



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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Our presenters at the Atlanta GA meetings: L-R Randall Brassell, Jones & Granger; George Boatwright, National President; Ron Hylla, National Vice President; Angela Bryant, Palmetto GBA; Walt Barrows, Area 2 Director; Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto GBA; Philip Steward, National Secretary Treasurer.

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Greetings to NARVRE members across our nation. It is hard to believe this is the combined May/June newsletter already. Since it is May, please consider this: it is only 12 months to our 43rd Biennial Convention.

Begin to make your plans to attend at the Hilton Garden Inn, 19677 E. Jackson Drive, Independence, MO. The Convention will be hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City, Mo in mid-May 2024. Our National Secretary Treasurer, Phil Steward will be providing our Units with further information.

National Vice President, Ron Hylla, will probably tell you April has been a busy month for the leadership of NARVRE. Thank you to Mr. Hylla and Mr. Jeff Dorrer for visiting Units in Iowa and Illinois. Also, we had a great meeting with Unit 003 CHATTANOOGA and had seven machinist members from the IAM in attendance who hopefully will be the basis for officer succession planning in that Unit.

It is of utmost importance for all Units to seek new members to take “the reins” as

our current officers are approaching an age where they feel the need to “slowdown” and let others lead within their Units.

Many thanks to our cooperate partners Jones & Granger Law firm and TLC Insurance Group for their committed partnership visiting Units and participating in our informational meetings across the country. This past year has been one of growth and sustainability of NARVRE Units and this will continue in the coming months.

As has been quoted before, OUR association is recognized by the Railroad Retirement Board as one of the “stakeholders” in railroad retirement benefits. Be “PROUD and LOUD” when talking to others about NARVRE!

I realized that May marks the end of my first year as your President and I have learned many things about being a leader. The main thing learned was that this is a “grass roots” organization built from the bottom up not from the top down. The independent local Units are the foundation of this association in the past, present, and future. Your input through calls, emails, and discussions with your Area

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FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Each year, federal agencies are required to submit their fiscal year budget requests to the Office of Management & Budget (OMB), in preparation for the President’s yearly budget. The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) must submit a detailed filing of their projected budget for the next fiscal year, in order to properly administer for and on behalf of its’ annuitants. The present day RRB funding is \$128M and the President’s FY24 budget for the RRB is at \$138.575M, which would be an increase, except that it would only support about 729 full-time employees. Currently, the RRB is operating at 18 percent below its minimum staffing level, and 25 percent of those employees are retirement eligible. This percentage will climb to nearly one-third (32 percent) within the next two years. Therefore, the agency is requesting funding of \$173,744M for fiscal year 2024 to support 880 full-time employees, which is the same number requested in FY23. The FY24 number also includes a long-delayed and overdue \$10M to further IT modernization efforts. The projected number of 880 employees is an absolute as the agency continually needs to hire and train to manage proper succession planning. The increase in funding would allow the RRB to move into the modernized IT phase with sufficient employees to provide critical benefit service. The RRB have been under-funded and under-staffed for years, working with outdated IT systems. That leaves the RRB open to invasive cyber-attacks, unable to fully secure the personal information of annuitants and beneficiaries. The U.S. Congress needs to finally invest in new technologies for the RRB offices to provide services for rail workers and beneficiaries. It is therefore time to make contact with our Representatives in Congress on this issue. And keep in mind that many of

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From the National Vice President —

It has been a very busy Spring for your NARVRE Executive Officers. In April, we have attended several NARVRE unit meetings along with holding informational conferences. We have visited NARVRE meetings at Unit 067 in Clinton IA, Unit 153 in Fort Madison IA, Unit 029 in Cedar Rapids IA, and Unit 030 in Council Bluffs IA.

At all these locations, I was extremely impressed by the number of NARVRE members in attendance. At the Unit 030 in Council Bluffs IA, the attendance for their meeting was over 90 people whereas several new members joined NARVRE.

I would like to thank all the Unit Officers at each location for their warm hospitality. I would also like to thank Jeff Doerr and Jones Granger for accompanying me while attending these locations.

Your NARVRE Officers also held informational conferences in Atlanta GA and Chattanooga TN in April. We had several new

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Directors and Assistant Area Directors comes directly to the leadership of NARVRE and is both appreciated and welcomed.

Enjoy the coming summer months and as always, we will Protect, Promote, and Preserve Railroad Retirement benefits. 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.

Gloria Nutter • James Rollins • David Corless • Barbara Sundquist • Victor Sundquist • Unit 115 Wichita KS President Gary Marquart Secretary Treasurer Robin Smith donation in remembrance of Larry Wright • Unit 030 Council Bluffs IA President John Billingsley, Secretary Pam Fogle, Marjorie Ingram, donation in remembrance of Al Taylor

Memorials

Ronald Buschman 96 years old • Ron Jones • John Hays • Suzanne Eller • Lawrence Allmaras • Oscar Hess • Patricia Steffensmeier

members sign up for NARVRE. Additionally, thanks to Randall Brassell and Jones Granger for partnering with us while conducting these conferences. Our success story in obtaining new members will continue throughout 2023.

In May 2023, your NARVRE Officers and members will continue their pursuit for new members and units. We will be attending the Railroad Retirement Board's Pre-Retirement Seminar in Omaha NE, meetings at Unit 002 in Chicago IL and a Chicago CNW Retiree Luncheon. We will also hold an informational conference in the Philadelphia PA area, focusing on the re-establishment of the NARVRE unit it once had.

Area 8 Director Bob Aparicio, along with Assistance Area 8 Directors Niece Patterson, Fred Granados, John Hermann, and others will be attending the SP Historical Society Convention in Sparks, NV. Efforts will be to obtain new NARVRE members, along with restoration of the membership of Unit 050 in Reno NV. Thank you everyone for your assistance in making NARVRE stronger. All these venues are for the purpose of securing new NARVRE members and our continued efforts in Protecting, Preserving and Promoting your railroad retirement benefits.

— **Ron Hylla**
NARVRE National Vice President



Signing new members in Chattanooga TN Unit 003, Mary Bowen, Secretary Treasurer, while Unit VP Randall Magnusson and Legis Rep David Johnston look on and enjoying lunch.



Front – (Left to Right) Lori Doerr - Administrative Asst Jones Granger, Margie Ingram - Treasurer Unit 030, and Pam Fogle - Secretary Unit 030. Back – (Left to Right) Ron Hylla – NVP, Jeff Doerr - Rep Jones Granger, Gary Moller - VP Unit 030, John Billingsley - Pres Unit 030, and Gary Nelson - Area 4 Director.

National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



N.A.R.V.R.E.

Established
1937

PRESERVE **P**ROTECT **P**ROMOTE

THE ONLY FEDERALLY CHARTERED RAILROAD RETIREE ORGANIZATION IN THE INDUSTRY WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE OUR RAILROAD RETIREMENT PENSION.

Our Banner has received a new look and redesign created by Cheryl Lambert, wife of longtime member Jerry Lambert. Thank you for your time and consideration. A banner will be sent to each area director. They are available for sale to units and individuals for \$100 (including shipping). Place your order through the National Office.

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Spring has sprung! Nature's season of renewal and hope for the future! There is nothing like watching the greening of lawns and trees and flowers blooming with the promise of God given glory. We pray that

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

we have newly elected Members that need to hear from their constituents drawing benefits from the RRB. The message is simple... "appropriate the necessary funding requests from the Railroad Retirement Board." The information to contact a state House Rep or Senator can be found on your website (Narvre.us) under Resources: Helpful Links. Or ... NARVRE TOLL FREE NUMBERS ***877-668-3864 and 877-668-3866***

The Medicare Board of Trustees recently released their report on the financial health of Medicare. The Board's projection indicates that the Medicare Part A hospital insurance (HI) trust fund, will be able to pay full benefits until 2031, gaining three years of solvency compared to last year's projection. However, if Congress does not take action, the Trust reserves will become depleted, at which time Medicare could pay 89 percent of benefits. NARVRE will continue to follow this and give credit where credit is due but will also report on any obvious actions that threaten the long-term solvency of the Medicare Trust Fund. Congress must begin to work together in a bipartisan fashion to resolve the looming financial crisis facing Medicare in the not-to-distant future. We will join with millions of seniors and support common sense proposals that strengthen the Medicare system, like the enactment of the Inflation Reduction Act which empowers Medicare to negotiate and reduce the cost of prescription drug prices in America. That legislation caps

2023 will continue to be a wonderful time for you and your families. It is hard to believe the first quarter is over!

With the same fervor of renewal as mother nature, our leadership team is working at a relentless pace to rebuild and renew the NARVRE organization. Informational meetings were held in one the nation's largest rail

insulin co-pays at \$35 per month and caps the out-of-pocket costs at \$2000 per year for seniors with Medicare Part D Rx plans. Fraud and abuse against Medicare must stop and the stealing must end, especially when those crimes are committed by companies involved in the administration of Medicare benefits. The Kaiser Health News (KHN) has been forthright in their reporting about alleged crimes committed by the largest Medicare Advantage (MA) insurers that manage Medicare benefits in lieu of traditional Medicare (TM). All fraud threatens the financial health of Medicare. There are warnings abound that speak to the very real possibility of a financial calamity that would call for the privatization of the national Medicare program. Congressional oversight also reports that the managed-care companies will take in a projected \$27 billion in excess payments as they spend roughly 6% more in providing benefits than TM. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPac) continues to sound an alarm regarding the need for lawmakers to act on MA overpayments and oversight, in part, due to the strain those costs put on Medicare's finances. We will keep you updated on HR 1745, introduced by NARVRE supporter Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX), soon after the KHN reporting on a shocking loophole. During that action, Rep. Doggett stated... "the ability of fraudsters to continue billing Medicare for services is outrageous. Wherever there are large amounts of government money, someone tries to steal it."

— **Gary Faley,**
National Legislative Director

centers, Atlanta, GA, visits to Chattanooga, TN, and all units in Iowa. Under the direction and guidance of National Legislative Director, Gary Faley, NARVRE National President, Area 5 Director and former rail labor lobbyist, Tony Padilla is leading a contingency of NARVRE representatives who will be going to Washington DC to reestablish and renew our congressional contacts since the pandemic. We will be informing everyone about these and other activities in future newsletter editions.

As you know, the May and June newsletter editions are combined, consequently our next issue will be July 2023. For more information concerning employee and retiree matters please visit our website www.narvre.us or join us on Facebook – our two Facebook pages are N.A.R.V.R.E. and National NARVRE Forum.

Since the 2022 Convention in Oakland CA, we have acquired 424 new members which includes 128 spouses. We have 153 deceased members during this same period. Our total membership is 12,708 with 4,551 members who have not paid current dues, totaling \$108,297 in arrears. This is the reason our leadership team has been stressing the importance of our Unit Officers contacting members in an effort to update rosters and remove those who have passed or are uninterested as well as encouraging others to renew their membership.

Finally, a most gracious thank you to our 2024 Convention Leadership Team Unit 095 Kansas City President, Michael Steward, and Convention Chair Shari Miller for locating and securing our 2024 Convention site. I also thank Past Convention Chairs, Niccy Patterson, Brian Lewis plus Oakland Convention Treasurer Bob Paulson and Marjorie Ingram's husband, Royce Ingram Council Bluff Convention Treasurer for their participation in our first Pre-Convention Planning Call.

During the Zoom Call many ideas were shared along with best practices methods whereby mishaps of the past can be avoided, or positive situations are built upon and improved on issues that were successful.

Incidentally the 2024 NARVRE National Convention is scheduled Sunday May 19, 2024, to Tuesday May 21, 2024, 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.

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



NARVRE Meeting in Ft Madison IA

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News deadline 10th of each month

Fraud and Abuse: Ophthalmology Kickbacks in Texas

Medicare pays for medically reasonable and necessary cataract surgery. As always, all Medicare guidelines have to be met. However, some providers are not meeting the guidelines because they are paying other doctors for patient referrals.

Case in point: Arlington Ophthalmology Association, P.L.L.C. d/b/a Kleiman Evangelista Eye Centers (“K&E”), located in Arlington, Dallas, Plano, Southlake, Mount Pleasant, and Gun Barrel City, Texas, agreed to pay \$2.9 million in fines to settle “kickback” allegations related to paying other providers for patient referrals.

According to the government’s investigation, K&E “routinely engaged in the practice of co-management of cataract surgery patients with optometrists who referred patients to K&E. Patients who undergo cataract surgery require post-operative monitoring and care. When post-operative care is rendered by another provider other than the surgeon, such

as an optometrist outside the surgeon’s practice, this practice is generally referred to as co-management.” (Taken from a press release notifying the public of the settlement <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edtx/pr/ophthalmology-practice-agrees-pay-over-29-million-settle-kickback-allegations>).

Also included in the press release: allegations say that K&E violated the Anti-Kickback Statute, which is when an entity pays money/trades & offers goods/solicits or receives payment for Medicare, Medicaid, and other federally funded program services. This statute was created to ensure that a medical provider’s judgement is not influenced by financial incentives.

The settlement found that K&E paid other optometrists for referring beneficiaries who received premium intraocular lenses (IOLs) or laser-assisted cataract surgery. The payment that the optometrists

received was in free continuing education

courses, dinners, and seats in the company’s Texas Rangers stadium games.

The exact amount of the settlement was \$2,902,505. Included in the settlement was K&E’s cooperation in providing information about the other providers who took part in this scheme.

If you believe your provider may be filing False Claims or is involved in a kickback scheme, please don’t hesitate to 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.

We also encourage you to sign up for 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.

To access the portal, visit www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed. To contact the Department of Health and Human Services to report fraud, abuse or mismanagement, you can call 1-800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477).

— Jennifer Johnson

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.