

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.



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Published ten times a year
Cost – Membership in a Unit or Membership-at-Large



NARVRE NEWSLETTER

May-June 2018

VOL. 32 NO. 05

FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

The 41st NARVRE National Convention held in Council Bluffs, IA, was a success in many ways. First of all Host Unit 30 of Council Bluffs was superb in their hosting the convention at the Hilton Garden Inn. Hats off to the Host Committee led by Royce and Marjorie Ingram and Orville and Judy McGee. Co-Chair Pam Fogle, Brian Bernhardt, Debra Bernhardt, John Billingsley, Margaret Billingsley, Ed Collier, Sandy Collier, Ron Doughman, Larry Fent, Darla Fent, Ray Miller, Peg Miller, Gary Moller, Joan Newbill, Bill Phillips, Sharon Phillips and Eileen Taylor. This group was well organized and at the top of their game.

Thanks to the vendors Mark Thomson (RRB); Jennifer Johnson (Palmetto GBA); Angela Pulekines, United Health Care (UHC) and James Bosley, Dean Wilde Agency, Inc. Speakers John Risch, SMART/UTU National Legislative Director; Mark Hibbs, Hibbs Tax Service; Will Moody Jr., Moody Law Firm and NARVRE Host;

Scott Steward, Facebook; Morris Heath, Media Campaign and Lynn Duncan, Legal Shield/Identity Shield.

Our sincere thanks to the Rev. Dianna Northcutt and the Ladies Quartet “Witness.” Their participation was most appreciated! Our thanks to Past National Vice President George Wisdom for his swearing in of the newly elected officers.

No convention is successful without the support of the delegates, spouses and guests who attended. We hope you enjoyed yourself while in Council Bluffs. Looking forward to 2020 the convention bid went to Oakland, CA as the 42nd Biennial Convention Host. Congratulations to Unit 61.

It is with sadness with the conclusion of our convention we were notified of the passing of Buford “Butch” Hunter, Assistant Area 8 Director and Delegate from Unit 48, Sun City AZ. He passed away on May 25th in Minnesota where he has family. Our condolences to the Hunter family.

Tom Dwyer, National President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Address to the 41st Biennial Convention:

Over the last two years, NARVRE has been successfully involved in obtaining federal appropriations for Amtrak, and also, our own allocations for the Railroad Retirement Board Agency.

While the appropriations for 2018 are an improvement, RRB computers are outdated and they are experiencing the continual erosion of the necessary abilities to protect and maintain data. The RRB agency is facing serious problems with safeguarding information, and they are vulnerable to cyber-security threats.

An increase in FY19 is necessary to process benefits and payments to all railroad retirees. The needs are significant to modernize and implement 21st Century protection, and Congress should know the RRB is under-staffed, especially out in the field offices, and that will directly affect their constituents back home in their Districts. All members must understand that this is a priority for NARVRE... and our next call to action will be a call for “all hands on deck”.

In the current session of the 115th Congress, we are experiencing additional votes in supporting Amtrak. The American people continue to poll in high favorable margins in their support of Amtrak, and they also favor an increase in federal subsidies for passenger train service. Ridership continues to grow, but Amtrak has a new CEO, Richard Anderson, who comes from the airline industry, and his priorities are very different and not pertinent to the Amtrak national train network.

He has ignored the national train service law enacted in Congress, and he proposes to eliminate congressionally supported long-distance trains after he diminishes Food & Beverage service.

While citing statistics on certain LD trains, he was quick to point out older stats on F&B service, but ignored stats that indicate improved food service and hot meals are a big part of overnight train travel (which sell tickets).

Mr. Anderson says he will build “corridors”, but he has not given the details of a plan, or how trains will operate under the existing national passenger train law. He should look to the detailed plans of the bipartisan Fast Act bill, which passed with a bipartisan vote in Congress in 2015.

NARVRE worked for passage of the Fast Act because it increased funding for Amtrak, has new protections for Amtrak employees working in Food & Beverage, and developed grant dollars with specific investments for passenger rail. The bipartisan Fast Act mandates an increase in funding for both the NEC and the national network which supports existing train routes across 46 states. We will keep you posted on plans to action, because this new leadership at Amtrak is threatening the whole system, and lots of employees, to be sure.

This is surely the time to think of the November elections. Importantly, the White House, and the House & Senate are all currently held by the Republican Majority. The GOP therefore chair all committees, and they control what comes forth from their committees with a majority of their committee members. There is no balance in the current Congress. The Congress needs a return to regular order, whereby both

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From the National Vice President —



NARVRE Area 5 photos of Delegates attending (Top L-R): Gonzalo G. Gonzalez, Jr Area 5 Director AR-LA-NM-OK-TX; John Higdon President Unit 45 Oklahoma, OK; Dennis Taylor Assistant Area 5 Director Unit 187 Houston, TX; Ernesto Mendoza President of Unit 37 El Paso, TX; (Bottom L-R) Anthony (Tony) Padilla National Vice President and Member of Unit 163 San Antonio, TX; Christian Fletcher President of Unit 28 Shreveport, LA; Eddie Posas and Spouse J.S. Posas Delegate of Unit 163 San Antonio, TX; Mrs. Yoshie Taylor; Mrs. G.G. Gonzalez; Mrs. Carmen Mendoza.

The 41st NARVRE Convention opened May 21st by President Tom Dwyer. Convention was hosted by Unit 30 of Council Bluffs. The colors were posted by the Air Force color guard accompanied by the Local Air Force Band. A welcome was given by Matt Walsh Mayor of Council Bluffs. The convention was comprised of 4 officers, 5 area directors and 54 delegates for a total of 63, representing 15,277 members. The 4 officers opened with their reports to the convention. Accountant Mark Hibbs addressed the convention concerning our financial status.

John Reisch, UTU Smart Legislative Representative outlined problems in Washington facing Railroad retirees. Health Care, spending bill and tax cuts could make Congress look at cutting entitlements to help pay for the increases in spending. He also talked about Amtrak being privatized. Amtrak has roughly 20,000 employees paying into RR Retirement. Automation being made in the rail industry is another issue. Resolutions 1 through 5 were accepted by the Convention. Resolution 3 dealt with dues increase. After much discussion it was agreed to raise dues \$10.00. NARVRE has been in deficit spending and a raise was needed to make us more viable in the future. A memorial service was conducted for the 527 deceased members since the 2016 Convention. The election of officers was conducted and since there was no opposition, all were elected by acclamation --President Tom Dwyer, Vice President Tony Padilla, Secretary-Treasurer Phil Steward and Legislative Director Gary Faley. Area Directors for Areas 2, 4, 6, and 8 were elected for 4 year terms. The Convention closed with a banquet. Key-

note speaker was Mark Thomson from the RR Retirement Board. He talked about the status of the board and the operation. They are currently shorthanded and need more employees. The Railroad retirement fund is very solvent and should sustain itself in the future. The officers were installed. It was announced that the next Convention will be held in Oakland, California.

The 41st Biannual Convention of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc., (NARVRE) was a remarkable and innovating success. I am thankful to the Convention Chair Marjorie Ingram and to the host committee of Unit 30 for the professional performance to bring the convention to be one of the best conventions we have had.

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



Pictured above is 94 year old Susie Blessing who resides in the Philadelphia PA area like thousands of loyal member spouses across the country NARVRE fights to protect RRB benefits.

CORRECTION



Unit 59, Boone, IA, during their most recent meeting.



Roger Sogard on his 91st Birthday at the March 8th 2018 meeting of Unit 59.

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.

Unit 56 \$350 President Norbert Shacklette, Treasurer Cameron Cook, Secretary Kathleen Cook, Legislative Rep Jim Queathem • E. V. Silverman Unit 60 in Memory of Past Area 8 Director Bob Bloomer and Past President Whitey Westphal • Dorothy Hinz • David Corless • Victor H Sunquist Jr • Wayne & Nadine Haskamp • Mary Windels • William Jackson • Susan Krist • Jacqueline Watson • Alfred Flores

Memorials

Dorothy A Acciari
Ann M Bursch
Jairus "Jerry" H Wegener
Helen B Reinhardt
Earl Dodd
Richard J Potvin
Carl Malonee,
former BNSF trainmaster
Butch Hunter,
Assistant Director Area 4
Richard Potvin

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

parties have a voice for their constituents, and accordingly, reach consensus on legislative matters affecting the American people. There is no discourse nor dialog in our committees in Congress. Don't take my word for this, simply google Senator John McCain's article in the WA Post (August 2017), on Congress and how it was meant to govern with compromise, and I quote, "it requires pragmatic problem-solving from even the most passionate partisans. It relies on compromise between opposing sides to protect the interests we share. We can fight like hell for our ideas to prevail. But, we have to respect each other or at least respect the fact the we need each other".

Both parties must bear responsibility for an ineffective Congress that will not work

together as they place party above country. However, we know as fact, the Republican party has threatened the existence of Amtrak in their party platforms at their conventions. The truth is in their history... in 2012, Presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan declared their own war on Amtrak. We also know that the Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, has threatened the existence of the current structure of Medicare for years. We all know that it was Paul Ryan that chaired the 2012 Budget committee that called for legislation to conform railroad retirement Tier 1 benefits, so that our benefits would equal those of Social Security, with an estimated savings to taxpayers of \$2 billion dollars over 10 years.

We know this inaccurate because railroad retirement is funded by railway employees and railroads and not the taxpayer.

Had it not been for the protection of the U.S. Senate in 2012, this targeted attack could have led to the elimination of occupational disability and the 60/30 early retirement. We knew the Senate Democrats would not take this proposal up for consideration... it stopped there in that chamber.

We know we must protect our railroad retirement from all possible harm. We need to elect people that will work for us, and not against us. We want them to respect our work on the railroads, and we want them to protect the promise and delivery of our earned benefits. We have an opportunity this year to put some balance into the legislative branch of Government... certainly in the House of Representatives. There is currently no balance. Time is upon us now...in 2018.

— Gary Faley,
National Legislative Director

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Our 41st NARVRE convention in Council Bluffs, IA was an outstanding success. Our theme for the 41st convention was Fix It. We have received significant positive feedback from those who attended our convention. Unit 30, headed by Unit President Orval Mc Ghee and Convention Chair Marjorie Ingram as well as their committee, did a masterful job hosting a great event. I commend Ray Miller, our official photographer and Dick Elliott who also recorded and took pictures. In the next issue, we will highlight the approved resolutions, business plan and a word from the members of the Convention host unit.

During the proceedings our Corporate Accountant, Mark Hibbs, examined and explained the past, current, and future prospective financial position of NARVRE and the consequences if action was not taken. The Delegates overwhelmingly responded to intervene and increased yearly rates which average \$0.83 per month. This rate increase will become effective July 1, 2018. See chart. Additionally, multiple year discounts and lifetime memberships will be eliminated. Those who previously purchased memberships in these categories will not be



affected until time has expired on the membership purchased.

Moving forward, we will continue cutting costs and expenses as those opportunities become available. The number of members converting from receiving a paper copy of our newsletter to receiving it via email increased from 450 to over 850. This significantly reduces our monthly mailing expenses.

Classes were conducted at the convention for delegates and any member interested in employing Social Media to increase membership. Our National Officers' aim is to increase NARVRE's national footprint by using social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as well as our new website www.NARVRE.us. Soon webinars will be offered to units that seek assistance applying social media in their recruiting efforts.

In addition to utilizing social media, our organization is in the process of seeking exposure in other ways. With the closing of multiple units across the country and the advancing age of our membership, our numbers are slowly dwindling. The current ways of soliciting members are on longer as effective as they once were. Some older members are unable to do the "footwork

soliciting members and have been retired so long our contemporaries don't know many railroad personnel actively working. Most of us never heard of or joined NARVRE until someone mentioned it. We need exposure," says Carl Taddeo of Unit 144 in Lorain OH. Exposure is vital to the survival of our organization. Our plan in addition to social media mentioned earlier is to begin running ads in various periodical magazines and newspapers. With these ads our goal is to reach every train enthusiast, retired and currently working railroader and spread our reach further than it has ever been before.

As added value to our members, representatives from ID Shield/Legal Shield partnering with NARVRE were presented to convention delegates and members. Additionally, our organization will receive a commission with respect to the number of our members and their relatives who join in receiving their services. If your unit is interested in ID / Legal Shield representatives presenting the program at your meeting contact Lynn Duncan 512-589-9199 || lduncan@idtsoa.com

The Delegates approved our next convention will be held in San Francisco, CA in 2020.

— James (Phil) Steward,
National Secretary/Treasurer

MEMBER DUES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2018	
Single Unit Member	23.50
Couple Unit Members	30.50
801 At-Large Single Member	26
801 At-Large Married Couple	33

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Volume 32 Number 05

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News deadline 10th of each month
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MAY-JUNE, 2018

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From Palmetto, GBA

New RRB Medicare Cards Coming in June

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) will mail approximately 450,000 new Railroad Medicare cards with new Medicare numbers in June. You may have already heard about the new cards, and in some areas your neighbors may have already started to receive their cards. That's because the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is sending out non-Railroad Medicare cards in monthly waves across the country while the RRB is sending all Railroad Medicare cards in June.

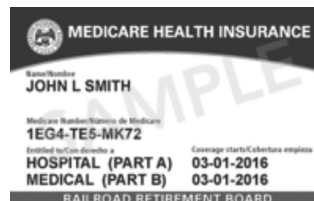
New Card, New Number

Your new card will have a new Medicare number that is unique to you and that does not contain a Social Security Number (SSN). SSNs are being removed from Medicare cards to help protect your identity. While the same SSN may have been part of the old Medicare numbers for spouses or dependents, the new Medicare numbers will no longer have that pairing. Each new Medicare number is unique to each person.

In addition, the new Medicare number format will be different. Currently, your Railroad Medicare card contains a Health Insurance

Claim Number (HICN) made up of 1-3 alpha characters followed by numerals. The format of a Railroad Medicare HICN was distinct from the format of a Social Security Medicare HICN. When your new card arrives, you will see that your new number is a unique combination of 11 characters made up of numerals and letters. Providers will no longer be able to tell a Railroad Medicare number apart from a Social Security Medicare number by looking at the number. Instead, the difference will be the design of the card. Your card will have the RRB logo on it, and printed on the bottom, it will say 'Railroad Retirement Board'.

Sample RRB
Medicare
Card



When to Put It in Your Wallet

When your new card comes, destroy your old one and start using your new card right away. When it's time for a doctor's appoint-

ment or other Medicare service, be sure to take your new card with you. Your provider's office knows the new cards are coming, and they will need to keep a record of your new Medicare number so they can bill Railroad Medicare correctly.

If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, your new Medicare card does not replace your plan's identification card. You will continue to use your plan's ID card to receive your Medicare benefits.

Is Your Address Up-To-Date?

It's important to make sure the RRB has your address correct in their systems. If you need to verify or correct your address, you can call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455. If you have other questions about your Medicare coverage, please call us. Customer Service Representatives are available Monday through Friday, from 8:30 am to 7:00 pm Eastern Time. We encourage you to visit our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR and use our new beneficiary portal, MyRRMed. You can access MyRRMed at www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed.

— Jennifer Johnson