



- SINCE 1937 -

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

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

The nation has a General Election in November of 2024 and every member of the House will stand for re-election. NARVRE will be focused on those in Congress that threaten rail issues important to the railroad retirement system. The membership understands our role is to stay involved with Congress and our own representatives in order to protect what we've earned. This past year has opened our eyes to a Republican party in the U.S. House that is intent on causing irreparable harm to rail passenger service and Amtrak which directly threatens the Railroad Retirement System.

The House Republican lawmakers are calling for devastating cuts in funding for Amtrak, rail safety, infrastructure and high-speed rail, all of which threatens federal and state investments already in place. Their FY24 proposals would eliminate thousands of American jobs connected to rail projects all across the country. They do not have the support from state authorities, mayors or city managers whose 2024 planning projects will be stalled or ended. These proposals originate in the heads of people that came to office to cut government programs. NARVRE has a history of taking on the threats to completely defund and ultimately destroy Amtrak. This year, Rep. Scott Perry (PA), remains a hostile leader for the anti-Amtrak crowd in the House GOP Freedom Caucus. He and his colleagues introduced over 200 amendments meant to obstruct and interfere with the ongoing progress and future of Amtrak and rail passenger service in America. This is a common exercise among groups that do not have any inclination to govern. They do not care that Amtrak is a popular travel option for millions of Americans that continue to poll favorably for more routes and additional passenger rail service in America. The teamwork of NARVRE and other supporting rail advocacy groups over the years

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Let me open 2024 by saying in the words of an old rock song "I'M SO EXCITED"! This past year has seen significant growth of OUR organization largely due to the tireless work of not only OUR Governing Board but also the individual Units around the country. Congratulations to Unit 002 CHICAGO, IL (the newest Unit) for tripling their membership in only 12 months. Also, to Unit 030 COUNCIL BLUFF, IA (one of our established Units) for adding 41 new members in three months this past summer. The enhanced growth of these Units was aided by visits from members of the Governing Board.

"I'M SO EXCITED" that numerous Units have embraced the concept of SUCCESSION (Defined As: "the right, act or process by which one person succeeds to the office, rank, estate, or the like of another"). Several Units have had individuals "step up to the plate" and assume the duties of those who wished to "rest" from their long-time tenure as officers. It is essential to the continued

SUCCESS of our organization that this process be of the utmost importance within your individual Units.

"I'M SO EXCITED" the new year will bring the return of successful ventures to expand OUR footprint by establishing new Units and revitalizing established Units. We will concentrate on the Southeastern, Mid-Atlantic and Northeastern states which have been under represented since COVID caused many of OUR Units to curtail meetings.

"I'M SO EXCITED" thinking of OUR upcoming 43rd Biennial Convention to be hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City, MO. Dates are set for May 19-21, 2024 (Sunday – Tuesday) at the Hilton Garden Inn located in Independence, MO. Since this meeting will be near the geographical center of our country, I am expecting many of OUR Units to be represented.

In closing, "I'M SO EXCITED" and honored to be YOUR National President and look forward to serving this great organization for several years to come. STAY SAFE!

— *George Boatwright,*  
*National President*



Paul Jevert with the great people in Unit 39 Stockton CA at their Christmas Party.

## From the National Vice President —

Happy New Year and welcome to 2024. We hope you had a wonderful and joyous time with your family and friends over the holidays. Also, it is a special time to remember those who have passed and touched our lives whether they are family members, friends or co-workers.

### 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.

Gene and Kimberly Hatfield • Jeremy Ferguson - Smart Union • Robert and Evelyn Tapscott • John & Lucretia Crawford • Eugene Cratin • Jones and Granger Law Firm • TLC Insurance Group • Larry & Delores Walczewski • Judith Andreason donation in Memory of Dean Andreason • Judy Koepke donation in Memory of Jeff Schmid • William Scharoun 100 years old 2/3/1923 • David Corless • Barbara Sundquist • Victory Sundquist • Peggy Peek • Carolyn Copeland • Richard Hanningan • John Beal • Gerald and Louise Olesen • Charles McCulley • Gloria Rhoads • Richard Cromer • David Hempeler • Dave Jackson • Mary Russler donation in Memory of Robert Russler • Angela Cummings • Ronald & Barbara Kaye • Daniel Milone • Harry R Bryan Jr • Leroy Engel • Joseph Levitt • Ruth Jean R Venters • Ronald Gilson • Stanley R Woytowicz • Dennis Hanson • Michael Gildea • Warren Dent • W F Currier • Jerry Nicas • Shelly Kaufman • James Bosley • Joan Janof • Elain Bjornson • Steven Job • John Evans • Milton Guy • Andrew Merrick • Sally Seamon • Richard Bernhardt • Glenn Malloy • Kay Williamson • Charles Bates • Audrey Stovall • Sereena Hogan • Bill Dunbar • L M Schwab • Ronald Jardine • Thomas Bulger • Paul Green • David Goldsboro • David Crocker • Douglas Manson • Garland Koopman • Robert Richardson • Elizabeth Griesbach • Paul Bond • G B Triviets • William Dunlop • Marion Patrick • Billy Parker • William Gordy • H F Parish • Christina Nutz • Alfred Flores • James Lindholm • Paul Anderson • Michaellen Benson • Peter Faller • Sandra Miller • Brian Helfrich • Thomas Lynch • Anna Billam • Charlene Koch • Peter Hinckley • Lowell Cantrell • George Grogan • Mike Matthews • Ronald Heltibrand • Steven Habeck • Jose Cardenas • James Purtell • Daniel Besaw • John Patterson • Ron Ewert • Florence McCoy • Mary Jo Windels • Conley Petty • Joyce Dalzell • Mary Helfrich • Marvin Spies • M B Mason

### Memorials

Gerald Olesen Former President Unit 87 Spring Hill, FL • Marjorie Bucklin • Robert "Bob" Russler • Max L. Harshman • Dennis Bendickson • Terry Christiansen • Nelson Brooks • Sherman Miller • Michael Bellow • Carolyn Pease • Ella Mae Monroe • Gordon L Nelson • Terrence J McDonough • Janice A Johnson

Onward we go in 2024 with NARVRE leading the way to Protect, Preserve and Promote your railroad retirement benefits. This is why it is so important for everyone to insure they paid their NARVRE dues for 2024. We need to improve on the NARVRE members continuing their membership. The annual dues you pay to be a member of NARVRE is just a small token to pay to have NARVRE continually be the watchdog over your retirement benefits. If you have not paid your 2024 dues yet, please make your payment today.

The goal of NARVRE in 2024 is to increase the membership. Part of the duties of NARVRE Area Directors is to reach out and establish new units. Due to Covid restrictions a few years ago, NARVRE was hampered in creating new units. Now, we have moved on from the pandemic, it is vital to the existence of NARVRE to continue to grow its membership. I would like to request each unit to create a new member committee to seek out new members, either retired or active railroaders.

Your NARVRE National Officers will

shortly be creating its calendar for informational conferences in 2024. Unit 154 in Marceline MO was very successful in holding a regional informational conference. Regional informational conferences are established with multiple NARVRE units attending in a centralized location. If any units would like to hold a regional informational conference, please contact one of your NARVRE National Officers.

Finally, as President Boatwright mentioned, the NARVRE National Convention will be held on May 19 through May 21, 2024 in Independence MO. Your NARVRE Officers encourage each unit to send a delegate to represent your unit. Remember, your NARVRE Officers work for you and the convention is an opportunity to have your voices and concerns heard. NARVRE National Secretary-Treasurer, Phil Steward, will be forwarding information regarding the convention to each unit in the coming months.

— *Ron Hylla*  
*NARVRE National Vice President*

### (National Legislative Director from page 1)

has paid off because of our combined efforts. Members of the House heard our message this year and let the GOP leadership understand they would not have enough votes to pass their House transportation spending bill. They were then forced to pull their legislation which proposed to dismantle the existing provisions of laws from previous bipartisan bills. NARVRE, and other partners of a growing alliance, reminded House members that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act (BIL) of 2021 has already been implemented on certain rail projects and more historic levels of funding is forthcoming for more rail expansions to begin. Nearly \$400

billion in BIL dollars is invested over 40,000 projects. We must continue our work together to ensure the progress continues to move this country forward. As info, this House has only passed 3 of their 12 annual appropriations bills due to the insurmountable amount of confusion and disorder within the current Republican majority.

Throughout this last session of Congress, the House of Representatives has been an exercise in dysfunction. In early February, the House Freedom Caucus caused the chaos of a 15-ballot election for Speaker of the House. They then held the Congress and American people hostage over the nation's debt, insisting on future spending cuts before they would

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L-R Don Lynch Unit President Terri Genzen, George Boatwright National President with wife Lois Boatwright, celebrating Christmas at Unit 066, Wildwood FL.

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

We are paying tribute to our longest serving Governing Board Member, Area 4 Director, Gary R Nelson which began in 2010. Gary comes from an extensive line of railroaders starting with a great grandfather being the first of six generations which now includes Gary's son Chadd and grandson Christopher, who is now employed with BNSF as a conductor. Over 42 Years of service with GN/BN/BNSF, Gary has been active with railroad operations and safety, winning various awards and recognition which included Chair of the BNSF System Slip Trip Fall Safety Focus Team, BN Chairman's Award, and BNSF - Hill/Holiday Founders Award. Along with various community-based activities, Gary was bestowed the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Twin Cities United Way after

### (National Legislative Director from page 2)

allow a vote to pay for debts already incurred. They scoffed at warnings that congressional inaction would force the U.S. Treasury to default on the nation's debt. They ignored warnings that military families would not receive pay or monthly housing income and senior's checks would be delayed. Railroaders worried a default would impact annuities and the bottom-line of the railroad retirement investment trust fund (NRRIT). Thankfully, after leaving the nation teetering on the edge of a financial calamity, the new House Speaker and President Biden settled on a legislative compromise in order to pay the nation's debt and avert a default. The negotiated deal also suspended -rather than raises- the debt ceiling, with measures to help avert future government shutdowns. Projections from the CBO stated the bill would decrease the national deficit by \$1.5 trillion and lower interest on the public debt by \$188 billion. The GOP reaction was to remove the Speaker for negotiating with the White House. That's just a brief look back at the disorder and chaos of the 2023 majority in the House of Representatives.

Members of the Freedom Caucus have already proposed more legislation adversely affecting Amtrak, it's employees and railroad retirement. We'll keep you posted. Thank you for your involvement, especially calls to Congress! Happy New Year. Stay safe and healthy.

— *Gary Faley,*

*National Legislative Director*

chairing fundraising campaigns for 20 years. Regarding his most recent accomplishments in the NARVRE organization, Gary was instrumental in starting two units in Area 4, Unit 076 in Jefferson City, MO and Unit 002 Chicago.

Officer Election Forms are due in the National Office December 31, 2023

Below quoted from the bylaws are reasons for the importance of this official document which should include not only the elected officers but the Delegate and the Alternate Delegate who are to represent the Unit at the National Convention.

“ARTICLE IX. Constituent Divisions Section 2. Local Units B. Local Units: 1. Elect officers. Unit Officers will be elected biennially at the regular meeting in the month of November in the odd number years. Unit Officers shall be installed and take office immediately at the close of the meeting. Unit Officers will serve for a two (2) year period or until their successors have been elected and qualified. The results of the elections shall be reported immediately to the National Secretary Treasurer, whereas the election results will be certified, including verifying the elected Unit Officers are current members in good standing and not delinquent. The elected Unit Officers will be added to the membership rolls and placed in the National Directory.”

The following is from The Policies and Procedures Manual

“10:02 Delegates are elected to act only as an authorized representative at the biennial convention. Delegates are not elected to

serve a term of office for a two-year period. We have one convention and that is their one duty, which is to serve at that one function.”

In few weeks Registration Forms will be mailed and/or Emailed to all Unit Presidents to present to elected Delegate and Alternate Delegate representing their Unit at the 2024 NARVRE 43rd Biennial National Convention, Sunday, Monday & Tuesday, May 19, 20 & 21, 2024, Hilton Garden Inn, 19677 E. Jackson Drive, Independence, MO 64057

Annual Audit Forms are due February 28, 2024. Unit officers, if you need help with the preparation of Audit Forms, Roger Swanson, Chair of the Finance Committee has volunteered to aid in proper completion of your Unit audit. Contact the National Office and we will be happy to contact Roger if needed. The report forms are available on our website.

As we have done in the past, NARVRE is offering to file IRS form 990N for any unit. Just send a check or \$8 to the National Office. The 990N Unit filing deadline is May 15, 2024.

As a reminder dues are as follows:

#### Members associated with a local unit.

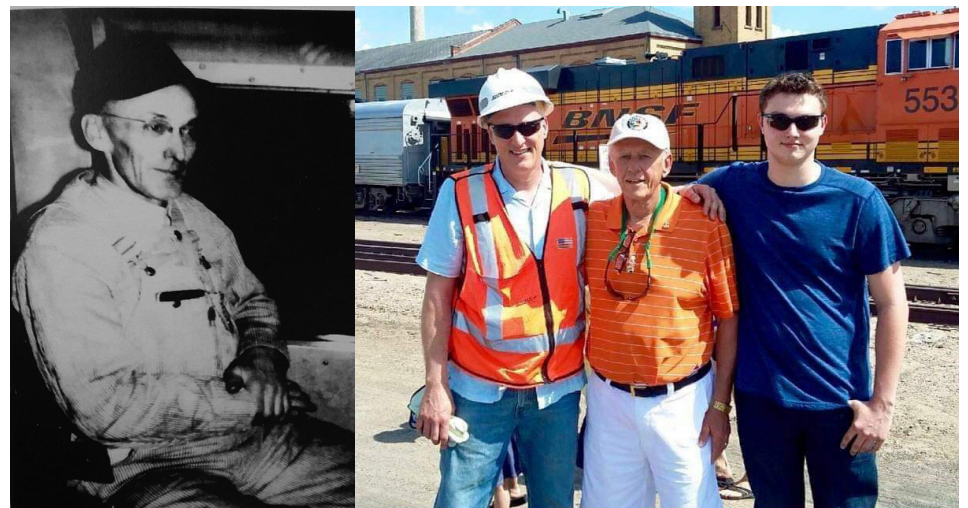
Single Member .....\$29  
Couples.....\$36

#### 801 Members - Not associated with a local unit.

Single Member .....\$31  
Couples.....\$38

National Dues are considered delinquent after February 28, 2024.

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



**Photo Left:** Emil Nelson, who worked for 22 years (1943-1965) as a Locomotive Engineer and Fireman for the Great Northern Railway at Willmar. In most of his career, he worked on the chain gang between Willmar and Breckenridge, and between Willmar and Minneapolis. Note the timebook in Engineer Nelson's pocket. His son, Gary, allowed the author access to all of the timebooks Engineer Nelson used in his career. (Gary R. Nelson collection)

**Photo Right:** The Nelsons: Chadd, Gary and Christopher.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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# Changes In Medicare's Mental Health Coverage

2024 brings good changes for the Part B Medicare/Railroad Medicare program related to mental health services.

If you've wanted to see a marriage and family therapist or mental health counselor in the past, then you will be pleased to know that these two types of providers can now offer services to Medicare patients.

Prior to 2024, the only provider types that could offer psychological services were:

- Psychiatrists/other doctors
- Clinical social workers
- Clinical psychologists
- Clinical nurse specialists
- Nurse practitioners
- Physician assistants

The addition of marriage and family therapists and mental health counselors gives you more choices when deciding who you want to assist you with your mental health needs. This is very timely because you can start the year right making mental health your number one focus for the year. Here are ways you can do that:

Take advantage of Medicare's annual Depression Screening. This service is free every 12 months, as long as your doctor participates in the Medicare program. Depression Screenings must take place in a "primary care setting" (such as your doctor's office) where you can receive follow-up treatment and/or referrals to other providers.

# Part B 2024

Once you meet the Part B deductible (\$240 in 2024), you only pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for the service. These services include seeing a provider to diagnose and/or to treat your condition via:

- Individual and group psychotherapy
- Psychiatric evaluation
- Family counseling (when the purpose of the visits are to assist with your personal treatment)
- Medication management
- Testing to find out if your current treatment is working or if you need additional services
- Drugs (such as some injections) that you can't administer yourself
- Intensive outpatient program services (new for 2024)
- The one-time "Welcome to Medicare" preventive visit to review your risk factors for depression (this is a free service that you may only receive once as you enter the

Medicare program. You must receive this service within the first 12 months that you have Part B/Railroad Medicare).

• An "Annual Wellness Visit" (called the AWW), when you can talk to your health care provider about how your mental health has changed since your last AWW. (This service is also free and is available once every 12 months. You may have this service if it has been longer than 12 months since your "Welcome to Medicare" visit. However, you are not required to have the one-time "Welcome to Medicare" visit to qualify for this service.)

If you have any questions about your Railroad Medicare coverage of mental health services, please call us toll-free 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.

*Important Note:* If you or someone you know is in a mental health crisis, please call or text 988. You can also chat with someone at 988lifeline.org. If you are in an immediate medical crisis, please call 911.

— Jennifer Johnson  
Palmetto, GBA