newly formed unit in Chicago IL. With this partnership in place, we will forge ahead.

Correction: last month with respect to the outstanding performance of Unit reporting we inadvertently left off Unit 092 Proctor/Duluth 3% Unit President Greg Haynes Treasurer John Zupansic

We will republish this list within the next two months as we have many Units updating their Rosters.

Thank those who have really put forth the effort in this initiative.

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

(National President from page 1)

ing their lives and missing the companionship of their families on America's railroads are THE FUTURE OF NARVRE. These women and men will soon be the future leaders of this great organization and we must reach them and welcome them with open arms.

The hot summer months will soon be just a memory as Fall arrives and we think about the holidays to come. Remember, Congress will be back in session and please read and give heed to National Legislative Director Gary Faley's column in this newsletter and releases issued concerning events affecting our RRB benefits. May God bless you and as always STAY SAFE!

— **George Boatwright,**
National President



NARVRE's largest Unit 109 Minneapolis/St Paul MN. L-R President Tom Perkovich C.A.R.E. representative Kathy Hamilton, Legislative Rep John Filter.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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News deadline 10th of each month

Moving? Make Sure to Let Us Know

If you have moved, or are in the process of moving, it's important to update your address with Medicare and the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Having an old address on file will keep you from receiving payments, as well as claims information from your Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs). Your MSNs or payments cannot be forwarded through the US Postal Service, even if you have a forwarding notice on file with them.

Railroad Medicare Beneficiary Address Change Form

To update your address, please complete the fields, print, sign, and return this form to Railroad Medicare at the address below or fax to (800) 764-9844.

Your Name: _____
Medicare Number: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Telephone Number (including area code): _____
New Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Date: _____
(Respondent's Signature) _____

If you are signing the request for this change for the above patient, please include a copy of court/legal papers showing you can act on behalf of the person listed above.
If you need further assistance, please call us at (800) 833-6455, Monday through Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. ET. You may also fax this form to us at (800) 764-9844. Basic Medicare information may be found on our Web site at www.PalmettoGBA.com/customer.

Palmetto GBA - Railroad Medicare
P.O. Box 10366
Augusta, GA 30909-0021
www.PalmettoGBA.com/customer

Version: May 2014

our Customer Service department to make the necessary update.

* We will not mail any MSNs or send any payments that are due directly to you until your address is updated.

You can avoid any delays by notifying us of your address change directly, either in writing, by a telephone call, or through our MyRRMed portal. When you update your address with Rail-

road Medicare, we may update the address with the Railroad Retirement Board for you, if you have not already done so.

In Writing

To contact us in writing, you can send us a letter or complete a Railroad Medicare Beneficiary Address Change form.

A letter must include the following information:

- * Your name
- * Medicare Number
- * Date of Birth
- * Telephone number (including area code)
- * New address
- * Your signature and the date you signed your letter

Our easy-to-use interactive "Beneficiary

Address Change Form" is available on our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me. You can find the form by clicking on the 'Forms' picture link on our home page and then locating the Beneficiary Address Change Form article. Please keep in mind that if someone else is completing and signing this form for you, they must include a copy of legal or court papers showing they can act on your behalf.

— Jennifer Johnson
Palmetto, GBA



Unit 030 Council Bluffs IA, Margaret Hale Billingsley, Facebook administrator posted this picture taken at a recent meeting.

ATTENTION: ALL MEDICARE ELIGIBLE RETIREES

Are you afraid of losing access to your doctor or hospital?

Large network disruptions may be occurring on your Medicare Plan in 2024. Call TLC to make sure you are on the right plan for your needs. We provide FREE service and support to all NARVRE retirees, spouses, and surviving spouses.

Medicare is constantly changing. Enrolling in, or remaining enrolled in, the wrong Medicare plan could cost you thousands in unnecessary out-of-pocket costs.

Whether you are deciding on your first Medicare plan or interested in comparing all your options, Medicare can be confusing. This is where TLC can be of assistance. TLC's professionally trained staff will listen to your needs, explain all your options, and help you find and choose the Medicare plan that fits you best. Please feel free to contact TLC for a FREE personalized review of all your options.

You're invited to attend exclusive NARVRE Retiree Medicare Webinars!

Webinars will cover:

- Intro in to the FREE services provided by TLC.
- A basic overview of Medicare (A,B,C, and D).
- Review of all your Medicare Plan options, including: Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Supplemental Plans, and Prescription Drug (Part D) Plans.
- Who is eligible and when you can enroll.
- How to get your FREE personalized review.

Please visit our **NARVRE Retiree Medicare Web Page** for more information and to register for a scheduled online webinar at:

tlcmedicare.info/NARVRE



**For Your FREE Personalized Review or Questions About Your Medicare Plan, Please Call the TLC Retiree Service Center
1-800-719-3751 NO OBLIGATION!**

**FROM THE DESK
OF TOM DWYER —**

Congress will be returning soon from their August recess to face a deadline of keeping the government open. There is a lot at stake on all sides. The House will want cuts whereas the Senate and White House will want to pass legislation to keep the government open.

Railroad management and labor contacted the Appropriations Committees in the House and Senate on funding the Railroad Retirement Board back in July. As passed by the House in July the RRB would have its budget cut at 103 million a reduction of 25 million which differs from the Senate FY24 bill and the White House by 35 million.

The RRB cannot operate properly with cuts to service regarding retirement applications, unemployment and sickness benefit inquiries and maintaining proper staff in its regional offices across the country.

It is up to us to let Congress know how reduced funding is affecting the daily operation of the Board. We encourage all members to contact their member of the House of Representative on this serious situation. Please do so today because of the importance.

— *Tom Dwyer, NARVRE
Former National President*

**Please visit TLC
NARVRE Retiree
Medicare Web Page**

for more information and to register
for a scheduled online webinar at:
tlcmedicare.info/NARVRE

Scan here to Visit the NARVRE
Retiree Medicare Web Page



RAILROAD RETIREE INFORMATIONAL CONFERENCE

Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023

9 am to 3 pm

**Walsworth Community Center
124 East Richie
Marceline, MO**

GUEST SPEAKERS

NARVRE NATIONAL OFFICERS, WALT BARROWS (FORMER LABOR MEMBER FOR THE RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD), JONES GRANGER LAW FIRM, TLC INSURANCE GROUP, PALMENTO GBA, CARE INSURANCE, DIAMOND TOURS

Breakfast, Lunch and refreshments will be served.

**For all retired and active railroad
employees and their spouses**

*Sponsored by the National Association of Retired and Veteran
Railway Employees (NARVRE)*