



- 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 —

After more than five-months of continuing resolutions, Congress finally passed a six-bill FY2024 spending package ahead of deadline, averting a proverbial government shutdown. President Biden signed this critical legislation without the radical Amtrak cuts proposed by the Republican House Freedom Caucus. Transportation investments in this legislation provide \$21 billion for public transit, \$16.3 billion for Amtrak passenger and freight rail, and \$3.8 billion for Capital Investment Grants. All Amtrak supporters should be proud of the success we all shared last fall when our combined actions forced the Speaker of the House to suspend legislation that targeted Amtrak, their employees, and the railroad retirement system. Congress still has their last six appropriation bills to finish ahead of a deadline threatening another government shutdown. Of course, budget proposals for FY 2025 are already due at this time of the year. Indeed, a key House committee moved quickly this year to get ahead of the game, and they have the attention of NARVRE and all senior/retiree organizations tasked with protecting Medicare, Social Security and Railroad Retirement.

In January of this year, the House Budget Committee passed The Fiscal Commission Act (FCA) on a party-line vote of 22-12. HR 5779 would establish a fiscal commission to act as a body outside of the normal committees of Congress to recommend changes to federal spending and taxes. This Commission would make policy changes to balance the federal budget and slow the increasing level of debt. The stated purpose of this Commission is to increase and improve the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare. The Commission would be comprised of 12 voting members from Congress (equally divided between Democrats & Republicans) and four

continued on page 2

## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Wake up members of NARVRE! Spring has sprung and the clocks rolled forward and now it's time to register for our 43rd Biennial Convention. We are about 45 days out and I predicted 2/3 of our current units to be represented, so don't let me down.

I would like to shine a light on our partners who have contributed enormously to our growth this past 2 years:

Jones Granger law firm represented by Mr. Weldon Granger and Mr. Bruce Halstead and their numerous agents around the country (most who are members of NARVRE) have visited many of our local Units. At these meetings our members have been alerted to compensation that may be available for former railroaders relating to asbestos exposure.

An additional partner is TLC Insurance, who can advise individual members as to the best options for Medicare supplemental plans. Mr. Craig Villwock and his nationwide agents stand ready to answer questions

at Unit meetings or on an individual basis. Both partners have aided our Governing Board with travel and logistics for setting up new Units and visiting existing Units. Check out our website: www.narvre.us for contact information.

As has been done in the past, we will make a concerted effort to attend RRB Pre Retirement seminars throughout the coming months. Several of our Unit members across the country have made a commitment to represent NARVRE at these meetings. This type of dedication is vital to the preservation of our organization now and in the future.

We are in the initial stages of planning organizational meetings in the southeast, southwest, and northeast regions of our country.

As we go into the warmer months, get out your calendars and mark when your Units will be holding their meetings and make a concerted effort to attend. The local Units of NARVRE have always been the backbone of this organization and will continue to be in our future. SEE YA in MAY! STAY SAFE!

— *George Boatwright,*  
*National President*



Pre-Convention meeting in March, in Kansas City, Mo. Pictured: Lionel Schlobohm, Chaplin; Sam Caudill, VP, shaking hands with a member and Mike Steward behind the podium.

## From the National Vice President —

Well, we are less than 60 days before the 43rd Biannual NARVRE Convention being held in Independence MO. The Convention Committee has been working vigorously in preparation for the convention. We hope to have a large number of delegates attending the convention. If you have not made your arrangements to attend, please do so on the NARVRE website.

National President Boatwright and I have been busy traveling to various locations to bolster the NARVRE membership. I traveled to Stockton and Fresno CA in March and met with unit officers and their respective membership. With the assistance of those units, we were able to secure 5 new members. As of this writing, I will be traveling to Chicago Unit 002 to visit with many retirees who are not NARVRE members with the hope of increasing their membership.

April will be a busy month once again. President Boatwright will be visiting and attempting to re-establish the old NARVRE Unit 088 in Philadelphia. Meanwhile, my travels will be to Unit 059 in Boone IA along with Unit 029 in Cedar Rapids IA. I will be meeting with Unit 061 in Oakland CA. With

**Your National Officers, George Boatwright President, Ron Hylla Vice President, Philip Steward Secretary Treasurer, and Gary Faley Legislative Director, as we did in 2022 are candidates for re-election as a team to carry on the important work we initiated at the beginning of our term. We would appreciate your vote.**

## 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.

Jeanne Boruta donation in Memory of husband Herman Boruta • Jones and Granger Law Firm • Lucille Mitchell • David Corless • Victor Sundquist • Barbara Sundquist • Donation from Unit 067 Clinton IA Pres Bill McClimon, VP Randy Stark, Treas. Janell Hughes Sec Marshall & Carolyn Richardson, LR Gary Wilke

## Memorials

Maxine Marzoula passed away Dec 2023, husband Louis passed away Feb 2024 members Unit 093 • John R. Francis • George Brannen

the assistance of Assistant Area Directors Niece Patterson and John Hermann, we will be in San Francisco and St. Jose CA to gather potential new members and the possibility a new NARVRE unit.

We are asking NARVRE Area Directors, Assistant Area Directors, and Unit Officers to attend the Railroad Retirement Board Seminars throughout the year. These seminar attendees are within 5 years of retiring and are a great opportunity for NARVRE to increase our membership. I wish to thank these NARVRE officers for attending these seminars.

In the coming months, things will be

## (National Legislative Director from page 1)

non-voting outside experts. The Commission created by this bill would meet behind closed doors and not open to the public. The term “fast-track” means no amendments would be allowed, and only yea or nay votes will occur, all of which might give members of Congress political cover for any changes to Social Security and Medicare. The Commission’s recommendations only require affirmative votes by a simple majority of seven voting members, so long as two votes in favor come from each political party. As it stands now, the Commission would vote on its recommendations after the November 2024 elections, with a deadline of Dec.12, 2024. This begs the question as to why the Budget Committee would have Congress voting on changes to Social Security and Medicare benefits in a lame-duck session? Finally, on February 7, 2024, the House Budget Committee held a hearing on the House Republican FY2025 budget resolution, with the FCA on the markup. The budget resolution was reported out of committee with support from all Republicans and all Democrats voted against it. The Fiscal Commission Act is clearly designed to minimize public input, removing the pressure from voting on critical changes to Social Security

heating up on the presidential and congressional elections. As NARVRE members, we must remain focused on our ultimate goal of Protecting, Preserving and Promoting our Railroad Retirement benefits. Likewise, during the next presidential and congressional terms, the solvency of Social Security and Medicare will be important issues to resolve without any decrease in benefits to the programs. Please take a moment to research the candidates on all these senior related issues. Your future may depend on it.

— **Ron Hylla**

*NARVRE National Vice President*

and Medicare benefits. Further, consider that prior to the Speaker calling the bill up for a House vote, all possible procedural objections will have been waived, with a limit of two hours of debate (fast-track). Rich Fiesta, Executive Director, Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) made his point saying “This is nothing but a political stunt. This budget resolution puts seniors on a path to cuts to their earned Social Security and Medicare benefits”. Many arguments today claim fiscal commissions are frivolous and a waste of time. We shall see. Along with a multitude of senior advocacy organizations, we will keep a watchful post on the forthcoming actions of this particular Fiscal Commission. We are ready to stand with millions of retirees, seniors and workers paying into and protecting Medicare benefits and retirement pensions. Railroad Retirement has an integral and ongoing financial coordination with the Social Security Administration, governed under statutes of the Railroad Retirement Act. NARVRE has a history of working to protect retirement benefits under both of these administrations. Ultimately, any changes outlined in this Fiscal Commission Act must be voted on in the House and Senate and signed by the President. They must be fair to all beneficiaries, current and for those to come.

— **Gary Faley,**

*National Legislative Director*



Ron Hylla made a presentation to NARVRE Stockton Unit #39, including members of Oakland Unit #61 in attendance, at the Black Bear Diner in Manteca, CA.

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

In order to ensure that everyone can be properly accommodated, a deadline of April 19, 2024 has been set for registration and hotel reservations. This includes bus transportation to and from the airport, the tour, or purchase meals for guests outside of registration. Committee Members to contact are Shari Miller 816-678-8900 or Mike Steward 660-351-1207.

The 2024 Convention date is near. If you have not made arrangements yet, please make them as soon as possible.

### Things to know and consider about the Convention.

1. The convention begins May 19 at 300PM with evening concluding a mixer which includes hors d'oeuvres and adult beverages.

2. Concludes Tuesday May 21 with an evening banquet featuring Bruce Halstead of Jones and Granger Law Firm as Keynote speaker.

3. Any member can attend the Convention, however, only a duly elected Delegate from a Unit can participate and has voting privileges.

4. Convention expenses for Area Directors and National Officers are the responsibility of the National organization only and not local Units.

5. Room Rate for the event are \$149 per night (includes hot breakfast) plus local state taxes and fees per contract rates are good 3 days prior and 3 days after the event.

6. Go to our website [www.narvre.us](http://www.narvre.us) to Reg-

### Centurion Birthday

Sonny Hinds, 100 years young party, given by Brock and Debbie Zimmerman at Steakhouse in Midwest City OK



Visiting the office of our newsletter publisher while in Kansas City. Pictured L-R: Mike Steward, Jon Males and Phil Steward.

ister, make reservations, or obtain directions to the hotel.

7. Members and guests who are flying into KCI Airport requiring transportation to the hotel immediately inform the Convention Committee of arrival and departure times and date.

8. Tour buses will be available Wednesday May 22 which will include a visit to Truman Presidential Library and brief sightseeing downtown KC. Sign up as soon as possible advising the Convention Committee

9. To purchase an Ad for the Souvenir Book, contact the Convention Committee

Unit officers, 990N filings are due May 15, 2022. Any unit wishing for our accountant to provide this service, simply send a \$8.00 check to the National Office.

The new reports that have been designed over the past few years to assist in making sound decisions regarding our business plan as well as our finances, recruitment, marketing, and advertising strategies have proven successful. In summary, the collective effort of our officers nationwide significantly had a positive impact.

As we have anticipated from a year ago our total number of members have decreased

as many of our unit officers working with National and Area Officers have aggressively taken action to “clean up” their local rosters, that is, removing those members who have deceased, unable to continue, no longer interested, or unable to locate or contact. Coupled with our National Campaign to grow our membership through conducting informational meetings, local unit meetings, plus attending retirement seminars conducted by Railroad Retirement Board also has produced immensely positive results. We are continuing these efforts.

Let’s look at the numbers In January 2023 Membership totaled 12783. Currently we have 12098 members. Since the 2022 Convention we have gained 601 new members including spouses and have lost 339 including spouses.

We have much more work to do, and we feel we’re headed in the right direction.

During tax time we receive several inquiries from members of states taxing Railroad Retirement. Our former NARVRE National President, Tom Dwyer, reminds everyone below is the statute to give to your tax preparer.

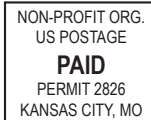
— **James (Phil) Steward,**  
*National Secretary/Treasurer*

### 2021 US Code Title 45 - Railroads Chapter 9 - Retirement of Railroad Employees Subchapter IV - Railroad Retirement Act of 1974, Sec. 231m - Assignability; exemption from levy

<b>Citation</b>	45 U.S.C. § 231m (2021)
<b>Section Name</b>	§231m. Assignability; exemption from levy
<b>Section Text</b>	(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 [26 U.S.C. 1 et seq.], notwithstanding any other law of the United States, or of any State, territory, or the District of Columbia, no annuity or supplemental annuity shall be assignable or be subject to any tax or to garnishment, attachment, or other legal process under any circumstances whatsoever, nor shall the payment thereof be anticipated 1



L-R Alda Evans, Secretary/Treasurer, Unit 140; Gary Marquart, Area 6 Director; and Shari Miller, Co-Chair, Convention Committee.



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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# Cardiovascular Disease Screening Tests

February is both the American Heart Month and the World Heart Month. To put a focus on our hearts, this article will highlight Cardiovascular Disease and Medicare's Cardiovascular Disease Screening service.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Cardiovascular Disease (also known as Coronary Artery Disease, or CAD) is the leading cause of death in the United States, with one of every three deaths being attributed to it. High blood pressure (hypertension) is the leading risk factor; high cholesterol is also a major cause of CAD.

CAD encompasses the following:

- Heart Disease (heart and blood vessel disease, related in many cases to atherosclerosis – which is when plaque builds up and narrows your arteries)
- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Heart Failure (also called “congestive heart failure.” Although the heart does not stop beating, it isn't working well enough to supply your body's need for blood and oxygen)
- Arrhythmia (an abnormal heart rhythm)
- Heart valve problems (stenosis/heart valves don't open wide enough for blood to flow through properly or regurgitation/when the heart valves don't close correctly and blood leaks through)

### The American Heart Association, 2024

Called the “silent killer,” CAD can strike without any warning or identifiable symptoms. That's why it's important to take advantage of Medicare's free preventive service, Cardio-

vascular Disease Screening. This screening encompasses bloodwork to test your cholesterol, lipid and triglyceride levels. Knowing these levels can help you and your doctor create a plan to reduce the chance of a heart attack or stroke that you may have.

This service is covered by Medicare Part B/ Railroad Medicare once every five years. It must be conducted in a “primary care setting,” which translates to a doctor's office, clinic, or other place where you can receive “integrated, accessible health care services” and it is “responsible for addressing most patient health care needs, developing a sustained patient partnership, and practicing in the context of family and community.” (The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services – CMS, 2023).

You can receive this screening if you do not have any signs or symptoms of CAD.

To learn more about cardiovascular disease, please visit the American Heart Association's webpage at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org). You may also find helpful information from the CDC at [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov).

If you have questions about this screening 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, MyR-

RMed. 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](http://www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed).

— Jennifer Johnson  
Palmetto, GBA



Celebrating a member of Unit 95 turning 100 years young, left to right: Ora May and her nephew.