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National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Listen the birds are singing, income tax is filed and the 43rd Biennial Convention is upon us. I am looking forward to shaking lots of hands in a couple weeks and seeing smiling faces in Independence, MO. This is your combined May/June newsletter and in July we will reminisce about happenings in these two months.

The Governing Board of NARVRE has been very busy since the first of April visiting existing Units, probable sites for new Units and RRB Preretirement Seminars. We have been welcomed by the RRB to attend seminars and associate with those facing retirement or newly retired. Likely from these meetings will come some of our future leaders.

Thanks to the work of your National Vice-President, Ron Hylla and members of our California Units there may be a new Unit chartered in the San Francisco area in the near future. More on this in July! I have just returned from a meeting in Florence, SC with Unit022 and the Florence

Retired Railroad Association. They have a combined meeting and we were able to sign up new members as we did in March at the Reading Railroad Veteran Railway Employees meeting in PA. Groups such as these are a “gold mine” for acquiring new members.

Following our convention, your Executive Board will begin to make trips around the country to Protect, Preserve and Promote our annuities provided by the Railroad Retirement Board. We always solicit the help of local Units of NARVRE in these initiatives. In July’s newsletter we will try to list upcoming visits.

Just as the flowers started blooming it was also time for the campaign signs to spring up. I hope that each of you exercised your right to vote in primaries during this crucial year for local and national elections. Also, the current Executive Board of NARVRE desires your support and prayers in the coming National Convention of NARVRE. SEE YA IN KANSAS CITY/INDEPENDENCE! STAY SAFE!

— *George Boatwright,*
National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

After years of work by rail employees and unions advocating for the need to strengthen rail safety, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the US Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a final rule establishing a minimum requirement of two-person crews for most Class 1 freight and passenger railroad operations. USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg in speaking on safe crew sizes being long overdue stated “common sense tells us that large freight trains, some of which can be over three miles long, should have at least two crew members on board and now there’s a federal regulation to ensure trains are safely staffed”. The final rule establishes a new federal oversight to empower communities and rail workers to make their voices heard on whether the FRA will grant special approval for one-person train crew operations. Without the final rule, railroads could initiate single-crew operations without performing a rigorous risk assessment, or even notifying the FRA. As an association, NARVRE has always supported and urged Congress to pass specific rail safety legislation. Indeed, NARVRE members helped their own states to get rail safety introduced, and many state bills have been passed requiring two-person crews. Accordingly, the final rule codifies train crew staffing rules at the federal level, ensuring that freight and passenger rail operations are governed by consistent safety rules for all states. The rule does permit exceptions in limited cases, based on how this rule might adversely affect smaller railroads. FRA Administrator, Amid Bose, clarified their decision, “ today’s final rule acknowledges the important role both crew members play in the safe operations of trains, and it comes at a time when the latest annual data reflects some troubling trends that demonstrate the need to improve safety”. He further explained the FRA has taken proactive steps to protect the public, workers, and



RRB pre-retirement Seminar in the Twin Cities MN - NARVRE'S Officers nationwide have been attending to recruit new members.

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From the National Vice President —

We are on the eve of the 43rd Biennial NARVRE Convention scheduled for May 19 through May 21, 2024 in Independence MO. There will be several resolutions to be considered at this year's convention. I look forward to meeting every delegate and guest at the convention.

The theme of the Convention is "THE FUTURE IS NOW". This theme is so pertinent to what NARVRE has to overcome in maintaining its strength through increasing its membership. As we requested units to clean up their respective rosters, we found our numbers have dwindled sufficiently. For NARVRE continued success in Protecting, Preserving and Promoting our railroad retirement benefits, we rely on our membership. Ask yourself these important questions, "WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF NARVRE DID NOT EXIST?" Would you be covered under Social Security retirement benefits? Would railroad workers be able to obtain an occupational disability? Would railroad workers be able to retire with 30 plus years of service at age 60?

Would you like to have your retirement payments reduced by 49%? The answer is very simple – NO. You and I must convey this to every railroad worker and retiree because this could happen without NARVRE's existence.

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.

Karen Anne Nelson • Monty Tuchel • David Corless • Jones and Granger Law Firm • TLC Insurance Group • David Cass • Donation in memory of Al Bocher by Unit 115 Wichita KS President Gary Marquart Sec/Treas Robin Smith Legis Rep Larry Chambers • Donation in memory of Jack Dillard Hobday by Robert and Medra Stewart • Victor Sundquist • Barbara Sundquist • Sareena Hogan • Donation in memory of James Wayman by Unit 030 Council Bluffs IA President John Billingsly Sec Pam Fogle Treas Marge Ingram • Charles & Sharon Kittner

Memorials

Jimmy Lake • Al Blocher • Peter Janky • B J May former Asst Area 6 Director • Robert Lindsey • Terry Todd • Louise Wing

In the past month, NARVRE has been very busy visiting units in several areas. With the support of Jones Granger Law Firm representative Jeff Doerr and Area 4 Director Gary Nelson, we visited NARVRE Unit 059 in Boone IA and Unit 029 in Cedar Rapids IA. I met the new Secretary-Treasurer for Unit 059, Janet Schultz, who is extremely devoted to her position and her duties.

At the end of our visits in Iowa, we were able to secure 5 new NARVRE members. Thereafter, with Bruce Halstead, Jeff Doerr and myself, we visited the San Francisco CA area the week of April 15, 2024. We attended a wonderful Unit 061 Oakland CA unit

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

communities where trains operate across the country. We agree the FRA rule recognizes the Biden Administration's actions to improve the safety of our railways by deploying funding from the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and raising safety standards while supporting first responders and rail workers.

RRB Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations have been finalized. Last year, the RRB reported the agency was operating at 18 percent below its minimum staffing levels with 729 full-time employees (FTE). RRB budget requests for FY24 was therefore set to climb to nearly 32 percent within the next two years which would get them to 880 employees and allow the RRB to move into a new modernized IT phase with sufficient employees to provide critical benefits service. During the appropriation process, the House proposed a 20% budget cut for the agency which would have been devastating, while the Senate proposed flat funding with no cuts. The amount the RRB received was a \$2M cut in funding which still has a significant impact on the RRB's ability to reach optimal staffing to effectively carry out their mission. Once again, the agency will not reach the request level of 880 full-time employees. Due to the stagnant budgets, staffing levels declined nearly 19% from FY2017 levels of

meeting. I was extremely impressed with the conduct of the meeting by their officers. Thereafter, we met with several NARVRE members and non-members in San Francisco and Santa Clara CA. We were able to secure 6 new members for NARVRE. However, more importantly, those NARVRE members have elected to establish a new NARVRE unit in the area. This would not have been possible without the assistance of Assistant Area 8 Directors Niccie Patterson and John Hermann. We will continue to monitor and assist the new unit and its members.

— **Ron Hylla**
NARVRE National Vice President

853 FTE's to a projected 695 in the President's Budget level for FY2025. The RRB has been under-funded and under-staffed for years, working with outdated IT systems. That leaves the RRB open to invasive cyber-attacks, unable to fully secure the personal information of annuitants and beneficiaries. RRB information is made available to the Congressional offices detailing all of the inherent problems caused by the lack of adequate funding. NARVRE will be working with the RRB urging Congress to step up and remedy these ongoing shortages when discussing FY25 appropriations. We will continue to discuss these problems with RRB leadership at NARVRE's upcoming Convention. We must challenge the disturbing actions from members of the House Freedom Caucus proposing irrational and deep cuts to the RRB Administration. Their misleading information must be addressed with the facts, advising all of Congress that the RRB funding structure is unique in that railroad employer and employee contributions are held in trust funds to pay railroad benefits and support RRB operations. Appropriations come from the railroad retirement trust fund system rather than the federal general revenue fund. We will insist they speak the truth. RRB funding does not come from US taxpayers and their proposed cuts will not save the US Treasury a dime.

— **Gary Faley,**
National Legislative Director



Unit 061 Meeting Oakland CA

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Living a long and healthy life has always been a top priority for me. In my opinion, one of the keys to happiness and enjoying life while having the capacity to positively contribute to society is good physical and spiritual health. The following excerpts from the NY Times and the American Heart Association are recommendations to help obtain or maintain physical health to promote longevity.

“Humans have searched for the secret to immortality for thousands of years. Practicing simple behaviors, many people can live healthier for longer, reaching 80, 90 and even one hundred in good physical and mental shape.

Physical activity is one of the best ways to keep your body and brain healthy.

It relieves stress, improves mood, gives you energy, helps with sleep and can lower your risk of chronic disease, including dementia and depression.

Physical activity keeps the heart and circulatory system healthy and provides protection against numerous chronic diseases that affect the body and mind. It also strengthens muscles, which can reduce older people’s risk of falling.

The best exercise is any activity you enjoy doing and will stick with. You do not have to do a lot, either — the American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, meaning just walking a little more than 20 min.

How much physical activity do you need?

1. Get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous aerobic activity (or a combination of both), preferably spread throughout the week.

Move More, Sit Less

Get up and move throughout the day. Any

activity is better than none. Even light-intensity activity can offset the serious health risks of being sedentary.

Add Intensity

Moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise is best. Your heart will beat faster, and you will breathe harder than normal. As you get acclimated to being more active, increase your time and/or intensity to get more benefits.

Add Muscle

Include moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity (like resistance or weight training) at least twice a week.

Feel Better

Physical activity is one of the best ways to keep your body and brain healthy.

It relieves stress, improves mood, gives you energy, helps with sleep and can lower your risk of chronic disease, including dementia and depression.

2. Eat more fruit and vegetables.

The experts did not recommend one specific diet over another, but they advised eating in moderation and aiming for more fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods. The Mediterranean diet — which prioritizes fresh produce in addition to whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish, and olive oil — is a good model for healthy eating, and it has been shown to lower the risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and dementia.

Some experts say that maintaining a healthy weight is important for longevity, but to Dr. John Rowe, a professor of health policy and aging at Columbia University, which is less of a concern, especially as people enter old age. “I was always more worried about my patients who lost weight than my patients who gained weight,” Dr.

3. Get enough sleep.

Sleep is sometimes overlooked, but it plays a significant role in healthy aging. Research has found that the amount of sleep a person averages each night is correlated with their risk of death from any cause, and

that consistently getting superior quality sleep can add years to a person’s life. Sleep is especially important for brain health: A 2021 study found that people who slept less than five hours a night had double the risk of developing dementia.

4. Do not smoke, and do not drink too much either.

Smoking cigarettes raises your risk for all kinds of deadly diseases. “There is no dose of cigarette smoke that is good for you,” Dr. Rowe said.

We’re starting to understand how bad excessive alcohol use is, too. More than one drink per day for women and two for men — and possibly even less than that — raises the risk for heart disease and atrial fibrillation, liver disease, and seven types of cancer.”

Our Convention is less than a month away. We commend those who promptly submitted your registrations and room reservations! Your efforts have allowed our convention committee to present fairly accurate numbers to the hotel management to ensure all our members and guests will be adequately accommodated with food and beverage. The official delegate count at this moment is fifty-one delegates.

Every convention since I have been privileged to serve as National Secretary -- Treasurer, our Marketing team which includes former BNSF General Director of Corporate Affairs Pat Hiatte and Scott Steward President Genius Lab and I convene to name a convention theme to capture the essence of the point in time in our organization’s rich history. In 2018, it was “FIX IT” a term coined by our Past President Whitey Westphal while at a summit meeting with the Executive Board in Olive Branch, MS discussing the financial viability of NARVRE. The 2020 Convention was cancelled due to the pandemic. In 2022 in Oakland, CA, our theme was “BREAKING THROUGH THE FUTURE” which signaled moving out of the dark days of COVID-19 and rebuilding what was lost in memberships as well as those who passed and plan for a bright future. Our 2024 theme is “THE FUTURE IS NOW” appropriately named as through our partnerships with Jones and Grangers Law Firm who has sponsored a significant amount of our events nationwide and TLC Insurance Group who has provided members with information regarding Medicare supplements and other insurance options.

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



Unit 039 Meeting Stockton CA

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Million Hearts 2027 Initiative Can Save Lives

As a person with high blood pressure and high cholesterol, I was shocked to hear that every 34 seconds, someone in the United States dies from cardiovascular disease. That number grows to 2,552 deaths each day and 800,000+ per year.

Yet there's more . . . heart (cardiovascular) disease took more victims in 2021 than all types of cancers, chronic lower respiratory disease and accidents, combined.

It is very hard it is to face these stats, but they are a call to action. The organization "Million Hearts" was established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in 2012 to fight the battle of cardiovascular disease. Its purpose was and is to "save more of the lives taken and protecting more of the lives impacted by heart disease and stroke in the United States." (*Million Hearts 2027 website. See more details at the end of this article.*)

This initiative gets its name from its charge of preventing one million preventable heart attacks and strokes in the next five years (January 2022 through December 2026).

The Million Hearts initiative has four areas of focus:

- "Convene" healthcare and public health champions,
- "Facilitate" real collaboration and resource sharing,
- "Promote" the implementation of evidence-based tactics to prevent heart disease, and
- "Address" the fact that some populations are hit harder by this disease and using specific

policies, processes and practices to combat that. (Million Hearts, 2024).

This is a really good initiative. I encourage you to visit the Million Hearts website and use the many tools and resources you find there, such as heart-healthy recipes, information on statins, and the "Healthy is Strong" portion of the website, which offers journals you can print out to record your blood pressure over time, a "Health Resume" where you can keep all of your health information in one place to share with your doctor, and much more.

The Million Hearts website is as follows:
<https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/index.html>.

You can also follow Million Hearts on

Facebook.

If you have questions about your Railroad Medicare claims or coverage, you can call our toll-free 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



Top: John Filter, George Joyce, Gary R Nelson attending Railroad Retirement pre-retirement Seminar in the Twin Cities MN.

Right: Adrienne Natole Area 2 Director attending a Railroad Retirement Board Seminar in Wayne NJ representing the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc (NARVRE.us). NARVRE preserves, protects and promotes the protection of the railroad annuity. Join today to protect the organization which is chartered to protect railroaders.

