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National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

NARVRE National Office

509 W Reed St • Moberly, MO 65270

Phone: 660/269-8895 • Fax: 660/269-8896 • Toll Free: 1-800-551-2588

Email: NARVRE@gmail.com • WEBSITE: www.narvre.info

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

As I prepare to write this column we will be preparing to swear in a new president on January 20, 2017. It already seems like the campaign has been going on for two years with a list of candidates that

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seems to never end. The American electorate appears to be rallying behind non-establishment candidates with the rise of New York businessman Donald Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders I-VT. Who would think it in 2016? When you read this column the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary will already have been held. Many of the so-called

establishment candidates are lagging behind because of the frustration with Washington politics. Middle class voters feel left out and on many fronts such as the disparity between the wealthy and those trying to keep their heads above water.

No matter where our allegiances lay, we as Americans need to take part in the process to elect our next presi-

dent. We as seniors and retirees need to be aware of where the candidates stand on a variety of issues. If you live in a caucus state or one that has a primary we should do our patriotic duty and vote or attend a caucus of your choice.

There are many of us who are worried about world events, national security, the economy, environment, social security,

health care and Medicare to name a few. You also have to be aware of we have national elections where all 435 member of the House of Representatives are on the ballot along with 34 Senate seats and several governors. The next president will no doubt appoint at least two justices to the U.S. Supreme Court.

We in NARVRE worry about issues that directly affect us such as railroad retirement, transportation such as Amtrak funding, commuter rail and Medicare. Many defined benefit pension plans have gone by the wayside over the past thirty years and that worries us even more. So it is up to each and every one of us to take part in the process before us. If we complain about our government and don't partake in the process we have no one else to blame but ourselves when it comes to electing our leaders. Get involved.... stay involved!

—Tom Dwyer, National President

From the National Legislative Director —

It sometimes takes a mixture of a rabbit and a hat-trick in order to get enough votes to move a proposed bill in Congress. Legislative deadlines that threaten yearly funding can usually muster enough bipartisan support needed to pass a bill. But bills can be complicated by projections that look well into the future, if and when proposed funding is not clearly defined. Usually,

“...there are times when issues affecting dates and dead-lines will be fixed without everyone being on the same page.”

the smart staff workers that craft a final bill with the input from different committees are still able to send forth a detailed piece of legislation, get it passed, and the bill actually does what it proposes to do with minimal complaint. There are times, however, whereby bills are passed without specific items having been finalized, or the means to the end have not been etched in stone. Financing issues need to be cleared by bean-counters, lawyers, and Congress-

sional staffers who remain on the job working out the loose ends of just-passed legislation, in order to resolve any inherent problems, and to score the specifics in the bill. Scoring, to my knowledge, means something different in the back rooms of Congress, but it is a word used to refer to fixing a bill, usually to garner the needed revenue to appease the oversight from the Congressional Budget Office. And, there are times when issues affecting dates and dead-lines will be fixed without everyone being on the same page. That might be the case in the recently passed “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act”.

You will recall that a five year com-

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From the National Vice President —

As we get closer to our 40th Biennial National Convention to be held in St. Louis MO on May 15-17, our National Secretary Treasurer Joyce Burton has advised the officers of NARVRE that our 2016 Budget could be in a tight spot. President Tom Dwyer and I saw this as a dire deficit warning in the collection of Membership Dues for 2016, thereby we urge all Area Directors and officers in their respective Units to reach out to the Unit officers to make every attempt possible to personally call every members to remind them to bring up to date their 2016 NARVRE Dues. The proposed Budget for 2016 cannot be accomplished if our members do not renew. We have been in this situation in the past during a convention year and our officers have come through in petitioning to those that are delinquent in paying their dues to renew their membership. We hope our officers can come through this year as done in the past. Each unit must have-in-place a calling committee to make that personal call. When the Unit officer makes that call, it makes a difference. **“Looking at the budget for 2016 and being in a convention year, costs increase. The NST has estimated that as of December 31, 2015 a total of uncollected Dues of \$145,000.00 for 2016 are outstanding. We must make every effort to renew current members and their spouses as well as to reach out to new members,”** said President Thomas Dwyer. Railroad Retirees have enjoyed a good retirement earned from the hard work through the years in the Rail industry. NARVRE’s goal is to continue to promote, protect and preserve the Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity from congressional infringement that threatens to weaken our pension annuity. The only way to protect that pension, we must remain strong as a group. Our pension has been threatened thought out the years and you, our membership have been our weapon to fight and keep the Railroad Retirement Law harmless. **I AM NOT SURE IF IN THE PAST, WE HAVE ASKED FOR PERSONAL AND FREEWILL CONTRIBUTIONS ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS FOR THE NARVRE ORGANIZATION, BUT THIS IS THE TIME TO ASK FOR CONTRIBUTIONS.** This does not mean that we are in deficit spending to the point where we are in a serious financial situation. Individual contributions are not mandatory and are strictly a request as many organizations pursue to increase a stable goal. Many non-profit organizations such as NARVRE reach out to their memberships of an in-kind voluntary contribution if they so choose in addition to their yearly dues. No matter how large or small, your contribution is appreciated to keep our organization strong. We appreciate your consideration strictly on a volunteer basis with this appeal. If it is in your heart to make a personal contribution, please make a check to our Secretary Treasurer and indicate it is a Contribution. **I am making a contribution of \$20.00 for January to set the example. Again, any amount you contribute is appreciated.**

— Anthony (Tony) Padilla NARVRE National Vice President

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Each month we receive notices of our members passing and each and every one of them are equally important to our NARVRE family and are appreciated for their fellowship and membership.

Retraction of in memory of Gerald (Snuffy) Cress his name was spelled incorrectly in the January issue. We regret this error.

A dear member of Unit # 165 Marjorie Wisdom, wife of our Moberly, MO Unit V-P and Past National Vice President George Wisdom, passed away on Friday morning after short stay in hospital. We also have received notice that R.M. Bagerow 1st division USS Yorktown passed away June 30, 2015. Kenny Rogers activist member of Unit 065 Roseville/Sacramento, CA passed December 21, 2015.

All Units that have not been collecting dues for 2016, I urge you to send out notices to your membership and get this important job completed. Members that have not renewed will lose their newsletter soon.

Please note for future reference that dues collection starts each fall after you receive the renewal packet from the National Office. Use the roster we send out with each packet to check on renewals for all of your members and note the date is January 1, deadline for turning the Per capita for those renewal into the National Office. Don’t forget the Audit of 2015 and the epostcard 990N can be accomplished any day now if you do not have access to a computer, please call the National Office so we can get this important duty completed.

I will soon be working on a new Directory and Workbook for the upcoming convention, credentials will be sent to all folks attending as officer, delegate, alternate delegate or committee member. Tom Dwyer is working on a full slate of speakers for our Sunday afternoon meeting.

If you have questions about the Convention program booklet ad, you can call Norbert Shacklette, President of the Host Unit 056 (314-609-8981). Or Candy Stewart about registration when entering the convention.

We have consistently been receiving new membership through the website with PayPal, many folks like the convenience of using a credit card to pay their dues.

We are looking forward to chartering several new units: Unit 049 Ogden, UT Unit 050 Reno, NV, Unit 073 Mobile, AL and Unit 072 Jasper, AL.

Area 1 Directorship has a new appointment of James (Phil) Steward to this new position. He has been

Working with the Mobile and Jasper, AL officers to get these two units up and running. Congratulation on your appointment to a very important area, with many contacts for prospective members. Phil is a member of the Memphis, TN Unit as President and lives in Olive Branch, MS.

— Joyce A. Burton,
National Sec/Treas

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

prehensive transportation bill (FAST Act) was passed by a bipartisan House & Senate conference vote and became law in the last legislative months of 2015. One important item in this transportation legislation is the innovated speed-control system, and the implementation of positive train control (PTC). This life-saving technology was first mandated to be completely installed on specific rail lines by December 31, 2015, but the freight rail industry (and some commuter rail) appealed to Congress claiming they could not meet that deadline for a whole host of viable reasons. Further, the industry threatened to stop operations on freight lines that were not PTC ready and FRA compliant, in order to avoid penalties for violating federal law. Congress eventually agreed with that request for a three-year delay, extending the new deadline to December 31st of 2018. Some members of Congress are now saying that this deadline is premature, as the true intent of the extended deadline was to guarantee an additional two years, for a full five year extension. It seems that new language got tucked into the 2000 pages of this transportation law that could effectively extend the deadline until the end of 2020. However, Chief Administrator Sarah Feinberg has informed industry leaders that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) expects them to follow the requirements for installing PTC by the initially extended deadline (3 years) or face civil penalties starting at \$5000 a day. The NY Times and other media reported that Congress had earlier considered pleas from freight and commuter rail lobbyists for a full five-year extension, but that request was roundly criticized after the Amtrak Philadelphia crash of last May, which killed eight and injured more than 200 people. There are reports that while the original language in the bill was for a three-year extension, it also had an option for requesting two more additional years, but only if a railroad had submitted working plans to complete the project by Dec. 31, 2018. More statements from Congress have

now been released stating that the FRA had “misinterpreted” the lawmakers intent and the language in the law was a ‘clarification’ that essentially gave the rail industry what critics called a blanket extension-until the end of 2020-to fully install the PTC technology. Other lawmakers from the Northeast have now stated that the language in the bill made the 2018 deadline a sham. At this point, while the American Association of Railroads (AAR) has been silent, they have apparently agreed with the FRA that the industry’s focus should be to get PTC installed and working by Dec. 31, 2018. Meanwhile, Amtrak has announced that the positive train control system has been implemented and is operational on all of the tracks they own between Washington and New York. As a reminder, the installation of PTC was an unfunded mandate from earlier 2008 legislation but the FY16 Omnibus bill appropriated specific funds as a Railroad Safety Grant.

Unlike the recently passed FAST Act’s five-year authorization bill, the Omnibus appropriations bill provides specific funding for FY16. Congress has been unable to pass the annual federal agency funding bills as separate entities, so

they were all packaged together in one government-wide omnibus spending bill. For FY16 transportation funding, the omnibus bill includes the FAST Act FY16 authorized level for all programs funded through the Highway Trust Fund. However, FAST Act programs funded with General Funds did not fare as well. The Omnibus bill discarded the well intentioned agreements of the FAST Act bill and appropriated Amtrak funding at current levels rather than the higher FAST Act level. Also, three new FAST Act discretionary passenger rail grants were not funded at all (what you see in Oct is not what you get in Dec.) The appropriated funds for PTC are also well below the levels agreed to in the FAST Act. This office has received many inquiries and opinions on the installation and affect of PTC, and we will continue to follow this issue as updates are released by the FRA and the industry. Also, moving forward, we will be encouraging members to stay involved with the political process and vote in this general election year. As railroad retirees, we need to keep watch over any proposals that may serve to threaten that which we have earned and what we have paid for during our working years.

— Gary Faley, Legislative Director



At the monthly #043 NARVRE meeting, Conneaut, Ohio, January 11, 2016, they celebrated their 4-year anniversary with cake and coffee at the Conneaut Eagles Club #408. Unit #043 NARVRE officers left to right: President, Jon Brady; Second Vice President, George Dixon; Communications Officer, David M. Harlacher; and Secretary/Treasurer, Ralph Mongenel.

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National President
Thomas Dwyer
11304 Norway St. NW
Coon Rapids MN 55448-3269
763-757-1501 FAX 763-767-5794
tdwyertcu@aol.com

National Vice President
Anthony "Tony" Padilla
303 Black Cap Run
Buda, TX 78610-4978
Home: 512-523-8465
Cell: 512-552-8703
tonypadillatcuam@austin.rr.com

National Secretary-Treasurer
Joyce A. Burton
509 W Reed St
Moberly, MO 65270
660-269-8895
narvre@gmail.com

National Legislative Director
Gary M Faley
6324 Calkins Road
Flint, MI 48532-3207
810-733-7256
faleyg@comcast.net

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
AND VETERAN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES, INC.
509 W REED ST
Moberly, MO 65270
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From Palmetto, GBA

Palmetto Launches Beneficiary Website Redesign

On December 5, 2015, Palmetto GBA/Railroad Medicare launched our redesigned beneficiary website. The website address remains the same: www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/ME.

Some changes to, and highlights of, the site:

1. You can easily increase the font/type size so that it's easier to read on your computer screen. Just click on any article and see the smaller boxes under the title. To increase, click on the 'aA' font box. To decrease, select the 'Aa' box.
2. Our homepage is now called the 'Railroad Beneficiaries Hub'. Clicking on the Railroad Beneficiaries Hub button on the top of any page will return you to the Hub homepage.
3. We have a dedicated 'News' section on the bottom of the homepage.
4. We have static notification boxes that remove our former rotating banners. These boxes highlight important information on our website.
5. The site now has a prominent 'Top Links' section, which uses vivid color to guide you to this information.
 - If you click on the 'View all Topics' link, it brings up an expandable listing of the topics and subtopics available on the site.
6. A colorful 'Forms/Tools' section lists the top tools.
 - Clicking on 'View all Tools' brings up a list of links to all the tools available on the site.
7. A new 'Was this article helpful?' feature allows visitors

to tell us how useful an article was to them. Links to the Most Helpful Articles are available on our homepage.

8. We also gave the site the ability to be 'condensed', allowing a display that can be viewed on different screen sizes or mobile devices.

If you can't find what you are looking for on our newly redesigned website, we have a link to a handy 'Site Map' at the bottom of the page. If you don't want to use the Site Map, you can call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, and our Customer Service Advocates can assist you in finding what you are looking for.

In addition to our website redesign, we invite you to stay connected to us through Facebook or email updates. Links to those are found on the right-hand side of the main webpage.

Our Facebook page, and our email updates, are places that we notify registrants and page viewers of new articles we have posted to the website. The address to the Facebook page is www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare. Facebook is also a great way you can give us feedback on what article topics you would like us to write about in this monthly newsletter.

To sign up for email updates, click on the 'Listserves' link, which shows in the top black toolbar on every page.

We hope you like our new look and how it makes our website easy to use and easy to find what you are looking for. Give it a try today!

— Jennifer Johnson