



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

NARVRE National Office

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

A month ago I wrote in a column on the TPP, TPA and TAA (trade agreements). On June 24, Congress passed the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015. This bill allows the president to negotiate future deals. The Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) will be the last official piece of legislation to be voted on. There can be no amendments nor filibuster to be allowed so just an up or down vote.

Concerns by senior groups is that what the effects costs will be for seniors and Medicare

beneficiaries due to big Pharma demanding higher prescription drug prices. The TPP will allow drug companies to bypass U.S. laws and force the federal government to raise drug prices. Other concerns are what Medicare and Medicaid can do to control drug costs. Keep in mind there will be special legal rights for global corporations. What does the consumer get in all of this?

Here are the countries involved with TPP. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, Australia, Mexico, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Peru, China and Singapore. These countries cover 40% of the world economy. Many of these countries pay below living wages to their

employees and are American companies.

Medicare passed and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in July. The initial task force was established in the John F. Kennedy Administration and passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. Working people, seniors and the labor movement were the catalysts back then of pushing Medicare.

Senator Paul Douglas, D-IL on the floor of the Senate stated, “without the labor movement Medicare would not exist.” Sounds familiar in today’s political climate with the Affordable Care Act.

—Tom Dwyer, National President

From the National Legislative Director —

Congress is currently working to find agreement on appropriations bills for several federal agencies, as another lengthy August recess is close at hand. And a long term transportation bill doesn’t seem possible as they absolutely cannot agree on how to fund proposed legislation, so count on another extension (31 and counting). In the interim, we will take this time to remember that NARVRE requires an active membership to properly protect our retirement benefits and annuities. The importance of helping our own Members of Congress understand some basic facts on railroad retirement is paramount to the sole purpose and mission of NARVRE. Congress has an obligation to their rail constituents to familiarize themselves with our divergent retirement system authorized by the Railroad Retirement Act. They need to acknowledge that what they may hear from their colleagues in Congress regarding railroad retirement needs to be checked out, as past statements relative to the structure and funding of Railroad Retirement have been false and intentionally misleading. Unfortunately, there will always be offices in

Congress that need to be educated on some basic facts on Railroad Retirement. Even our own Representatives might need a reminder on the following information...

Railroad Retirement does not cost the American taxpayers a single penny. Railroad retirement benefits are paid with payroll taxes by railroad employers and railroad employees, and that same revenue pays for the overhead operations of the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Railroad retirement taxes have historically been higher than Social Security taxes, and help finance certain benefit payments over and above Social Security levels. Railroad retirement benefits are structured in a two-tier system. The Tier 1 benefit is roughly equivalent to Social Security benefits, yet they are not identical under the law. There have been several different types of Tier 1 benefits that are more generous than those under Social Security, including the ability to retire with full benefits at age 60 with 30 years of railroad service. The additional benefits are paid out of the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund, and maintained entirely by railroads and rail employees through payroll taxes. The Tier II retirement benefit, which is akin to a defined benefit private pension is fully funded by additional payroll taxes paid solely by the

railroads and their employees. And importantly, if the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund were to face a shortfall, the railroads are on the hook for higher taxes, and not the U.S. Treasury. That’s the law! Congress needs to understand there are specific laws governing Railroad Retirement. In 2001, Congress passed and Pres. G. W. Bush signed into law a bipartisan bill that authorized the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust (NR-RIT), as well as the 60/30 early retirement program. These dissimilar programs are both integral parts of the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act (RRSIA). The origin of these innovative ideas was developed through years of debate and negotiations between rail employers and rail labor. Every passing Congress should be aware that these programs have nothing to do with Social Security. Both Railroad Retirement and Social Security Administrations do indeed work together through financial interchange agreements, but elected officials must grasp the reality that Railroad Retirement is and will remain independent and separate from Social Security. Congressional offices should be encouraged to getting their questions answered from the experts at the RRB (1-877-772-5772).

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From the National Vice President —

Tremendous progress has been made in the promotion, preservation and protection of our Railroad Retirement Pension and in the healthcare benefits we receive. As always if it is not Social Security (Tier I of our Railroad Retirement), it is Medicare and Medicaid. Sixty-seven million citizens were on the verge of losing healthcare insurance. But once again the Supreme Court decided on the side of the American people rather than on side of the rich and powerful top one-percent who aside of not paying their fair share of taxes for these programs, they want to fix those problems on the backs of Seniors.

Because of the many e-mails to congress received from organized retiree organizations such NARVRE, we were able to stop Congress from using Medicare funding as the piggy-bank to fund the Trade Bill. However we have not rescued Medicare completely because although we were able to remove the \$950 million from the trade bill, we are still short in convincing the Administration and the Congress to not take an additional \$250 million that over the next ten years reduces funds that Medicare uses for patients for renal dialysis services for those with acute kidney injuries and other medical procedures not yet identified since one of the most controversial aspects of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement is it is secret from the public. But additionally, the trade bill gives Cart-Blanch to the pharmaceuticals. They will be given authority to regulate generic prescription drug prices which may result in seniors not being able to pay for their prescriptions and be left out with the choice of paying for prescriptions, the rent or the food they need. Senior Groups as NARVRE and their membership made all the difference in persuading congress to vote against the trade bill. The congress separated the TPP and the CAFTA after failing to pass the bill, so they came to an agreement to take the Medicare \$950 million from Medicare program to finance the Trade Agreement. President Tom Dwyer made his case for the Medicare issue on the Trade Bill in the July newsletter. Many NARVRE members may not be aware what this have to do with NARVRE, but those were the circumstances.

On another note: Area Directors and their Local Unit-Jurisdictions have to be congratulated for the great job they do to increase our membership. It is sometimes incredible how they have reached out in the quest to increase membership and establish new Units. G. G. Gonzales is an example of that success, established a new Unit in La Fayette, Louisiana in June and will be issues a Charter under Unit #026. Congratulations GG! Another movement in developing the Promotions of NARVRE is in Area one. Assistant Area Director Phil Steward with the assistance of our Past President Whitey Westphal and President Tom Dwyer have organized three different NARVRE informational meetings that look very promising to establishing new Units in Mobile Alabama on August 18, 2015, Birmingham Alabama on August 19, 2015 and Jasper, Alabama on August 19, 2015 and Cleveland, Mississippi on September 12, 2015. All is looking very promising.

Nationwide, Officers and Members met with numerous other Union Locals and at Regional Union Conferences. So, we continue to bring in new members as we strive to promote membership for units which slowly are diminishing for various reasons most notably age. We have been successful in these promotions, slowly but surely as the old saying of our times goes. One other example of a promotional meeting was in San Antonio, Texas. The Newspaper did not pick up our meeting so we had a low turnout. But, we were very successful in recruiting members as we promoted San Antonio Unit 163 thanks

to the efforts of Area 5 Director G.G. Gonzalez, and the officers of Unit 163 S/T Jim Shelton and LR Pete Holder who is also Assistant Area 5 Director. The very next day at the Regular meeting we had 8 new members with many more commitments. So, we had a minimum number of members show up to the NARVRE Informational Meeting. Although we only signed up eight new members, there are many that did not show up that got the information about NARVRE and about the existing NARVRE Unit 163 in San Antonio.

Report of Bob Bloomer Assistant Area 8 Director on June 24th Meeting in Ogden, Utah.

For years NARVRE membership in the State of Utah has been very low. It is an indication that we must do something to build up membership and a new units. But the problem has been finding someone to have a contact to help. Looking at our Utah membership roster we see only ten members listed and some cannot be contacted others are in a location to far from a railroad terminal. In the effort to see if we could get something going once again in Utah a contact was made with Mr. and Mrs. Babcock of Ogden, Utah a major railroad terminal. Thomas and Jeanne were contacted by phone and agreed to set up a meeting with as many rails as they could contact. As time went on Mr. Babcock reported that he located a meeting location and thought perhaps ten to fifteen would show up at the meeting. Assistant Area Director Gary Watkins went to work on finding a hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah for us but the prices were out of sight. Most of the bigger hotels close to down town and the Amtrak train station were too high per night. After Gary's exhaustive hours on the telephone to a number of hotels he finally found one which would accommodate our crazy schedule without it costing us two days and too much for the stay. They will allow us to come in around 3:00 AM on the 24th of June and we don't have to check out until 11:00 AM on the 25th of June. This would support us to return from our meeting in Ogden and have a dinner and be in a room until the train arrived Salt Lake City at 11:30 PM on the 24th. Gary was able to contact Vonna E. Ward, Network Manager of the Railroad Retirement Board in Salt Lake City and ask her to come to our meeting in Ogden. Vonna Ward agreed to attend and also pick us up at our hotel and drive us to Ogden and return. This saved us renting a car and was a terrific help to us and a benefit to those attending the meeting.



1. Gary Watkins sitting at the Amtrak station in Fresno waiting for Amtrak to take us to Salt Lake City and a meeting to get new membership and a new NARVRE unit started in Utah. 2. Gary Watkins and Vonna Ward, Network Manager of the Salt Lake city Railroad Retirement Board having lunch at our meeting location in Ogden. 3. Among the 6 people who did attend the meeting in Ogden were Mr. Russell J. Gale and Mrs. Charlene V. Gale who drove all the way from Orem, Utah. As a result of the information presented at the meeting they both joined NARVRE. Mr. and Mrs. Gale were the two people who were responsible for setting up the meeting

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We cannot forget the false statements as well as the threats we've heard over the years, which usually suggest to combine Railroad Retirement and Social Security. With the necessary assistance of many supporting groups from rail, labor and the RRB, we have quieted many of those ignorant and misleading voices over the years. There have been certain Republican Chairmen that claimed Railroad Retirement and Social Security agencies were performing the same work, which was absurd. Rep. Darrell Issa, while Chairman of the House Oversight & Government Reform made unsubstantiated statements more than once that Railroad Retirement should be eliminated and rolled into Social Security. In 2012, Chrm. Paul Ryan's House Budget Report proposed to conform our Tier 1 benefits to mimic those in Social Security, which he stated would save the U.S. Taxpayers \$2 billion over ten years. The RRB publicly rejected those claims and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) informed Congress and the media that Paul Ryan's financial accounting in his budget report would not save the taxpayers any money. Officials in high places should do their research. These things are all good to remember, and we will keep watch, of course.

— Gary M. Faley,
Legislative Director

From the National Secretary-Treasurer

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

TELEGRAPHERS BRASSPOUNDERS REUNION will be held in Bismarck, MO at the Railroad Depot October 8, 2015 at 10:30 AM for a day of fun friendship and lying about what really happened. Food is available at the adjacent restaurant afterwards.

2016 CONVENTION: Our National Convention will be held in St. Louis, Missouri on May 15, 16 and 17 at the Hilton Union Station. Registration mailings will be sent about September 1, 2015 to all units. We currently have a 10% discount rate with Amtrak for the convention. We look forward to seeing a delegate from each unit. Norbert Shacklette, President Unit #056.

The host Unit 056 will mail out information September 1, 2015, the room rates will be \$139.00 plus tax. The Hotel is easily accessible from St. Louis International Airport via MetroLink Light Rail, which will bring

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and contacting other rails were Mr. and Mrs. Babcock of Ogden, Utah. According to Mr. Babcock he has been a member of NARVRE for around 30 years and is willing to help us get things going.

An RRB informational conference was held in Parsippany, NJ on April 17 and Ken Kolberg, our Area 3 Director, attended the meeting to distribute NARVRE flyers, newsletters and general information about our organization. During the 4 1/2 hour meeting Ken received a good response from the approximate 50 attendees and was helpful in addressing concerns of the new and soon to be railroad retirees from Amtrak and New Jersey Transit. Since Ken has had a good working relationship in the past with Bryan Shortino, the District Manager and sponsor of the RRB meeting, he was able to meet and greet many of the attendees on a one-on-one basis and discuss the benefits of our organization. The plan now is to follow up with the attendees and move to sign them up with NARVRE.

Larry Fent, Delegate at the National meeting in California last year; Bruce Kelly, member of our NARVRE unit; and Margie Ingram, Treasurer Unit 30 Council Bluffs, IA. attended the RRB informational Meeting

in Omaha, Nebraska May 8, 2015. Margie contacted the RRB area manager Joe Gray from Denver and he invited them to attend and have a table near the registration table for us. The conference was held at Mahoney State Park near Omaha, Nebraska May 8, 2015. Joe Gray from Denver was there to facilitate the meeting and said he is a friend of Tom Dwyer and has been for the past 20 years. We set a table outside the meeting room entrance and greeted most of the attendees as they arrived. There were 95 people in attendance and many of them were spouses.

"We had a sign-up sheet, and about 20 people signed with their phone numbers. We will call each and invite them to a meeting. A number of the people signing our list were from Lincoln, Nebraska and asked about a meeting in Lincoln. We did determine there is an active club in Lincoln so will contact the president of that club and refer the Lincoln individuals to them. It was a productive morning and we appreciated the opportunity to be part of it," said Margie Ingram.

Many more successful meeting took place during the past few months that increase our NARVRE Membership. I am unable to feature all. But, thanks to all for the great work you do for NARVRE.

— Anthony (Tony) Padilla NARVRE
National Vice President

Attention: Check out the YouTube video on NARVRE FACEBOOK or our website <narvre.info>. It can be used to attract new members.

you within 2 blocks of the hotel, Amtrak and Greyhound Bus located 4 blocks away. Also St Louis is conveniently located on Interstate Hwy's 44, 55, 64, AND 70.

The National Office sent letters and elections forms for officers and delegate/alternates July 3 we are asking for each unit to do their elections earlier so that the Convention host Unit can do additional mailings with information about the Convention. Also will be helpful to the National Office in spreading our workload over a longer period of time instead of getting it all at once. Thank you.

AMTRAK PASS: Debra Young at CSX Phone 904-359-7673 EMAIL Debra.Young@csx.com (note there is an underscore (_) between her first and last name in this email.) Once she verifies a little information from Virginia in JAX with the Railroad Retirement Board they will then arrange to have a pass printed and mailed normally takes between 2 and 4 weeks, She said. They will need your railroad ID# or your SS# and mailing address. Please share this informa-

tion with other railroaders.... Good luck!

Unit #077 Treasurer, Carol Sincebaugh has collected 99% of her unit members' dues for 2015, thanks Carol we are very proud of your accomplishment.

Keep track of your interests.

The possibility of passing is always unexpected. No one knows for sure when it will happen. We pray for your long life expectancy. Have you designated a recipient of the \$2,000.00 death benefit from

Met Life? If you do not know, make a call to (800-310-7770. Ask for the paperwork if there has not been

A designation made of needs to be updated. This principal is in order for all other insurance policies you may have. Make sure the family knows where these policies are located and phone numbers to reach each company. From Ruth Teper, President Unit 019 Cleveland, OH.

Joyce A. Burton,
National Sec/Treas

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From Palmetto, GBA

Medicare's Open Payments Reporting

In 2013, we announced a new initiative that was part of the Affordable Care Act called 'Open Payments'. The goal of this program then and now is to increase public awareness and knowledge of the financial relationships between physicians/teaching hospitals and the manufacturers of drugs, biologicals, medical supplies, devices, and 'Group Purchasing Organizations', or GPOs. A GPO is a group of businesses that earn discounts from vendors based on their collective buying power.

Now that the program has been up and running for almost two years now, you can visit the Open Payments website at <http://www.cms.gov/openpayments/index.html> and look up a doctor, hospital or company and see if any reportable payments exist. In addition to viewing the data, you can also download the data to your computer.

If you search for a specific doctor, enter in their information (name, city and state are a good start) and if there is a record to display, you will see it at the bottom of the search webpage. Summary information for the year 2014 is provided. For my family physician, I could see several 'food and beverage' and 'education' payments that totaled approximately \$2,100 for the year.

It's important to note that financial payments or transfers of value do not necessarily mean a violation of law or an implication of fraud or abuse. This data merely reports financial relationships.

If you have questions about this initiative, or about your Railroad Medicare benefits, please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. Medicare information can also be found on our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me. We also encourage you to sign up for email updates. To do so, visit our website and click 'EMail Updates' on the top of the webpage to start the process.

We also encourage you to visit our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare.

— Jennifer Johnson