



- 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 —

This month's article will summarize some of the Legislative Report presented to the delegates at NARVRE's 43rd Biennial Convention. Since the 2022 Convention, it was necessary to call on the membership to contact their Representatives in Congress and voice our collective messages on certain issues. Those types of requests go directly to our Unit Legislative Reps, but we welcome any and all members to sign up for periodic information. The more contacts, the better our communications will be when it's necessary to act in a timely manner. Every member of NARVRE should realize that their calls to Congress are an important element of the work we do as a national association. We also work with other supporting organizations, which can allow us to break the work up amongst our different memberships in order to bring more attention to a specific issue. There's strength in numbers and affiliations! The Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) has a large headquarters in DC, and their national membership is close to 5 million strong. NARVRE has banded together with the ARA fighting for the rights of seniors for many years. Together, we helped President Biden pass the "Inflation Reduction Act" which now allows Medicare to negotiate and lower the obscene costs of drugs. Insulin under Medicare is now capped at \$35 a month. Out-of-pocket costs are decreasing and will be capped at \$2000 beginning next year. We have colleagues in these organizations that share their legislative messaging tools. While NARVRE has our own toll-free direct lines to switchboards on Capitol Hill, it's nice to have the option to access a link to an online ready-to-go-message. Also, I hope all Units have a "Call Team" in place in case of an alert. Our railroad retirement system hasn't been attacked in a number of

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Senator Susan Collins (R) Maine and NARVRE Assistant Area 3 Director Dan Lauzon had a discussion about Railroad Retirement Board funding and other railroad issues.

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Greetings once again to the members of NARVRE who are current for their 2024 dues. The Executive Board of NARVRE (Myself, NVP Hylla, NST Steward and NLD Faley) wish to thank the almost 60% of Units who were represented at the 43rd Biennial Convention this past May in Independence, MO (HOST Unit095KAN-SASCITY). We were unanimously reelected for another two years and are committed with YOUR help to PROTECT, PRESERVE and PROMOTE NARVRE.

The 43rd Convention slogan was "The Future Is Now" and we embrace the future and ask YOUR help in the following areas:

SUCCESSION: A strategy that ensures our Units will remain active and thrive in the future. Several Units have been successful in having "younger" and/or newer members step up and become leaders. This allows OUR older officers to step back and rest.

CALLING COMMITTEES: A member who may be delinquent in paying their dues may only need a "Hi, how are you doing"

call to refresh their memory and they will be appreciative someone is checking on them.

UPDATING UNIT ROSTERS:

This has been a focal point for the National Office these past four years and great results have been achieved. Thank you to each Secretary/Treasurer who has taken the time to research your rosters and advise the NST of needed changes. These updated and accurate rosters provide a basis for our yearly budget.

ACQUIRING NEW MEMBERS:

Many of our Units have reached newly retired railroad workers and advised them of the benefits of NARVRE memberships. Up-to-date brochures are now being ordered and will be made available to each Unit to enhance YOUR recruitment.

These four basic areas are of utmost importance in ensuring that NOW and in the FUTURE, there will be an organization recognized by the Railroad Retirement Board as a "stake holder" in protection of railroad retirees.

BE LOUD AND BE PROUD of YOUR part in Protecting, Preserving and Promoting RRB benefits! **STAY SAFE!**

— *George Boatwright,*
National President

From the National Vice President —

The 2024 NARVRE Convention has concluded and it was great to see so many wonderful friends of NARVRE. I would like to thank the delegates for their vote of confidence in my re-election to my position of NARVRE National Vice President. It is truly an honor to represent all NARVRE members across this great country. I would also like to congratulate the NARVRE Area Directors elected at the convention by their respective area delegates. They are Larry Bussell (Area 1), Andrienne Natoli (Area 3), Tony Padilla (Area 5) and Bob Boltz (Area 7). I wish to thank Jones Granger Law Firm and TLC Insurance Group for sponsoring the Convention.

During my presentation at the Convention, I emphasized every NARVRE member as a member of our NARVRE Family, a Family of Brothers and Sisters. Our NARVRE Family is devoted to Preservation, Protection and Promotion of our Railroad Retirement benefits and all senior benefits. In doing so, we must remember to support political candidates who are willing to step up to assist us in our hour of need. As NARVRE Legislative Director Gary Faley put it so astutely in his article, the Administration and Congress has attempted in the past to rid itself of the Railroad Retirement Board. Such an act would have had a devastating

impact on every railroad retiree across this country. Our voices can be heard during the upcoming election time and to place presidential and congressional candidates into office who are willing to listen to our concerns and act upon them. Please consider those candidates who we can trust to come to our aide.

Going forward after the convention, we have visited NARVRE Unit 123 in Fargo ND. With the assistance of Unit 123 President Ken Tighe, Secretary-Treasurer Marv Boser and Legislative Representative Marc Halvorson, along with Jeff Doerr from

Jones Granger Law Firm, we signed up 7 new members. I wish to thank those officers for their continued support of NARVRE, along with all NARVRE officers across the country.


Your NARVRE National Officers are making plans to visit several areas to hold informational meetings including regional meetings. We will keep you apprised of our venues to increase our membership and units. If you are aware of any locations we should visit, please contact me.

— **Ron Hylla**
NARVRE National Vice President

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

years, but we want to be prepared to respond and react quickly if it happens again. Briefly, we will remember 2012, when Paul Ryan and his GOP Budget Committee proposed that our railroad retirement should conform so that Tier 1 benefits would equal the benefits of Social Security thereby saving US taxpayers over \$2 billion dollars. Those lies and other misinformation were laid to rest by a unified barrage of fact-checkers from NARVRE, the RRB, members of rail labor and the rail industry. The retired Paul Ryan has now been replaced with a dysfunctional House of Representatives and more daily reminders that elections surely do have consequences. Since gaining control of the House last year, we were forewarned by GOP leaders that they intended to cut deep into transportation & infrastructure funding, which would intentionally destroy rail passenger train service in America. The Republican House quickly approved their FY 2024 budget that contained a 64 percent cut to Amtrak which would lead to nation-wide rail service disruptions and the cancellations of dozens of critical passenger

rail infrastructure projects. Rep. Troy Nehls, who chairs the Subcommittee on Railroads is on record with his contempt for Amtrak. He has also badmouthed the critical economic outcomes from the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), a law which funnels billions to the states and local governments to upgrade outdated roads and bridges as well as many long-overdue rail safety improvements. Even before the days of Paul Ryan, the GOP platform has targeted the demise of Amtrak and thousands of rail jobs paying into our railroad retirement system. In fact, members of the GOP's Freedom Caucus threaten to repeal specific investments from the IIJA law, if they retain their majority after the General Election in November. President Biden promised he would get this legislation passed and the House GOP promises to kill it. In response, hundreds of transportation leaders at the federal, state and local levels of government, along with businesses and organizations signed onto joint letters opposing Republican attempts to stall or end ongoing advancements to Amtrak and rail infrastructure projects. Last fall, the Republican

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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.

Marcella Dulac donation in memory of John Dulac • Lori Dulac donation in memory of John Dulac • Joe Artzer in memory of Donald Gibbs Past President NARVRE Unit 117 Pueblo CO • Children (Kasey and Douglas Ronald Gibbs) of Don Gibbs in memory of father • Valerie Seitz • Barbara Sundquist • Victor Sundquist • Jones and Granger Law Firm • TLC Insurance Group • David Corless • Worldwide Technology • Unit 155 Charlotte Bowles

Memorials

George A. Grogan Jr • Theresa Schreifels • Robert Kirchner • Kenneth Buchal • Carol Vierkant • Rufina Jagielski • Murphy June E Behm • Nat Serfass • Jo Ann Schmidt • Dale Schmidt • Wilma J Wright • Brian J Baden • Leanne Zost • John Francis



Past President Tom Dwyer receiving Award from President George Boatwright for serving as NARVRE National President from 2008-2022. L-R Phil Steward, Tom Dwyer, and George Boatwright.

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

The National Convention of 2024 in Kansas City was an outstanding success.

We would like to acknowledge all members of Unit 95 for hosting the 2024 National Convention and significantly contributing to this unmitigated achievement.

Unit 95 members volunteering at the Convention were:

Michael Steward, Cheryle Steward, Shari Miller, Dan Miller, Florence Thexton, Dirk Hutcheson, Sharon Hutcheson, John Thompson, Larry Borgmeyer, Andy Kinne, Linda Kinne, Ramona Caudle, Sam Caudle, Mary Puhr, Don Puhr, Karen Arney, Tim Arney, Kathy Murry, Don Murry, Tony Simonie and Sharon Lundgren.

Unit 95 is very appreciative of Alda Evans and Gary Doyle from Topeka Unit 140 who volunteered their assistance.

Through their efforts and extraordinary management of resources Unit 095 is donating a record \$9000 to our National Organization.

Additionally, I want to thank Jones and Granger for their general sponsorship of the Convention, TLC for providing Airport transportation and the bus tour for the Conventioneers, plus Worldwide Technology the books and handouts.

A summary of the seven Resolutions which were passed by the Delegates of the 2024 Convention are listed below:

Resolutions 1, 2, 3, and 7 basically cleans punctuation, grammar, and conformity in Articles IV, V, and VI, allows use of video conference to conduct business, provides Job Description for the National Director of Legislation, and reconfigures the National Legislative Committee.

Resolutions 4 and 6 changes in the Policy Procedure Manual - provides a GPS map illustrating the 8 Area Directors territories, allows phone or video calls, provides an Oath of Office which should be used to administer to all officers at Local, State, and National levels.

Resolution number 5 provides an inflationary adjustment of \$3.00 increase per membership category effective July 1, 2024

SINGLE UNIT MEMBER \$32.00
COUPLE UNIT MEMBERS \$39.00
801 AT-LARGE SINGLE MEMBER \$34.00

801 AT-LARGE COUPLE MEMBERS \$41.00

All the revisions will be reflected in updated bylaws and Policy and Procedures Manual which can be accessed through our website www.narvre.us July 1, 2024

In addition, all the forms such as Membership Reporting Form and Annual Audit

Form and PayPal information will be updated July 1, 2024

We also will be posting pictures taken of the 2024 convention on our website. Council Bluffs, won the bid as venue of the 2026 National Convention

On Tuesday after the conclusion of morning business and lunch, a bus load of 55 conventioneers toured Kansas City, seeing the WWI Memorial, Union Station, Royals Baseball and Chiefs Arrowhead Stadiums, and finishing at the Truman Library. The evening festivities ended with Dinner with the Keynote Speaker Bruce Halstead from Jones and Granger and awards given to Past President Tom Dwyer, Past Vice President Tony Padilla, Weldon Granger, Bruce Halstead, David Steward, Chair Worldwide Technology, Craig Villwock, TLC, Area 4 Director Gary Nelson, Asst Area 8 Director Niece Patterson, and Unit 056 St Louis President Norbert Shacklette

NEW Exclusive NARVRE Dental & Vision Plans Now Offered from TLC!

NARVRE is thrilled to continue our ongoing partnership with TLC Insurance Group (TLC). As a prominent national organization specializing in individual and group Medicare, TLC is unwavering in its commitment to providing exceptional service to the NARVRE membership. For more detailed information, simply visit our website www.narvre.us go to the home page and scroll down and click on the TLC NARVRE DENTAL AND VISION PLANS button or call 1-800-719-3751 and just mention NARVRE.

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

(National Legislative Director from page 2)

leadership finally understood that they would not have enough votes to pass their ill-advised spending bill and they were forced to take down that legislation from the House floor. We've converted many members of Congress with the facts and truth. Your calls to Capitol Hill help change minds and votes because constituents wield the greatest power in our struggles with Congress! And the best defense should be a combined effort on November 5th, when many of these incompetent office holders are hopefully replaced. They certainly do not deserve another payday in the US Congress. Here's a fact to remember...NARVRE does not endorse political candidates for public office. We could, but never have for over 8 decades. NARVRE is not telling the members who to vote for...period. We do have the responsibility to report on the facts and actions of lawmakers that threaten Railroad Retirement. As rail workers and retirees, we need to be seriously concerned with the forthcoming election. Consider...whether it be Amtrak, or the RRB, or the ability to pass a bipartisan amendment in 2001 that allows rail workers an option for a 60/30 early retirement, or the creation of the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust (NRRIT). How is all of this possible? The common denominator is our democracy, and we need to defeat those that seek to replace our democracy. We cannot afford to put more reckless and unqualified candidates in office ...we have too much to lose and too much to protect.

— **Gary Faley,**
National Legislative Director



Some 35 Amtrak attendees RVEA luncheon hosted by Jones Granger representative, Randall Brassell, at Glen Burnie, MD



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Railroad Medicare Doctor Receives Jail Time, To Pay Restitution

Every year, law enforcement and Medicare review contractors are building cases against providers and suppliers who bilk the Medicare Trust Fund for millions of dollars. Review contractors include the Railroad Medicare Benefit Integrity Unit, or BIU. The BIU plays a very important role of identifying bad actors and swindlers who either claim to provide services they do not perform (filing false claims), share beneficiary data with other providers who file either false claims or bill for services that are not medically reasonable and necessary. (These are examples. There are other methods fraudsters use).

The BIU finds these providers by conducting data analysis, receiving referrals from other areas at Railroad Medicare (such as the Appeals department), or by tips called in/written to us from beneficiaries like you who read their Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) and see charges for services that they believe were never performed or billing from a doctor they do not know.

When analyzing data, the BIU looks at a variety of schemes. Some schemes they have seen committed are when bad actors bill for:

- More hours of service than hours in a day
- Home Visit doctor appointments at a rate that is more frequent than expected.
- Beneficiaries who have received cataract surgery without having a prior diagnosis associated with cataract surgery or an eye exam within a two year period.
- A physician and a substitute physician

billing for the same services.

- Impossible locations (over 200 miles apart) on the same day.
- Medically unnecessary surgeries
- Removal of single lymph nodes, glands in the neck as if the patient needed very complex and higher paying procedures for cancer of the head and neck

Here is where Daniel J. Castro, M.D. comes into light. He recently pled guilty to making false statements and that he performed medically unnecessary surgeries, including sinus surgeries and the removal of lymph nodes and glands that were not necessary. As part of his sentencing agreement, Dr. Castro will pay \$1,972,293.74 in restitution and serve 5 years in jail for his crimes.

Dr. Castro happened to be a Railroad Medicare provider in Michigan; and while his crimes included local Medicare, they also included our jurisdiction.

Per U.S. Attorney Mark Totten, “The criminal activities of Dr. Daniel Castro – performing unnecessary sinus surgeries – are sickening. Dr. Castro brazenly trampled the core promise of the Hippocratic Oath – to act in the best interests of the patient – and did so for his own financial gain. Our health care system depends on patients being able to trust their medical providers at every step, especially when deciding to go under the knife. I’m grateful for the vast majority of providers who keep their promise, and we will do our very best to root out criminals like Dr. Castro who lie and steal

for their own advantage.” (Taken from the Department of Justice press release, dated 5/29/24. It can be found here: https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdmi/pr/2024_0529_Castro_D_Sentenced)

No doubt, there are other Dr. Castros out there. While the BIU conducts analysis and opens investigations, you play a most important role in this process. Please read your MSNs regularly. Look for suspicious services that you may not have received or from doctors and suppliers you do not know. Report any strange activity to us by calling our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, or for the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD at 877-566-3572. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7 p.m. ET.

— Jennifer Johnson
Palmetto, GBA



One of the many meals enjoyed by attendees of the 2024 Convention: Left to back, Gary Nelson, Roger Swanson, Phil and Shirley Steward, Yvonne Williams, Dan Lauzon, and Lori and Jeff Doerr. Right to back, Scott Steward, Gary Faley, Tony Padilla, Terry Genzen, George Boatwright, and Cheri and Ron Hylla.