



- 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 —

Since taking office, Donald Trump continues to release a record-breaking number of executive orders (EO), many aimed at freezing authorized funding and eliminating thousands of employees from hundreds of agencies in the federal government. New reports indicate the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has been impacted by the EO's "hiring freeze" along with re-classifications of certain employees. We're all aware the RRB had already been working under their own hiring freeze due to the ongoing and yearly impact of inadequate appropriations. The EO also leveled a mandate that employees from all federal agencies will return to the office 5 days per week, and the RRB continues to work through complications with early retirements and other logistical problems. Earlier downsizing in staff coupled with more people now eligible to retire sooner than anticipated leaves certain "mission critical" jobs open without trained employees available. Congress has been inundated with information related to the funding problems at the RRB. They should be aware

that there's no program or department at the RRB that can spare any more employees. On that issue, NARVRE members are ready to continue to help remedy that problem by educating our Representatives on the facts relative to the funding of the RRB. Relative to any "new" problems at the RRB, we will keep the members advised as additional information becomes available. I can report that unlike the US Treasury, there has been no report of anyone asking or attempting to inspect any RRB data that might threaten beneficiaries' personal information. The RRB is working diligently to abide and comply with confusing orders and the conflicting actions from the Trump Administration.

Also, Pres. Trump issued an EO halting the disbursement of funding allocated in the Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA). NARVRE was recently copied with a letter from Jim Matthews, CEO of Rail Passengers Association (RPA) urging the President to immediately resume disbursement of funds for specific rail projects and grants which were thoroughly vetted by career Dept of Transportation (USDOT) staff and supported by Members of Congress from both parties. Mr.

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Spring Greetings to local Unit and 801 At-Large members of NARVRE. I saw a comment on Facebook which said, "the Easter Bunny is kicking the Ground Hogs Butt." I hope this is true and you have an early Spring!

National Vice President Hylla's article this month will stress the importance of paying your 2025 local and 801 dues promptly. Remember if you did not pay your 2025 dues by February 28th your support for NARVRE will be delinquent and this may be your final newsletter. Local Unit members, please contact and remit to your local SECR/TREAS as soon as possible. Our budget for 2025 was approved by the Governing Board and we need your support to accomplish the strategic goals set by the Board.

Among these goals are:

- 1) Establishment of new local Units
- 2) Rechartering Units that have been closed
- 3) Continued correction and updating rosters
- 4) Enhancing our relationships with our partners, Jones Granger law and TLC Insurance
- 5) Additional training for Area Directors, Assistant Area Directors
- 6) Further expansion of our social media platform

I cannot stress enough the importance of reading National Legislative Director Faley's articles this year as we attempt to research, fact check, and report on the actions and edicts coming from the 119th Congress and the current Presidential Administration.

Spring is the time of year that Your leaders begin traveling to attend local Unit meetings, regional conferences, and union

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(Left to Right) Unit 048 Sun City, AZ - Newly Re-chartered. Ivanna and Richard Jaramillo, Secretary and Treasurer; Joe and Shawana Baca, Unit President; John Butler, Vice President; Bill Shumway, Legis Rep; Phil Steward, National Secretary Treasurer; Bob and Mary Aparicio, Area 8 Director; and Bruce Halstead, Jones and Granger.

## From the National Vice President —

Greetings from the Office of NARVRE National Vice President. In last month's newsletter, your Executive Officers informed you that we will be reviewing the NARVRE membership renewals for 2025 for all NARVRE units. I encourage all Area Directors, Assistant Area Directors, and units to review those rosters to ensure they are current. This office has set a goal for every unit to achieve a 90% membership renewal rate for 2025, and we remain optimistic about meeting this target. If you have not yet paid your 2025 NARVRE dues, please remit them to your unit treasurer. I would like to express my gratitude to all unit treasurers and their officers for their efforts in assisting with the 2025 membership renewals. I wish to thank NARVRE National Secretary Treasurer Phil Steward and his committee for the handling of the renewal of Unit 801 (membership-at-large) members.

Your Executive Officers will commence traveling to various locations to recruit new members and establish new units. This office will be visiting the Chicago IL area in March to meet with a new group of railroad retirees from Illinois Central and other railroads. The meeting will take place on March 6, 2025, at Kingsberry Waffle House in Flossmoor, IL, beginning at 9:30 AM. If anyone in the Chicago area is interested in joining us, Jeff Doerr from Jones Granger law firm will discuss the asbestos trust fund, and I will provide information about NARVRE. We hope

to recruit more new members to NARVRE during our visit.

A reminder to NARVRE members about donations to NARVRE. Many members and others have donated to NARVRE in the past, and we appreciate your past and future support. Donations help us maintain membership dues and support other key activities. To donate, please send contributions to NARVRE National Secretary Treasurer

### (National Legislative Director from page 1)

Matthews explained that the RPA has identified more than \$28.6 billion in discretionary passenger rail grants issued by the USDOT across 158 projects. These grants are located in almost every state and will benefit millions of Americans in big cities and small towns, urban and rural communities, Red States and Blue States. His letter further explains that the vast majority of the rail projects required state and local governments to financially match the federal funding to secure these grants. The RPA advises that blocking this progress will not only endanger tens of thousands of construction jobs, but it will also introduce costly delays which will be borne by local governments. In addition to immediately stopping the disbursement of appropriated funds, the EO calls for a review of all aspects of the IJA law to see if they conform and or contradict with the "policy views" of the Trump Administration. Numerous non-partisan groups have concluded that the Exec Order to delay previously appropriated funding is unlawful. Two federal courts have now issued temporary restraining orders that prohibit the Administration from "freezing" these funds. Court reports agree that if the Administration continues to stop the funding, they would be in violation of the Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Nixon found out that a President has no authority to impound funds from a ruling that was upheld in "Train v. New York" and a unanimous Supreme Court held that the President lacks the authority to withhold funds appropriated by Congress. Many cases on Nixon's attempts to "impound" appropriated funds were all decided on the merits, holding impoundment unlawful.

The House Sub-Committee on Railroads has a new chairman, Rep. Daniel Webster (FL-11). Describing his feelings on rail passenger trains and Amtrak's lack of profit, he also does not favor federal subsidies as outlined in law. At his initial hearing, the chairman stated Amtrak must become profit-

Phil Steward. Donors will be acknowledged in the Newsletter.

Finally, Unit 154 in Marceline, MO will host another NARVRE Regional Information Conference on June 4, 2025. The event is sponsored by Jones Granger law firm. Further details will be provided as the date approaches.

— **Ron Hylla**  
*NARVRE National Vice President*

able, and maintain its existing network, while weaning itself off government support. While his remarks centered on Amtrak's lack of profit, he further opined that Amtrak service should "only serve as an appealing option for travel, not as a replacement for vehicles and airplanes, which remain the overwhelming preference for Americans". Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA) pointed out that since 2008, highways have received more than a quarter of a trillion dollars in federal support, or about seven- or eight-times what passenger rail has received in the same period. NARVRE will remind Congress that Americans continue to favor Amtrak and rail passenger trains by more than 70 percent. A recent 2023 study on Amtrak shows 83 percent of Americans support passenger rail investments based on voters across geographical locations, age, race and gender. The percentages go higher when questions are based on investments for expanded service. The chairman's own preferences should not be germane to the progress of the nation's rail passenger train service. Amtrak was never intended to be a for-profit company. Congress confirmed in 2002 that its objectives for Amtrak had changed by passing the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1978 which states that Amtrak is not a for-profit company. And the Supreme Court has ruled twice that Amtrak is not a "private company". NARVRE's mission is to protect Amtrak and their employees that pay into and strengthen railroad retirement.

— **Gary Faley**,  
*National Legislative Director*



Members of Unit 048 Sun City AZ attending Re chartering event sponsored by Jones and Granger.

## 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 & Kimberly Hatfield • Kim K Johnson • Peter M Strong • Marilyn Sheurman • Donald & Julie Laune • Jean Boruta • James P & Barbara Kostibos • Victory Sundquist • Barbara Sundquist • David Corless • Jones & Granger Law Firm • TLC Ins Group

## Memorials

Joyce Eisler former officer Unit 103 Cumberland MD • Kenneth R Boeder • Dale Mayfield • Tom Halligan • Nadine Wiand • Haven Grittie • Alma Shadle • Sandra Stuart • Don Harrison - El Reno OK • Doris Vargo • Judith Caffo • Ada Brownell • Bonnie Gray • William Jackson • Harry King • James Mercer • Clarence Stiver • Johnny Ward

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

I have had the unique opportunity to travel and visit units in Chicago IL, Council Bluffs, IA, Temple TX Sun City AZ and Tucson, AZ. One common thread of all these outstanding locations were the strong presence of women collaborating closely with their male counterparts getting the job done and more than adequately serving our membership. No doubt this is happening around the country.

I encourage men and women to step up as the need arises to fill vacancies as written in our succession plan written by BNSF retired Manager Manpower Planning, Gary Rozell. This document can be found on our website [www.narvre.us](http://www.narvre.us) under Resources TAB

I was glad to present in person the new charter for Sun City Unit 048 along with Bruce Halstead, Jones and Granger, plus Area 8 Director, Bob Aparicio.

We certainly appreciated the work of the local officers led by President Joe Baca, Richard and Ivanna Jaramillo Secretary and Treasurer and others for the significant effort put forth in reconstruction this Unit

The following is excerpted from Consumer Reports

A call from the fraud department of your bank. The offer of a dream-come true vacation. Attractive

Posting. Scammers can warm their way into your world—your money—in insidious ways. And today, even old scams are being given new life using technology that can make bogus pitches more convincing, and more dangerous than ever.

Cathy M., a 70-year-old widow, considers herself financially astute and risk-averse. She has all incoming numbers sent straight to her voicemail. And she would never give out her bank account information to anyone over the telephone.

### (National President from page 1)

regional meetings. These visits could not have been done without the help of Jones Granger and TLC, and I thank them for their continuing support.

In closing, I again ask for every member of NARVRE to show your support for the organization by remitting your dues as soon as possible. THANK YOU & STAY SAFE!

— **George Boatwright,**  
*National President*

So last September, when a Wells Fargo caller ID popped up on her phone and a caller introduced himself as a representative of the bank's fraud department, she was wary. The man said her account had been compromised and that he wanted to verify some recent charges that appeared to have been made in Texas, a place she had not visited. "How do I know you're really from Wells Fargo?" was Cathy's first question.

The caller then read back to Cathy the last four digits of her Social Security number, a personal detail so closely held, in her view, that the caller had to be someone from her bank. Her guard came down; she was only too happy to help prevent more fraudulent transactions.

Over the next 90 minutes, the caller elicited numerous banking details from Cathy, including her account password. He had her write down and read out lengthy strings of numbers he called "transaction IDs." While she was busy helping in what she thought was fraud prevention, the scammer (or an accomplice) changed the contact phone number on Cathy's account and called Wells Fargo—pretending to be Cathy—telling an employee she was authorizing a wire transfer of \$25,000 to pay a contractor. The real Wells Fargo emailed Cathy right away, inquiring about unusual activity on her account—but she didn't notice the alert in her inbox because the

scammer on the phone kept her distracted. The scammer also told her not to access her bank account for a few hours while the "active investigation" was going on.

When she finally hung up, Cathy had a bad feeling. She quickly called Wells Fargo using the phone number on the company's website, but it was too late. The wire transfer had already taken place—and couldn't be undone.

The \$25,000 scam left just \$2,017.75 in Cathy's savings account. A day later, Wells Fargo denied her reimbursement claim, saying that because she had willingly shared her personal financial information, albeit under false pretenses, there was nothing it could do. The bank says it "deeply empathizes" with cases like Cathy's.

### How to Protect Yourself

Confirm that communication is real. If a bank or government agency contacts you, don't assume caller ID is showing you correct information. Hang up and find a verified phone number online to call the bank or agency back. As a precaution, it's also a good idea to have all unknown calls sent directly to voicemail.

Never give your financial info to anyone. Legitimate bank employees should never ask for your username, PINs, one-time access codes, or passwords.

Don't act fast. To put you off guard, scammers will often say that a matter needs to be managed immediately, or your money could be at risk. Don't take the bait. Rather, confirm whether there is really an issue by calling and checking with the bank or government agency yourself.

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



Retired engineers, Jerry Alexander and Ken Kroeger, of the Tucson AZ unit.



Former Unit 048 Sun City AZ President, Paul Hutchison, his loving wife, Teresa, and good friend, Bill Linville. We appreciate him and former Treasurer, Glen Bay, for their service to NARVRE until both resigned due to serious health issues.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED  
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# Montana Doctor Convicted of Fraud – Railroad Medicare Claims Included

A Montana doctor admitted to committing federal health program fraud, which was announced on December 13, 2024. He received jail time and was fined. The amount of fraud was greater than \$31 million.

Ronald David Dean, of Whitefish, MT, plead guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud. His crimes: Dean was paid by a telemedicine organization to sign orders for durable medical equipment for patients who did not need them. He also billed Railroad Medicare and Traditional Medicare for telehealth doctors' visits that never occurred.

Taken from Justice.Gov:

“Submitting false claims for medical services that were not provided will not be tolerated,” said Special Agent in Charge Dimitriana Nikolov with the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General’s Northwest Field Office. “Today’s sentencing is a testament to VA OIG’s dedication to investigating those who commit fraud and seek to benefit improperly from programs that are meant for deserving veterans.”

“Our office will continue to work alongside other federal agencies investigating crimes like this. The efforts of the VA-OIG, HHS-OIG and RRB-OIG agents, and the supporting personnel, combatted this

fraudulent activity. We have an obligation to protect federal funds, and the abuse of our Medicare system will not be tolerated,” said Railroad Retirement Board Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Douglas Williams.

As you can see, Railroad Medicare was involved in this case as this provider billed \$19,113.00 to the program. Many of these charges included Telephone Evaluation and Management services (doctor’s visits) for the purpose of referring medically unnecessary orthotic items and services. Dr. Dean was also paid for over-the-counter COVID tests that the beneficiaries never received or never ordered.

Railroad Medicare has its own fraud and abuse investigative unit called “Benefit Integrity”, which inspected this case. The BI unit reviews thousands of claim lines of potential fraudsters every year. Claims and providers are selected for review based on data analysis, referrals from other Railroad Medicare units, beneficiaries who contact us with concerns, and by keeping track of current fraud schemes.

“The Railroad Benefit Integrity team’s focus is to protect the Medicare Trust Fund by investigating providers who stand out as outliers, like Dr. Dean. This kind of work is crucial for maintaining the integrity of

healthcare systems and ensuring that funds are used appropriately,” said Debra Watson, Benefit Integrity team manager.

If you are wonder how you can help, we ask that you eagle-eye review your Medicare Summary Notices (Medicare explanation of benefits). If you see something that appears to be wrong (such as charges for services you never received), please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, or for the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD at 877-566-3572 to discuss your concerns. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET.

If you request it, your name will be kept confidential.

— Jennifer Johnson  
Palmetto, GBA



The Baca brothers, Joe, President Unit 048 Sun City AZ, and Len, member of Unit 063 Tucson AZ.