



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Greetings to our membership across this great country and wishes for an early spring, so that all our Units can continue meeting and socializing.

I am excited about the prospect of being involved with forming and or revitalizing Units in at least 20 states this year. Your National Team has worked long and hard to establish a strategic plan to accomplish these meetings.

By the time you read this National Vice President Hylla along with Area 4 Director, Gary Nelson and others will have revisited Unit 002 CHICAGO which has doubled in membership since formation in September 2022. Also, Area 6 Director Gary Marquart, Unit 140 Secretary Treasurer Alda Evans and I will have had a successful informational conference in Alliance, NE. The strategic plan is to visit two or three designated areas each of the next eight months and hopefully by next month we

will be able to post more firm dates for upcoming meetings around the country.

There is a matter that we do not like to talk about but has been brought to the forefront these last two years due to Covid. When death occurs to a retired railroader the immediate financial concern of the family maybe what resources are available to them.

The RRB just like social security has a death benefit of \$255. Many years ago, the unions representing freight employees negotiated a \$2000 insurance benefit for retirees through Metropolitan Life. The following phone number (800-310-7770) was a link for everyone to Metropolitan Life. Amtrak still uses Metropolitan Life, but you MUST contact a third party (Alight Solutions) which handles personnel issues: PHONE: 800-481-4887. Select “prompt” for agreement(union) employee or nonagreement (management) employee and then select “prompt” to report death.

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FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Tax time is upon us for 2022 filings, and all rail workers, active and retired, remain governed under the Railroad Retirement Act (RRA) which declares that railroad retirement benefits are exempt from State income taxation. The exemption is found in Section 14 of the RRA (under 45 U.S. Code 231m) as follows: “Except as provided in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, notwithstanding any other law of the United States, or of any State, no annuity or supplemental annuity shall be subject to any tax, nor shall the payment thereof be anticipated.” Legal opinions from the RRB, as well as court decisions agree that benefits are not subject to taxation at the state level. It is incumbent on the individual tax filer to be aware of this federal statute and exemption from state tax, and any challenge against a state must come from the railroad tax filer. That said, Past President Tom Dwyer is proud to remind us that his NARVRE Unit 109 challenged the State of Minnesota in a 1988-89 taxation lawsuit whereby the annuities of MN railroaders were being taxed without regard to the RLA federal law (USC 45, Sec.231m). The State Atty General, Hubert Humphrey III, agreed with the tax filers position on taxation and would not defend the State in Court. The MN Tax Court ruled in favor of 32,000 railroad retirees and were refunded \$2.9 million dollars. Also, in a case from 1979, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the RRA ensures that retirement benefits must actually reach the beneficiary and pre-empts all state law that stands in its way. These cases, and more, agree that the RRA law is also protected under the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The February 3rd train derailment of the Norfolk Southern (NS) continues to add confusion and trauma for residents in and around the village of East Palestine, Ohio. The train carried hazardous materials result-

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2024 Convention site hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City, MO. The soon to be remodeled Hilton Garden Inn located in Independence, MO the home of former United States President Harry S Truman. The Hilton Garden Inn is located at 19677 E Jackson Dr., Independence MO 64057.

From the National Vice President —

Members should have by now paid their 2023 dues and prevented the loss of the benefits from NARVRE. Units across the country should have made repeated attempts to have members pay their dues, along with reviewing their unit rosters and updating them; sending the roster revisions to the National Office addressed to National Secretary Treasurer, Phil Steward.

NARVRE cannot fully recognize the complete status of our membership without units updating their rosters. With units reviewing their membership rosters, many times they may learn some of our members have passed and need to be reported so NARVRE can pay a tribute to them.

I just returned from a meeting with NARVRE Unit 002 in Chicago as President Boatwright addressed. I still heard reports from some of the attendees at the Chicago meeting, “why haven’t I heard of NARVRE before?” It is astounding for me on hear-

(National President from page 1)

Alight will then report to Metropolitan Life on behalf of agreement employees.

If anyone knows of additional information concerning the \$2,000 benefit, please contact me at: amboat49@hotmail.com. Please enjoy the warmer weather coming and encourage your “old rail” friends to attend a meeting with you or one of our informational conferences this year. STAY SAFE!

— *George Boatwright,*
National President

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.

John Nadzam • David and Linda Williams • Mike Schlesselman • James White • Sergio Perez • Barbara Sundquist • Victor Sundquist • Katherine Denz • James Peek • Carol Kelch • David Corless • June Carder • Jones/Granger Law Firm • Peter Stronge

Memorials

Robert Jones • Daniel Chinanderr

ing this comment over and over again. NARVRE has new resources available under “social media” to apprise railroad retirees about NARVRE. Personally, I belong to over 30 railroad Facebook pages and continually advise those readers about NARVRE. We also need to have continued conversations with former railroad workers and retirees about NARVRE and what we do. You can assist us in getting the word out and asking them to join NARVRE to help Protect, Preserve and Promote railroad retirement.

Finally, for our members in Georgia, NARVRE will be holding Informational Conferences during the week of April 17, 2023, in the Atlanta area. Actual locations, dates and times will be posted on the NARVRE Facebook page, along in the NARVRE Forum and the new NARVRE Atlanta Facebook page. During

our visit, we will be focusing on starting new NARVRE units in the Atlanta area and signing up new members. NARVRE officers, employee and retiree advocates will be speaking about work place hazards and exposures to harmful chemicals and substances plus Medicare and Medicare Supplemental insurances.

I highly encourage our NARVRE members in the Atlanta area to join us at one of these conferences. It is also suggested you contact other railroad retirees and workers about the meetings. During the same week, NARVRE will travel to Chattanooga for a similar conference.

If anyone has a suggestion for a location to begin a new NARVRE unit, please contact me.

— *Ron Hylla*
NARVRE National Vice President

NARVRE Ohio State Meeting - May 15, 2023

NARVRE Ohio Biennial State Meeting will be held May 15, 2023 at Best Western Plus + Cleveland/Strongsville (formerly Holiday Inn) in Strongsville, OH. Speakers will be Labor Member, John Bragg, our National Officers, Walt Barrows, Area 2 Director, Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto GBA, Angela Miller, United Health, Attorney Chris Murphy, and TLC. A luncheon will be served compliments of Doran and Murphy Law Firm. A block of rooms has been reserved for anyone wishing to stay overnight. For more information please contact Ruth Teper, Ohio State President at 216-403-9530 or rbt@cox.net.



There were 20 people present including spouses and children. A NARVRE presentation was made and we thank President Cory Aaron of BMW Local#745 for inviting us. President Shacklette of Unit #56 and his Wife Patricia, Secretary; visited BMW Local#745 Union meeting at Ste. Genevieve, Mo. On Friday March 3, 2023.



From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

The National Secretary Treasurers, both past and present, have not removed any members from rosters unless Unit officials notified the National Office to remove that member. It is the responsibility of the individual units to communicate with members and determine membership status

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

ing in the release of over 1 million gallons of toxic pollutants into the air and streams, rivers, soil and seepage into well water. The EPA and NS testified in the hearing at the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on February 9th. First responders to the tragedy disagreed with NS CEO, Alan Shaw, on statements relative to toxic ground removal and cleanup. Senators from Ohio and Pennsylvania spoke on behalf of their constituents and some residents informed the media that Congress should hold the NS accountable for all of their problems now and into the future. Ohio Senators Sherrod Brown (D) and J.D. Vance (R) introduced bipartisan legislation (S.576) that would tighten government safety requirements for trains carrying hazardous materials. They both emphasized an urgency to pass the Railway Safety Act of 2023 in a bipartisan manner to help prevent future catastrophic derailments. Indeed, in the days just after the East Palestine tragedy, two more trains derailed in Ohio. S.576 would also require trains to operate with at least two-person crews and a more frequent use of sensors that detect overheated wheel bearings. Reports indicate the East Palestine train sensors failed, as did other detectors that alert employees when trains veer off the tracks. The House has introduced the RAIL

and report that to the National Office. This is consistent with Section 4:05 of the Policy and Procedures which reads : “The officers of each unit are responsible for notifying the national headquarters office of all additions and deletions to their membership rolls.”

At my direction, our database consultants have developed programming for new reports to identify delinquent members. They are broken down to an organizational scale

Act as a companion bill to the Senate legislation. Both bills call for a full investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on all safety rules and the need for the development of new safety measures to broaden the definition and classifications for “high-hazard flammable trains” (HHFT). The NTSB has been investigating other NS accidents over the last 2 years and are now working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to review the ever-increasing train lengths and other consequences of Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR). Rail articles and reports from many well-respected writers have agreed in principle with complaints from railroad shippers (customers) that consistently point to the implementation of PSR models as the underlying cause of problems with the NS and major railroads. NARVRE is concerned that cutting 30,000 rail employees from the workforce over 5 years is a contributing factor in far too many accidents and injuries. We agree that the NTSB should complete a comprehensive investigation in order for Congress to develop legislation that updates rail safety to better protect their employees, and citizens living alongside or near railroad tracks in America. NARVRE supports the residents at the EPW hearing who demand that those responsible “fix what’s wrong, so that it never happens again”.

— **Gary Faley,**
National Legislative Director

and structure, so this issue receives proper attention by Unit, Area, and National Officers.

The other reason for developing these management tools is for budgeting purposes. Obviously, we want our numbers to reflect reality. Our actual numbers include all members who are on the rosters, including those who are delinquent.

All 4 National Officers anticipate the total number of members will decrease as the 2023 data is recorded if Units do not make an effort to contact all members on their roster and remove those who are no longer active.

Let us not rush this effort. The National Office will continue to analyze the data as it comes in. These new reports were designed to assist in making sound decisions regarding our business plan as well as our finances, recruitment, marketing and advertising strategies.

In summary, we expect the collective effort of our officers nationwide will significantly impact our membership census and gross income.

We are encouraged as enthusiasm builds as a reaction to our nationwide effort to increase membership by conducting informational meetings in large population areas and rail operation locations across the country. I have received calls from across the nation offering to participate in this endeavor. Below are a few of our people who are spreading the word of our great organization. Terry Sigler will participate in our program in Alliance, Nebraska. St. Louis Unit President Norbert and Patricia Shacklett drove to Cape Girardeau to promote NARVRE to rail employees. Long time NARVRE member Gene Hatfield joined to assist with the efforts in Atlanta, GA. In Iowa, Area 4 Director Gary R Nelson is making an aggressive swing to visit all Units in the state. Andrew Caselka is going to train shows and railroad fairs passing out NARVRE literature to rail attendees. Finally, Niecy Patterson Assistant Area 8 Director will be assisting our National Team on west coast swing in upcoming months.

Anyone interested in participation in this National Campaign, contact any of the National Officers and we will put you in contact with the appropriate group or team.

A selection has been made for the 2024 Convention hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City, MO. The convention committee headed by Cheri Miller and Unit President Mike Steward has selected, the soon to be remodeled Hilton Garden Inn, Independence, MO the home of former United States President Harry S Truman.

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



Chicago 002 March meeting. The attendance has nearly doubled in size since this unit was established.

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News deadline 10th of each month

Good News for Some Diagnostic Audiology Services

Every year, The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) publishes a Physician Fee Schedule, which can change annually. Many items typically stay the same, but for 2023, there is an exciting new change:

Effective January 1, 2023, CMS changed the ordering process for some audiology services. Specifically, Medicare Part B patients can receive non-acute hearing diagnostic tests that are being conducted for issues not related to disequilibrium, hearing aids, or prescribing/fitting/changing hearing aids without the need for a physician's order. (Physician orders are still required for all other audiology services).

The cost for these services: Medicare pays 80% of the covered charges once the patient has met the Annual Part B deductible, which is \$226 for 2023.

Additionally, depending on the location (if you are being seen in a hospital outpatient location), a facility fee (hospital copayment) can apply. A copayment for these services would apply when you are being seen in a hospital Emergency Department (ED), a pain clinic, a surgery center or in a hospital observation unit.

As a reminder, it's important to note that Medicare still does not cover non-implanted (standard) hearing aids, or the exams needed for fitting aids.

If you have questions about this change, you can call our Palmetto GBA/Railroad

Medicare Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. For the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD 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.

We also encourage you to check out our free, beneficiary website portal called 'MyR-

RMEd'. 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.
— Jennifer Johnson

