



— SINCE 1937 —

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Greetings to just over 9000 members of NARVRE who are current with their Yearly dues. As of this writing, we are not able to reach over 3000 people who are listed on our individual unit rosters due to the fact they did not pay their dues this past year and are not receiving this newsletter. Currently we have a delinquency rate of 27% and to balance our budget all unit officers must reach out to those members who have neglected to pay their dues. Some people just need a friendly phone call to jog our failing memories and renew participation in NARVRE.

A new initiative of NARVRE this year will be presentations at more than 30 pre-retirement seminars presented by the RRB at multiple locations around the country. National Vice President, Ron Hylla is presently communicating with Area Directors and officers of units near each of the sites to have a presence at the spring seminars. We will be able to make contacts with approximately 2400 newly retired or soon retiring railroad workers this year with the blessing and cooperation of the RRB.

National Secretary & Treasurer, Philip Steward and his office staff are busy as always compiling data and correcting rosters as information comes in from our hard-working officers in units around the country. Each unit must provide timely and accurate information to the National Office.

Heed the words of National Legislative Director, Gary Faley as we are heading into spring primary elections throughout the country. Whether you are democrats, republicans, independents, or some other party affiliation I don't even know of, it is your solemn right & privilege to vote.

Now is the time for your final plans to be made to attend the 43rd Biennial Convention to be held in Kansas City, MO this May 19 - 21. I hope to meet & greet many of you there.

It is the time of year to plan those gardens and plant those seeds, and I desire each of us to cultivate new members by personal contacts with old railroad friends as Word of Mouth has been a tried-and-true method of growing and sustaining our NARVRE organization. STAY SAFE!

— *George Boatwright,*
National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

The Biden Administration made lowering the cost of prescription drugs a key priority soon after taking office in 2021. In August of 2022, the President signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law repealing an earlier mandate from the 2003 Medicare Prescription Drug Act which prohibited Medicare from negotiating the price of prescription drugs with the pharmaceutical industry. The bill passed Congress on party-line votes, as the GOP opposed the bill in both chambers. The law will cap senior's out-of-pocket prescription expenses at \$2000 a year beginning in 2025, and it already limits monthly insulin co-pays to \$35 beginning last year for Medicare patients. Also, drug companies will be hit with penalties if they raise the price of medicines faster than the rate of inflation. This is meant to end their long-standing habit of increasing drug prices, often at more than twice the rate of inflation. Negotiations are now ongoing and the final costs for the first 10 drugs must be made public by Sept 1st and will take effect in January of 2026. The drugs in this first cycle of negotiations include vital treatments for diabetes, cardio-based diseases, and cancer drugs taken by millions of Medicare enrollees. Another 30 drugs will be negotiated over the next two years and rolled out in 2027 and 2028.

On February 8, 2024, the Senate HELP committee chaired by Sen. Bernie Sanders swore in the top executives from three major pharmaceutical companies, all of which have filed suit against the Biden administration asking the courts to halt the drug pricing negotiations. Sander's initial questions were centered around why their top-selling drugs are priced so much higher than other countries. And many committee members took the drug industry to task for forcing Americans to pay exorbitant prices for crucial medicines, while the pharmaceutical industry reaps their

continued on page 2



The beautiful home of President Harry S. Truman, minutes away from where Unit 095 will be hosting the 2024 NARVRE National Convention Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday May 19, 20 & 21, 2024

From the National Vice President —



2024 SPRING SEMINARS

April 12 Atlanta, GA	May 17 Omaha, NE
April 19 Baltimore, MD	May 17 Roanoke, VA
April 19 Newark, NJ	June 14 Salt Lake City, UT
April 26 Oakland, CA	June 21 Huntington, WV
April 26 St Paul, MN	June 21 Kansas City, KS
May 3 Covina, CA	June 28 Boston, MA
May 10 Central Islip, NY	June 28 Chicago, IL
May 17 Altoona, PA	June 28 Little Rock, AR

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board has just released the 2024 informational seminars. During my discussion in 2023 with the Labor Member to the Railroad Retirement Board, John Bragg, NARVRE was approved to have an informational table located outside the meeting rooms of the seminars. RRB Seminars are for railroad employees and spouses who are within five (5) years of retirement. For NARVRE, these railroaders and spouses would be a great addition to our current membership. Your unit should plan on attending the seminars in your area. The Railroad Retirement Board will arrange for a table for your unit to provide informational materials to secure new members. Please contact Tandy Heath at the RRB at email: tandy.alexander@rrb.gov or call her at 312-469-2628 to arrange for a table.

On March 5, 2024, I will be meeting with the NARVRE Unit 039 members in Stock-

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.

Martha Frasier donation in Memory of John Frasier • Donation in Memory of Ron Butts from Unit 115 Wichita KS Pres Tony Schmitt Sec Karen McGee Tres Robin Smith LR Gary Marquart • Johnnie L Perry • John and Donna Gerber • Norm and Pamela Harris • Maude Eddings • Donald & Emily Beeler • John Crawford • Patricia Sudol • Felix Perez • Richard English • James Peak • David Corless • John Hilferty • Barbara Sundquist • Victor Sundquist

Memorials

Fletcher Christian - Longtime Convention Delegate and Legis Rep Unit 28 Shreveport, LA • Don Mayfield • Elizabeth Tidrick • Richard Lutz • David Paggen • Maxine Ann Marzuola • Bernice V Falls, • David J Riehle • Ron Butts

ton, CA. Thereafter on Thursday, March 7, 2024, I will be attending NARVRE Unit 060 meeting in Fresno, CA. Also attending these meetings will be a representative from Jones Granger law firm. As you may recall, at the 2022 NARVRE National Convention, Jones Granger was designated to be the official NARVRE law firm to represent members in dealing with asbestos related diseases. Since the designation, Jones Granger has helped thousands of our NARVRE members across the country. I encourage NARVRE members at these locations to join us at the meetings. I continue to review NARVRE unit rosters and realize updates to some rosters have not

been made for several years. I encourage Area Directors and unit officers to review their respective rosters. If someone has not paid NARVRE dues for several years, something is wrong. Either they may have passed or they just do not wish to be a member any longer. Attempt to contact them to find out more information on whether you should remove them from the roster or get them to pay their current dues. Speaking about dues, if you have not paid your dues by now, your membership is now suspended. Please renew your membership by paying your 2024 dues today.

— **Ron Hylla**

NARVRE National Vice President

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

obscene profits year after year. Prior to the hearing, the committee released a report stating that drug companies are charging American taxpayers more than all other wealthy nations, with examples of Merck's top drug Keytruda being priced at \$191,000 in the U.S., compared to \$112,000 in Canada, and \$44,000 in Japan. All three drug companies have repulsive histories of increasing the prices of their top-selling drugs to unreasonable levels, and unaffordable for most American seniors. A constant response from the industry and big pharma is that their profits are needed for research & development (R&D). They claim they cannot produce innovative medicines without the billions in profits they take in on an annual basis. However, economic studies have recognized the contributions to the drug industry and government as an "early-stage investor, with funding as an investment". The committee report concurs that the basic discovery research is funded primarily with government and philanthropic investments. The federal investments come from the NIH, which is funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars. Also, many patents approved by the FDA do not expire for 10 years or more in many cases,

thereby protecting the habitual rising prices for their best-sellers. Many Senators had questions about CEO compensations and spending more on stock buybacks and dividends (\$17 billion) than they spent on R&D (\$14 billion) in 2022. When questioned as to how they could lower the costs of drugs without the IRA, the three executives pointed to the pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs), the middlemen who primarily manage drug benefits for health insurers. They all claimed the PBMs were stealing rebates & discounts meant to be passed onto Americans buying their drugs. With a straight face, the Bristol Myers CEO told the committee that if Congress would de-link the rebates, they could "require that those rebates be passed on to lower out-of-pocket costs for patients". A second panel of experts followed and had another take on the PBM issue. According to Peter Maybarduk, Director, Public Citizen, the whole reason and need for the middlemen is because of the drugmaker's exceedingly high prices. He stated, "if you look at where the revenue is, drugmakers capture two-thirds, \$323 billion, and PBM's are a small slice, \$23 billion. You have to get to the root of the problem which is the monopoly power".

— **Gary Faley,**

National Legislative Director



L - R Jim Gella Unit 109 Board Member, Former NARVRE National President Tom Dwyer, Jeff Doerr of Jones and Granger, John Filter Legis Rep Unit 109 Twin Cities MN

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

The following regarding sleep deprivation was excerpted from the *New York Times*

Your First Step Toward a Better Mood

Poor sleep can make anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues worse. Here's what to do about it.

Americans are chronically sleep deprived: one-third of adults in the United States say they get less than 7 hours a night. Teenagers fare even worse: About 70 percent of high school students don't get enough sleep on school nights.

An analysis of 19 studies found that while sleep deprivation worsened a person's ability to think clearly or perform certain tasks, it had a greater negative effect on mood. And when the National Sleep Foundation conducted a survey in 2022, half of those who said they slept less than 7 hours each weekday also reported having depressive symptoms. Some research even indicates that addressing insomnia may help prevent depression and anxiety.

Clearly, sleep is important. But despite the evidence, there continues to be a shortage of psychiatrists or other doctors trained in sleep medicine, leaving many to educate themselves.

So, what happens to our mental health if we aren't getting enough sleep, and what can be done about it?

How does poor sleep affect your mood?

When people have trouble sleeping, it changes how they experience stress and negative emotions, said Aric Prather, a sleep researcher at the University of California, San Francisco, who treats patients with insomnia. "And for some, this can have a feed-forward effect — feeling bad, ruminating, feeling stressed can bleed into our

nights," he said.

It's not just about quantity. The quality of your sleep is also important. If it takes more than 30 minutes to fall asleep, for example, or if you regularly wake up in the middle of the night, it is harder to feel rested, regardless of the number of hours you spend in bed.

But some people "have a tendency to think they're functioning well even if they're sleepy during the day or having a harder time focusing," said Lynn Bufka, a clinical psychologist and spokesperson for the American Psychological Association.

Ask yourself how you feel during the day: Do you find that you're more impatient or quick to anger? Are you having more negative thoughts, or do you feel more anxious or depressed? Do you find it harder to cope with stress? Do you find it difficult to do your work efficiently?

Conditions like anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder can make it harder to sleep, which can then exacerbate the symptoms of mental illness, which in turn makes it harder to sleep well.

If you feel like the worry is too much, and it starts affecting your work, your relationships, or other parts of your life — or you feel depressed by these feelings — it might be time to speak with someone. That could be a primary care provider or a sleep professional. The anxiety may not go away on its own and may get worse if you don't ask for help.

The 43rd Biennial National Convention is scheduled Sunday May 19, to Tuesday

May 21, 2024, hosted by Unit 095 Kansas City, MO at the soon to be remodeled Hilton Garden Inn located in Independence, MO the home of former United States President Harry S. Truman.

To Register, make Hotel Reservations, or Directions to the Convention location, go to our website www.narve.us scroll down to the Convention click on the desired Tab.

The local Convention Committee led by Co Chairs Unit President Mike Steward and Shari Miller, plus Florence Thexton as Treasurer are working with an airport shuttle service and are currently assessing the need. Please let them know if you require airport shuttle service by emailing or calling Shari Miller at :sharim70@att.net or (816) 678-8900 with your date/time of arrival and departure.

If you still need to register, please add that info to your registration or if already have registered and require shuttle service contact Shari advising your arrival and departure times and dates.

I want to personally thank Assistant Area 4 Director, Dennis Van Dyke, for assisting me and willingness to help with the convention. He will be one of our vendor speakers at the Convention.

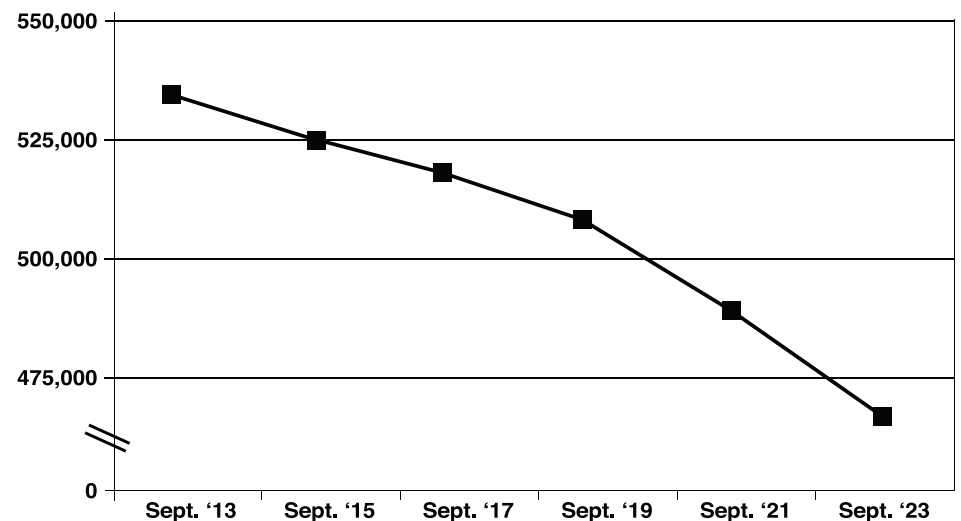
For those members who have not yet paid your 2024 dues, February 28, 2024, you will be considered delinquent and unfortunately, this March issue will be the last newsletter you'll be receiving until your payment is received.

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



Truman Library, minutes away from the 2024 NARVRE National Convention location in Kansas City, Mo.

Total Monthly Railroad Retirement Beneficiaries September 2013 through September 2023



Note the number of rrb beneficiaries decreasing due to attrition and fewer rail employees due to technological advances.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
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Medicare's Medical Nutrition Therapy Services Available for Patients With Certain Health Conditions



This article is an introduction to Medicare's Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) preventive services.

If you are living with diabetes or kidney disease, if you have undergone a kidney transplant in the last 36 months, or if you are getting dialysis in a dialysis facility, you may be eligible for MNT services. They include:

- An initial assessment of your nutrition levels and lifestyle activities
- Individual (or group) therapy services focused on only nutrition
- If you have diabetes, you will learn how to manage lifestyle factors that impact your diagnosis, which also includes some follow-up visits to see what progress you are making in managing your diet

A doctor must refer you for the services.

For Medicare Part B coverage of MNT, only a registered dietitian or nutrition professional can perform these services. "Registered dietitian or nutrition professional" means a dietitian or nutritionist licensed/certified by the state. The criteria for a dietitian or nutritionist also includes having:

- A bachelor's or higher degree at an accredited institution for nutrition or dietetics studies.
- Completed a minimum of 900 hours of dietetics practice, under the supervision of a registered dietitian/nutrition professional.

MNT offers up to three hours of counseling the first year, and two hours – if it is medically reasonable and necessary and if a doctor determines a change in your health, diagnosis or treatment plan has or needs to take place – in subsequent years.

These services are provided to qualified patients at no cost (no deductible, no coinsurance, and no co-pay). Note: If any other services are recommended, Medicare may not cover them, or a co-pay or deductible may apply. Be sure to ask your doctor why they are recommending other services and to tell you how much Medicare may pay for them.

If you have questions about this therapy or your Railroad Medicare Part B benefits, you can call our toll-free Customer Service Line at 800-833-4455. Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) are available 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 CSRs are available.

We also offer our free, online portal, MyRRMed. This tool allows you do the following:

- Review the status and details of your Railroad Medicare Part B claims
- Access Historical quarterly Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) for your Railroad Medicare Part B claims
- Obtain a listing of individuals you have authorized to have access to your private health information with an online option to submit a request to add an authorized representative or to edit or remove an existing authorized representative
- Submit an online General Inquiry Form to ask questions about your Medicare claims and coverage, or to report an address change

To sign up for MyRRMed, please visit the site at www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed.

— *Jennifer Johnson*
Palmetto, GBA