



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 2023

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Here we are in the Fall of the year already! Now is the time that we consider giving thanks for all the blessings bestowed on us and enjoy the Holiday Season and the coming New Year.

I am thankful for all the NARVRE members who have supported me and given me great counsel this past sixteen months. I look forward to 2024 and the coming 43rd Biennial Convention next MAY in Kansas City, Missouri. November is the month to elect your delegate and make plans to attend. All members of NARVRE and their families are cordially invited to attend and fellowship together. Let's make this one of the largest and best meetings in our long history.

These past months have been very busy for your Governing Board and the numerous Assistant Area Directors (AAD's) around our country. The ideas and suggestions put forth by all members have been greatly appreciated and are given careful consid-

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FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

On Sept 30th, after crawling to the cliff's proverbial edge, Congress agreed on a stop-gap funding measure and averted a government shutdown just before the midnight deadline. The bill cleared Congress with bipartisan votes and will continue to fund the government at FY23 levels until mid-November. The legislation contains \$16 billion in disaster relief but offers zero money for Ukraine or the border, as this package is a temporary compromise meant to buy-time in order for the Republican led House to pass their fiscal-year spending bills. Time is not on the Majority's side. The clock is running, and the House must move eleven major spending bills through the appropriation process before the November 17 deadline. The Republican majority first needs to put forth a candidate that can get elected as Speaker of the House. Rep. Jim Jordan (R-OH) was just recently defeated on three separate votes as 25 Republicans voted against him on the third ballot. Meanwhile, arguments con-

tinued over a proposal that would empower the current Speaker Pro Tempore, Patrick McHenry (R-NC) to literally step in and assume the duties of the Speaker. There is a difference of opinion among GOP caucus members on the importance of the Speaker position in the House. Some display an outright ignorance of the Speaker's role; others openly disregard the fact that the business of moving legislation is hindered due to the absence of a Speaker. For those that come to govern, this whole scenario has become an obvious problem. For those that ignore their responsibilities, their lack of concern is the obvious problem. That point is highlighted on a daily basis, but the House without a Speaker is basically an anomaly within this body. Until January 2023, there had not been a contested election for Speaker since 1923. The removal of a Speaker was unprecedented in Congressional history until October 3, 2023, when Speaker Kevin McCarthy was removed from his position by a seldom-used tactic: a "motion to vacate". The motion permits an individual representative to call for a vote to vacate the Speaker's chair. A majority then agreed to remove Speaker McCarthy from his position, creating a vacancy until a new Speaker can be elected. The motion to vacate was added back in January 2023 during the contentious election whereby 15 ballots were needed to elect McCarthy as Speaker. Today, the Speaker of the House is the majority party's political leader and one of the most powerful jobs in Washington. The Speaker controls the order of all institutional business on the House floor, and also plays a key role as negotiator between the House and the President. The Speaker also acts as the point person for the House fundamental role in originating and passing legislation and controlling "the power of the purse" to tax and spend taxpayer money. The Speaker is 2nd in line to the Presidency,

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Walt Barrows, keynote speaker, addressing rails and spouses at the Regional Informational Meeting hosted by Unit 154 Marceline MO. There 101 people in attendance including Officers and Presenters.

From the National Vice President —

NARVRE units across the country are in the middle of collecting 2024 dues. It is important for you to pay your dues timely to prevent your membership from being suspended.

Your unit officers constantly work to have members pay their dues on time. Please pay your dues prior to December 31, 2023 so your unit does not need to send additional notices or make additional calls to you.

I have had the opportunity to visit several units in the month of October with Jeff Doerr from Jones Granger. On October 6, 2023, we traveled to Roseville, CA to attend Unit 065 monthly meeting. It was great seeing many friends who traveled to Roseville for this event and the unit was well represented. The following week, on October 10, 2023, we attended the monthly meeting for NARVRE Unit 047 in La Crosse, WI with a large number of their members.

On October 12 th , we traveled to Proctor/Duluth 092 at their monthly meeting. Again, this meeting was well represented by a large number of NARVRE members. Finally, on

October 18th , your NARVRE Officers attended the Regional Informational Conference held in Marceline MO held by Unit 154. The conference was organized by Assistant Area 6 Director Dennis Van Dyke and was attended by over 80 NARVRE members, including members from units from Kansas, Iowa and Missouri. I personally would like to thank Dennis for this fantastic event. I wish to also thank Jeff Doerr from Jones Granger law firm for their sponsorship in attending the many unit meetings along with the informational conference. I would like to also thank TLC Insurance Group for their support at the conference.

While visiting Unit 092 in Duluth MN, I had the honor to meet Paul Iverson, the 2nd Vice President for the unit. Paul has helped hundreds and hundreds of NARVRE members

and their families in securing life insurance benefits when the railroader passes away. Paul shared with me examples of struggles he endured with assisting families of deceased railroaders. For most retired railroad employees, they are covered by Metropolitan Life (800-310-7770). Some retired railroad employees may be covered by other life insurance groups, such as SOO Line/Canadian Pacific Railroad. SOO Line/CP Rail retirees have Hartford Insurance as their life insurance coverage. The SOO Line/CP Rail life insurance contact person is Patty Lynch at 612-904-6151. Thank you, Paul, for the great information and the service you provide for our NARVRE members.

— **Ron Hylla**
NARVRE National Vice President

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after the Vice-President. Current problems here at home, coupled with the needs of allies across the world, demand the attention of the Congress, yet the House is at a standstill without a seated Speaker.

During the summer months, we expressed our concerns on the absurd and ill-advised GOP proposals to cut deep at the heart of Amtrak and transit funding, as well as other cuts in requested funding for the RRB. The Republican party and the same members of the GOP Freedom Caucus that left the House without a Speaker continue to threaten rail transit jobs all across America and slash over 10,000 jobs on Amtrak (August Newsletter). The House T-HUD and Appropriations committees approved cuts that decrease Amtrak funding by 64% from last year and cut funding in existing law (BIL) by 76%. The GOP members know what

they intend to do to rail passenger service in America. NARVRE and the coalition of advocates are in agreement that we need more calls from all of our members and constituents to urge our Reps to oppose the radical cuts proposed by the GOP leadership. The Senate Appropriators passed a bill unanimously, both Republicans and Democrats, allocating \$3.4 billion for rail and transit...urge Congress to support the Senate bill, and vote against the reckless and foolhardy cuts of the House GOP. If you've already called, and feel you have their support, we thank you. If you're unsure, call again...we can't be sure what's ahead of us in the weeks to come.

Call your House Representative today and urge a vote for the Senate bill to support Amtrak and American jobs: **** 202-224-3121****.

Happy Holidays!
— **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.

- Jack and Judy Bengtson • Robert Mandeville • Barbara Sundquist • Paul Anderson • Michaelen Benson • Peter Fallor • Sandra Miller • Brian Helfrich • Thomas Lynch • Anna Billam • Robert Tapscott • James Rasmussen • Charlene Koch • Peter Hinckley • Lowell Canterl • Agnes Hockgeiger • George Grogan • Mike Mathews • William Scharoun • Ronald Heltibrand • John Sullivan • George Wolfe • EO Argabright • William Howell • David Blutt • Richard Marzullo • Mark Berg • William Holmes • Joseph Bolduc • Peter Lombardozi • James Potyraj • Saul Stone • Richard Johnson • Frank Danenfelzer • William Roelle • Karen Conley • Margit Tormonsen • Richard Dixon

Memorials

- Michael Isbell • Arlene E Werdien • Robert S Russler • Richard Tobash • Donald Abfall • Marlene Abfull • Betty Pearson • Enoch Amerson • Joseph Tencza Jr • Darwyn Meyers • Teresa Snyder • William Steinwedel • Antone Olevera • Jack Conser • Roberta Gulkey



Regional Meeting Co-Sponsors



Photo Left: Lori and Jeff Doerr. Photo Right: Craig Villwock, Monica Treat, D J Crowson, and Chris Villwock.

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Year 2023 has been a great year fueled by our partnerships with Jones and Granger Law Firm and TLC Insurance Group. Both have been sponsors and active participants in most of our meetings across the country. As of October 22, 2023, and counting from our Convention in 2022 the NARVRE organization has gained 628 new members. In January 2024 we will report the gain from the 2022 Convention to December 31, 2023, which will include results from activities for the remainder of the year.

A significant number of our Units have started to regularly conduct meetings fully leaving devastating of Covid-19 behind.

As it already has been reported, we had a marvelous regional event in Marceline MO hosted by Unit 154 initiated and led by

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eration by the Board. A couple of examples are as follows:

First example - This past summer Unit 144 President Jim Blum suggested a billboard be placed prominently to inform CSX crews going on and off duty in Ohio about NARVRE. He obtained sponsorship from Chris Murphy of the Duran & Murphy law firm who works closely with the NARVRE Ohio State Legislative Association.

Second example - Dennis Van Dyke AAD Area 4 suggested holding a “regional” meeting hosted by Unit 154 MARCELINE, MO. Units from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Illinois were invited, and attendance was approximately 75 NARVRE members and interested RRB retirees. Six members of the Governing Board were in attendance along with representatives from Jones Granger law firm, TLC Insurance Co., Palmetto GBA and Diamond Bus Tours.

Forward-thinking ideas such as these aid our organization in reaching newly retired individuals. Your President attended the last RRB Pre-retirement seminar of the year in Philadelphia, PA and contacted sixty men and women who will retire within the next five years. We will give due consideration to these meetings in 2024 and beyond and foster further cooperation with the RRB.

It is my personal wish that each and everyone have a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

— **George Boatwright,**
National President

Dennis Van Dyke Assistant Area 4 Director. Unit officers and members from Iowa, Missouri, Kansas were among the 101 people including National Officers and Presenters attending this important event sponsored by TLC, Jones and Granger, and NARVRE. I especially commend Dennis for the hard work and effort put forth to make this event an outstanding success. We hope there are others who are willing to organize such a conference in your area of the country, if so, contact the National Office.

Medicare open enrollment is between October 15 and December 7, 2023 and changes will take effect on January 1, 2024. If you want a TLC Insurance representative or visit your unit to discuss open enrollment opportunities and plan options which may be available to members.

Additionally Jennifer Johnson with Palmetto GBA, LLC makes presentations regarding Railroad Medicare addressing units around the country upon request.

Don't forget to plan to attend the 43rd Biennial Convention 2024 NARVRE National Convention hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City MO Co-Chairs Mike Steward and Shari Miller

Convention is scheduled Sunday May 19, 2024, to Tuesday May 21, 2024, at the Hilton Garden Inn located in Independence, MO the home of former United States President Harry S. Truman. Dues are \$31.00 singles and \$38.00 couples for 801 (members not associated with a local unit) and for Unit members who receive renewal notices from the National Office.

**801 Due Notice
\$31 Single/\$38 Couples**
If you are an 801 member or a member of a Unit that received your renewal notice from the national and received a card with green writing, that indicates

rates other than \$31 and \$38 are incorrect. Be governed with the instructions issued in the cover letter. By now you should have received a copy of the card with blue lettering displaying the correct dues rates. If you mailed the amount less than \$31 for Singles or \$38 for couples send the remaining difference (balance) so your dues will be properly paid and credited to your account. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact the National Office. We apologize for any inconvenience or confusion.



This is the last newsletter of 2023. Newsletters will return in January 2024. On behalf of the National Officers George Boatwright, National President; Ron Hylla, National Vice President; and Gary Faley, National Legislative Director; our office, and communications staff Paige Franklin, Tracy Ward, Jessica Mason, Pat Hiatt, and Scott Steward, we wish you Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and have an exceptionally Happy New Year

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



Dennis Van Dyke, Area 4 Assistant Director, initiated the Marceline Regional Informational meeting.



Ron Hylla NVP; George Boatwright Nat. President; Phil Steward NST; Stan Haessig, Unit Pres Ft Madison IA; and Mike Steward, Unit Pres, Kansas City.



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Medicare's 2024 Open Enrollment Period: Oct. 15 – Dec. 7, 2024

October marks the beginning of Medicare's Open Enrollment Period for the 2024 coverage year. If you already have Railroad Medicare and want to make a change to your Part D coverage or plan, you can do so between October 15 and December 7, 2023. Any changes you make during open enrollment will take effect on January 1, 2024.

Here are some of the actions you can take during Medicare's open enrollment period:

- If you have Original Medicare, you can change from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan, sign up for a Medicare drug plan, or change your existing Medicare drug plan.
- If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, you can join, leave or switch to another Medicare Advantage Plan, add or drop drug coverage, or switch to Original Medicare.

This period is the time to reflect on any changes that may have occurred this year, as well as the time to do a little research. If you need help, you can do this on your own online or over the phone with a member of your State Health Insurance Program (SHIP), or utilize an insurance broker.

The most common change people face each year is a change to their prescription medicines, either the medicines themselves or the dosages. Be sure to check your Part D plan's drug formulary included in their Annual Notice of Change, which you should have received from your plan in the mail prior to October 15. If you need to make a change, you can compare available Part D drug plans

and Medicare plans using the "Find Health & Drug Plans" online tool at <https://www.medicare.gov/plan-compare>.

Other changes can be in the types of services that you need. Some may not be covered or covered by Medicare at the same rate as in 2023. You can research this when you receive your Medicare & You Handbook. Read the handbook carefully. There is a section called "What's new & important" that will tell you the most critical things you need to know. The book also explains the different Parts of Medicare, including what each Part covers. Railroad Medicare is Part B (Medical Insurance) for persons covered under the railroad retirement system.

If you would like to see the Medicare & You Handbook now, you can do so by following this web address: <https://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/10050-Medicare-and-You.pdf>.

As for SHIP, sometimes it's hard to know what type of coverage you need or where to go to look and see what options you have. Every

state has a SHIP, and they are manned by volunteers who have no affiliation with any health insurance programs (including Medicare). Visit the State Health Insurance Assistance Program website at <https://www.shiphelp.org/> to find the phone number and website for your local SHIP or call 877-839-2675.

As for the 2024 Medicare annual deductible and premium information, it is available at www.Medicare.gov and will be on our website shortly.

If you have questions about your Part B Railroad Medicare coverage or how to reach someone at SHIP, you can call our Beneficiary Customer Service Line 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.

— *Jennifer Johnson
Palmetto, GBA*



Left to right: Ron Hylla, Jacki Kuehl – Treasurer, JoAnn Tibbitts – Secretary, Lupe Mireles - Social Director, Al Vanatta - Newsletter Editor and Jeff Doerr.

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 —

Many years ago as a young boy growing up in Northern Minnesota I learned something at an early age. This is not about politics nor politicians but the fight for civil rights. It just so happened that in 1948 that the Mayor of Minneapolis Hubert H. Humphrey gave a speech at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia on the very subject. He spoke with passion. “there are those who say to you -- we are rushing this issue of civil rights. I say we are 172 years late... The time has come for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights.”

Hubert H. Humphrey went on to become

a United States Senator from Minnesota. In 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson chose him as his running mate for vice president. He lost in 1968 to Richard Nixon which included Governor George Wallace of Alabama as an independent.

I remember his battle for civil rights over the years and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He also was credited with passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Although it is 75 years later our work is never done.

Later on in 1948 President Harry Truman came to my hometown on Minnesota’s Iron Range on a whistle stop campaign. Imagine a 12 year old boy seeing a president for the first time. I never forgot!

— *Tom Dwyer, NARVRE*
Former National President

**Please visit the 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](#)

