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National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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NARVRE National Office
Phone Toll Free: 1-800-551-2588

6819 Crumpler Blvd, Suite 200 • Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940

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

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

March 2017

VOL. 31 NO. 03

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

It is time to bring to your attention that May 2018 is not that far away. That is when the 41st National Convention of NARVRE will be gaveled in at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The convention will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn, 2702 Mid America Drive, Council Bluffs, IA 51501 Telephone 1-(866) 221-8591. This is a casino hotel. The Host Unit is Unit 30 of Council Bluffs.

As in the past it is never too early to make your plans to send a delegate to the convention. By sending a delegate your membership is represented and you have the opportunity to participate in the business meeting as well as the camaraderie amongst the delegates and visitors who attend.

There are several ways to raise the funds to send a delegate. Many Units have a “Convention Fund” where members can donate every meeting or have monthly drawings to help alleviate the cost of the delegate. It is

your convention so please consider this fall when you have elections to not just to elect a delegate but to send one to the convention. Many Units elect a delegate but don't participate.

We have not made a request in recent months to make a voluntary contribution to NARVREPAC. Because NARVRE is a 501c4 under the IRS code we can raise money for candidates who support our issues in Congress when we established a Political Action Committee (PAC) back in 2008. All contributions must be voluntary and no monies can be derived from Unit treasuries or have members bundle (pass the hat) to make a contribution. A check addressed to NARVREPAC can be submitted for any amount and remitted to the National Secretary Treasurer's office at 6819 Crumpler Blvd, #200, Olive Branch, MS 38654-1946. Thank you for your consideration.

— Tom Dwyer, National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

In order to update some old issues, the following will hopefully be in order. If it sounds familiar, it's probably due to you being on our mailing lists, and receiving periodic updates or news via email. Please keep in mind that the majority of our membership does not receive NARVRE information outside of this Newsletter. For some, that's a choice they make, but for many, they are not connected to the internet for a variety of reasons. Indeed, this office still receives hand-written letters from members that need an answer or a question on something they're read related to their retirement or Medicare. I should point out that the majority of questions related to personal questions on retirement issues are normally answered by the Office of the President, Tom Dwyer, whose experience and knowledge is a viable asset for all NARVRE members. This office also has a diminishing number of home addresses for some active members (but no computer access) that want to be notified if needed to contact Congress. I mention this regarding our overall membership, and the fact that we

have many members who have no choice and rely on information within the boundaries of NARVRE's Newsletter. One update is on Amtrak's former Sunset Limited passenger train route that previously ran through the southern states along the Gulf Coast. The endeavor to reinstate this train service from LA to FL has continually garnered more support from the traveling public but also from the local communities that look forward to an increase in commerce and new jobs from a new and modern Amtrak route. We should be reminded that early Senate legislation was directed by the unlikely partnership of Republican Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) and Democrat Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ), who encouraged the support of fellow Senate members, but also, the business leaders along the Gulf Coast. It was their bipartisan persuasion that prompted the necessary funding for a study group that eventually provided the initial monies for the restoration of this train service. Now, all attention is on the Trump Administration and their commitment to a massive national infrastructure plan which must concur with existing legislation that includes

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From the National Vice President —



March is a special time to appeal to you to continue to be vigilant to making sure our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity continues to survive. NARVRE's goal is to Promote, Preserve, and Protect our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity. While there have been many specific threats to our earned benefits, let us not panic. Legislative Director Gary Faley will let you

know if we need to do any type of action to preserve, protect and defend our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuities.

March and the upcoming months are the most critical times for reminding our membership to bringing up to date our NARVRE Membership dues.

Once again we are appealing to the all the National Officers, Area Directors and all officers of the local NARVRE Units to set up calling committees to remind our members that is time to renew their 2017 Dues.

Our Secretary Treasurer Philip Steward has already sent reminders to all members of the at-large NARVRE Unit 800. As you know, this is a very costly but necessary mission and undertaking assignment to achieving our financial goal. This is a good time to also make an appeal to all members and officers of all Units about making Voluntary Contributions to NARVRE to attain financial soundness and continued endurance.

Last year, in February of 2016, we started this program and the units came through to making our treasury viable. We began to recognize contributors in our NARVE newsletter with the name of every NARVRE Unit or member who contributed. Many of contributions were dedications and memorials to our past members.

The Moberly unit has committed to contribute \$500.00 this year and we have received a check. We are hoping that units can match or exceed this amount.

I personally commit to contributing \$50.00 this year and hope there are others who can make similar commitments. Some Area Directors have committed to do the same as a way to encourage others.

Contributions will be categorized as a Friend for \$50.00, Silver \$100.00, Gold \$200.00, Platinum 500.00, and Diamond \$1000.00 with your photo in the NARVRE Newsletter. All contributors will be recognized. These are all voluntary contributions above your normal NARVRE Membership Dues. No matter how large or small, your contribution is appreciated to keep our organization strong.

Brothers and Sisters, if you have not seen the Donate Button on our NARVRE website go to it and CLICK -- <http://www.narvre.info/joinpay-dues.html> Look for the DONATE BUTTON.

The Cleburne NARVRE Unit 155 took a private tour of the Cleburne Railroad Museum. Mark Banton is the Chairman of the Advisory Board Unit 155 in the photo of their January 19, 2017 meeting. Cleburne is one of the most active units in Texas. George Appleby at the

end of the photo has been instrumental promoting the establishment of a NARVRE Unit in Fort Worth and has been at several meetings in Fort Worth to revive the unit there. We have not had enough members in Fort Worth to start up the Unit. Members on the Photo from the left are: Photo (#1) Eugene Brawner - Unit 155 VP, Gary Hutson, M.A. Collins, Tommy Johnson, R.E. Robertson, Mark Banton - Unit 155 President, and George Appleby. Photo (#2) Tony Padilla NARVRE NVP and George Appleby at our Cleburne Meeting on November 17, 2016.

— *Anthony (Tony) Padilla NARVRE National Vice President*



Members on the Photo from the left are: Eugene Brawner - Unit 155 VP, Gary Hutson, M.A. Collins, Tommy Johnson, R.E. Robertson, Mark Banton - Unit 155 President, and George Appleby.



Tony Padilla NARVRE NVP and George Appleby at our Cleburne Meeting on November 17, 2016.



Special Recognition to Unit 165 Moberly Missouri

— **A contribution of \$500.00!** This is the home Unit of Former National Secretary-Treasurer, Joyce Burton; Unit President, Richard Duley; Secretary, Jane Akers; Treasurer, Sue Fennel; and Legislative Representative, George Wisdom

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

freight and rail passenger trains. And this Gulf Coast project will present itself as a central part of any new funding for passenger train routes. Latest reports show that more local Republican officials as well as GOP members of Congress have now signed onto this project which will serve to support new legislation this year. However, there is the worry that the needed momentum may be side-lined by the attention to other major issues like an overdue tax reform bill and finally agreeing on the GOP's obsession to repeal Obamacare. With regard to the financing of this important project, it will be important for this movement to latch onto the language of last year's bipartisan FAST ACT (Fixing America's Surface Transportation), which laid the groundwork for that bipartisan transportation package. This legislation already provides for a number of incremental rail investments which is the opening for other rail projects like the Gulf Coast run to advance through the Congress if not this year, then in FY2018. Importantly, the new President recently made comment on the obvious lack of higher speed rail in a meeting with airline executives. **The quote from the President, according to "The Hill" follows..."You go to China, you go to Japan, they have fast trains all over the place", "I don't want to compete with your business, but we don't have one fast train".** CA constituents should remind Rep. Jeff Denham (R-CA-10th CD), Chair of the House SubComm on Railroads, that he should take these words seriously, rather than spend his time trying to derail the CalTrain Electrification project with delay tactics meant to stop all important rail progress in California. We will keep watch on this issue, as well as any Amtrak projects and the rail workers paying into railroad retirement.

In case you missed it, we have been following reports that the conservative and right-wing Heritage Foundation had mentioned railroad retirement in their 2017

fund-raising letter which outlines issues they're currently following as a powerful lobbying group in D.C. NARVRE took notice of this letter, and this office contacted Heritage asking for an explanation to such an alarming and offensive inclusion of our private retirement system. We did not receive a reply to any of our calls or emails, and we put the letter up on our website, as this was gaining ground throughout our association. Earlier this week, we received information from a creditable source that said Heritage denied writing anything on RR, as that is not an issue with them. Heritage also stated that their fund-raising letter did not even mention RR and that the information was not accurate. The final word was that while it is confusing, the source that spoke with Heritage said he takes them at their word, and doesn't believe they will be coming after our retirement program. He then promised to stay

in touch with Heritage and their allies, and promised to alert us immediately if anything changed. While that is from a trusted person of character from within the railroad industry, we will remain vigilant in our mission to protect our railroad retirement system. In closing on the updates, the last report on the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust (NRRIT) ending 9/30/16 was another good report from our investment managers. The Trust-managed assets and RRB assets held in reserve now totals \$26.5 billion. That is an increase of \$0.6 billion since the previous Quarterly Report ending June 30, 2016. More financial information is always available on the RRB website (www.rrb.gov). Outside of the downward hit everyone took back in 2008-09, NRRIT has done remarkably well for all of its investors and annuitants.

— Gary Faley,
National Legislative Director

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

The Governing Board in February 2017 voted to immediately suspend offering Lifetime Memberships for individuals and couples until the matter is resolved at the 2018 National Convention in Council Bluffs, IA.

The fact is, Lifetime Memberships are an unfunded liability and not economically sustainable. Current Lifetime Members are not affected by this decision.

Please remember unpaid membership dues are delinquent as of February 28. Narvre can no longer afford to mail the National Newsletter to members who are not current. Reminder post cards were mailed on February 22 to over 700 members; so, if you have not re-

newed for 2017 please do so soon as possible. As my colleagues have warned, we are facing challenging times ahead.

Attention all unit officers: the IRS form 990n returns will be completed by our corporate accountant for a discounted fee of \$8.00 for those who desire to take advantage of this service.

We have made significant progress with regard to updating our new database. New reports have become available and they are making it easier to statically track membership trends. For example: our New Member Report indicates 412 in 2016 and 97 so far in 2017.

— James (Phil) Steward,
National Secretary/Treasurer

What Is Going On

NARVRE Unit 60, Fresno CA, Guest speaker Rail Labor Trustee, William Walpert of the National Railroad Retirement Trust NRRIT Fund. He will speak on Saturday, April 1, 2017 at 1:00PM at the River Park Bible Church, 7500 Fresno. RSVP to Bob Bloomer at 559-438-8121 or email at hapyhog@aol.com

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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
James (Phil) Steward
6819 Crumpler Blvd, Ste 200
Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940
1-800-551-2588
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.
6819 Crumpler Blvd, Ste 200
Olive Branch, MS 38654-1940
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From Palmetto, GBA

In Response to the "Medicare at Age 76" Email: Part 2

Last month we discussed an inquiry from a member who had received an email entitled: "*Medicare at Age 74: A MUST READ*". In this email, several allegations were made regarding Medicare coverage. This article addresses the last issues listed in the email.

Claim: Cancer hospitals will ration care according to the patient's age.

Answer: FALSE. Medicare does not have an age limit when it comes to receiving medically necessary services.

Claim: The government mandates advance-care planning consultations. Those on Social Security will be required to attend an "end-of-life planning" seminar every five years.

Answer: FALSE. Medicare does not require 'end of life planning'.

You can speak to your health care provider about advanced planning directives, so that your wishes are known in the event you are not able to speak for yourself. This voluntary Advance Care Planning is a part of the Yearly "Wellness" visit and is a covered Medicare benefit, but you are not required to have this service.

As always, if you have questions about your Railroad Medicare coverage, you can call 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. We encourage you to visit our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare and our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR.Me.

— Jennifer Johnson

Our Contributions:

Unit 165 Moberly Missouri
Virginia Webb
Mark and Kathie Borleske
Terry and Susan Hurst
Anthony Domingos
Robert Andrews
Jeanne Domingue
Bill and Virginia Ratliff
Janice Thomas
Doris J Cochrane

In Memoriam...

Joseph Yankosky
Frank Sutton
Violet Lind
Barbara Pries
Delmar Gifford
Marion Lee of Boone IA
Delores Souba
Alan Drenckhahn
Margaret Gates
Frank Mead
Walter Watland
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