



# National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

The current surface transportation law (extended Fast Act of 2015) is due to expire at the end of this fiscal year on September 30th. Rail passenger travelers and supporters received early notice that the GOP leadership in the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) would propose to strip passenger rail service and Amtrak from the surface transportation re-authorization. The current Fast Act law (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act) was the first time a rail title was ever included in a multi-year surface transportation re-authorization package. However, encouraging remarks followed from T&I Chair Peter DeFazio (D-OR) who stated that last year's funding would be his blueprint for working with White House proposals to invest new funding for passenger rail in order to become competitive as a low-carbon option for intercity and long-distance travel. President Biden's fiscal-year 2022 budget requests includes \$88 billion for the US Dept. of Transportation (USDOT) to expand passenger rail service and increase low-and no emissions transit. His budget also calls for \$2.7 billion for Amtrak, which is a 35% increase in funding for the railroad and track renewals, renovation of aging stations and depots, capital fleet costs, and addressing maintenance throughout the system. Additional requests of \$625 million is for the modernization and expansion programs for passenger rail service and expand existing rail corridors across the country. That funding is a down payment and tied to \$20 billion from the American Jobs Plan and marked for rail expansion programs and additional rail jobs.

Accordingly, the House T&I Committee just passed out the INVEST in America Act (HR3684) on June 11 by a 38-26 vote.

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

An employee who worked for a railroad in the last 12 months in the 30 months immediately preceding the month his or her railroad retirement annuity begins will meet the current connection requirement for a supplemental annuity, occupational disability annuity, or the survivors benefits described within the law.

Once a current connection is established at the time the railroad retirement annuity begins, an employee never loses it, no matter what kind of work is performed thereafter.

Two examples I have run across are employees who refuse to follow their work to another location or terminal and then take a buy off and go to work in the private sector. Let's say Home Depot as his latest employer. When the employee retires and takes his railroad annuity he/she is fine until the railroad employee passes away and his spouse is reverted to social security because his last employer was Home Depot.

Some management employees have taken severance packages from the railroad at age 55 than go to work in the private sector before they file for railroad retirement at age 60. Let's say they went to work for a state-run railroad not covered by railroad retirement. This would break the current connection and the same situation would affect the non-railroad spouse upon the death of the annuitant and her benefits revert to social security.

— *Tom Dwyer, National President*



N.A.R.V.R.E. Twin Ports Unit #92. Where Rails & Sails come together! Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. Cover page new FB Group established by George Korich member Unit 092.

## From the National Vice President —

July is one of the most famous federal holidays in our country, as it is Independence Day and it commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence establishing the United States as a sovereign nation. It is celebrated every July 4th, and has been a federal holiday since 1870. This year Independence Day will be observed on Monday, July 5th.

For NARVRE it is the month of the year when we begin to think about membership drives to grow and develop organizational strength. As normally done, I continue to urge and encourage all Area Directors and officers of all NARVRE Units to organize and promote New Units. Contact old friends and bring in new recruits as we search for those now getting ready to retire. Appeal to local Railroad lodges and distribute flyers where railroaders go on duty. Only you know those local areas.

This month I am proud to point out that that Area 5 Director G.G. Gonzales visited Temple Texas, Area 1 Director Georg Boatwright visited several Units, Port Charlotte, Jacksonville and Wildwood, FL and Area 2 Director Jack Bengtson visited and helped facilitate rejuvenating Ohio Unit 019 Cleveland OH.

On Wednesday May 19, 2021, I was invited to address the SMART Local Union

## Memorials

Joseph Sacco President Unit 053 Syracuse NY • Richard Stephey Vice President UNIT 115 Wichita KS • David Clark • Alfred Deutcher • Robert Colbath • Leon Cox • John Veenendall • John Scott • Vaughn Postell • James White • Johnny Burns • Joe Coursen • Don Detwiler • Alvin Huxman • Sally Viegra • Wayne Wilson • Gene Yoder • Kevin McAllister • Audrey Anderberg • Richard Peremba

## 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.

William J Dailey SR • Carol N Kelch • Unit 115 Wichita KS donation in memory Richard Stephey • Victor Sundquist • David Corless



Officers of the SMART Local 0857 in San Antonio, Texas with Local Chairman Jim Bob Crow, President J.L. Dubose, Secretary Bert Gonzalez, Legislative Representative Greg Schmidt, NARVRE National VP Tony Padilla, Sergio Perez NARVRE Unit 163 Secretary Treasurer and Amtrak Local Chairman Martin Ortiz.

0857 in San Antonio, Texas. I talked about the memory of NARVRE's history and of its formation and of the many challenges we have faced throughout the years to fight to protect the very sole purpose to Protect, Preserve, and Promote the security of our Railroad Retirement Board Pension Annuity for us today and for the many future generation of retiree railroaders as it was by those who came before us. This includes secure pensions for the spouses, widows and widowers. I talked about the great memory of one of the most important legislative changes done in the pursuit of making that RRB Pension benefits better, that includes the protection of our Social Security which is the Tier I of our RRB Pension and Tier II combined makes the RRB Pension benefit which includes your healthcare under the Railroad Medicare and Medicaid.

What a great memory of that Legislative work done by "The Railroad Retirement Reform Coalition 1998-2001." The coalition was of the major railroads and its 11 major unions covered under the RRB. Today we continue to protect other funding for the administration of the RRB as well as funding for Amtrak, the two men crew on trains and rail safety. The current Presidential Administration has endorsed full funding for all long distance Amtrak passenger trains and funding for all modes of transportation. For now Amtrak seems to be safe as the previous administration had proposed cuts of all long distant Amtrak trains. Those cuts had also been rejected by the bipartisan Majority of those serving in Transportation and Appropriations Committees.

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



Unit #56 Meeting May 4, 2021. Mr. and Mrs. Diane and Ellis Huskey, Mr. and Mrs. Larry & Sandy McEntire; and standing Dave Grimoldi.



## (National Legislative Director from page 1)

This is a five-year, \$547 billion surface transportation re-authorization bill which includes a record \$95 billion investment in passenger and freight rail. This historic figure includes \$32 billion marked for Amtrak, tripling their current funding levels, and mirrors rail investment plans and proposals from the President's FY22 Budget. The committee markup took over 17 hours after considering about 200 amendments, with a final vote around 5AM. There were,

of course, the usual anti-Amtrak amendments to deal with, offered by the usual GOP members in the committee. Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA) alone filed 22 amendments, aimed to strike a wide array of new programs covering customer service and long-distance train service, and proposals to prohibit the use of federal funds for the expansion of the Amtrak system beyond the current network. All were defeated. The Rail Passenger Association (RPA) publicized a critical amendment from Rep. Rick Crawford (R-AR), meant to strike down Section 9204 from the INVEST Act, which

gives Amtrak the ability to enforce its legal right to preferential dispatching on freight railroads' right-of-way. While the Amtrak Improvement Act of 1973 mandated that intercity and commuter passenger rail be given preference over freight railroads in using a rail line, freight railroads continue to ignore their obligation to provide Amtrak preferential right-of-way. President Jim Matthews of RPA stated that "Freight train interference is the leading cause of delay to Amtrak passengers, and data show it has nothing to do with congestion, but just priorities. Sec. 9204 gives Amtrak a way to enforce its right to preferential dispatching, which has been the law for over 50 years. Rep. Crawford's amendment would take that away". Fortunately, the committee defeated the Crawford amendment by a roll call vote. Studies indicate that freight train delays have caused roughly 60 % of Amtrak's delays in recent years, and negative on time performance (OTP) was key in driving Amtrak's operating loss of \$171 million during FY2018. The reports also found that improving and maintaining OTP on all Amtrak routes, especially LD lines, would result in \$41.9 million in annual cost savings and revenues, plus an estimated \$336 million in equipment savings. Congress has been made aware of this, and bicameral legislation was recently introduced as the Rail Passenger Fairness Act (S.2922). The bill provides Amtrak with the ability to take the freight rails to court in order to enforce current law, which requires freight railroads to provide preference to passenger rail operating on their rail lines. The purpose is to hold freight rails accountable, reduce Amtrak delays, and save taxpayer dollars. The T&I INVEST in America Act will now work its way through the full House and then move onto the Senate. The Senate Committee on Commerce is now holding hearings on related issues.

NARVRE has been involved in the passage of many surface transportation bills over many years in Congress and we have been involved in many battles to defeat critical amendments meant to cause the demise of passenger train service and abolish thousands of good rail jobs in America. Our record is strong as an active legislative association, and we will always stand to protect American rail jobs and the employees that pay into the railroad retirement system.

—Gary Faley,  
National Legislative Director

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Our Social Media Training Classes conducted by A.D.Ventures Media have begun with the first Zoom Class completing its first month. As a result, 12 new Closed Facebook groups have been started across the country to help spread the NARVRE message and inform railroaders who have never heard about our organization. The second class begins June 22, 2021 with a brand new set of eager members. Another class is scheduled to begin in August with only a few slots remaining because of the tremendous interest in using technology as strategy in growing our membership. If you or one of your members is interested in participating in this program, please contact the National Office by telephone or email.

Please see the letter sent to NARVRE officers below.

*"Hello Unit Presidents & Officers!*

*As you may know, our organization is currently holding Zoom classes with a marketing firm that specializes in out-reach through technology with the hopes that this new approach will attract a new generation of members. We are asking that each unit nominate two people that would*

*like to participate in these classes. One of these chosen members will learn all of the techniques that are necessary to start closed Facebook groups and make new connections with potential members. That individual will train the other nominee as their backup person. We need members who are dedicated and willing to give their time and resources to ensure that our great organization can continue to thrive and grow.*

*Please notify me by e-mail or telephone the person designated by your unit to attend.*

*If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me*

*Thank you in advance for  
your cooperation.*

*Best Regards,"*

A significant number of units have begun to meet as more Americans have been vaccinated and COVID-19 infections continue to abate. Consequently, we urge officers to collect dues of delinquent members. While there is a number of units that are exceeding expectations by renewing memberships, there are still a significant number of units that are not performing well. At any rate we will be recognizing units that have unpaid member rates of 15% and below.

—James (Phil) Steward,  
National Secretary/Treasurer



Unit #43 Conneaut, Ohio had their 9th annual picnic June 14, 2021 overlooking Beautiful Lake Erie. Left to right Unit #43 President Jon Brady, 2nd Vice President David Scafuro, Communications Officer David M. Harlacher, Sec/Treasurer Ralph Mongenel. A good time was had by all, Great time getting back together after over a year with good friends, good food, and great conversations.

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# Cognitive Assessment: Do you or a loved one have any of the following symptoms?

It's easy to forget where you put your car keys once in a while. But if you or a loved one have any of the following problems, please read further:

- Trouble remembering
- Difficulty learning new things
- Feeling overwhelmed making decisions
- Getting confused easily or frequently
- Becoming very impulsive or showing poor judgement

You might think your memory has "slipped," but it might be more than that. Medicare offers a service to test your cognitive functioning. It's called a Cognitive Assessment, and it can be performed when you see your provider for a visit. Many times, it is performed when you do your yearly "Wellness" visit, but it can be performed at any time you have a concern.

It's really helpful if you bring someone with you to that visit, such as a friend, spouse or caregiver, so that they can provide answers to questions you might not know the answers to. During the visit, your doctor will do the following:

1. Perform a cognitive exam.
2. Review your medical history and your medication. Sometimes medications can have side effects that may make you appear to have a cognitive impairment.
3. Develop a plan of care, if one is needed.
4. Make a referral to a specialist, if one is needed.
5. Talk to you about community resources (these can include adult day care, rehabilitation services, and more.)

When this service is performed, the Part B deductible and coinsurance apply.

Cognitive impairment doesn't always present as in the ways noted above. It can also show up as depression, anxiety, apathy or irritation/aggression. If you see these in yourself or others, please make an appointment with your doctor. Having mild cognitive impairment can increase your risk of developing dementia caused by Alzheimer's. Per the Mayo Clinic, "some people with mild cognitive impairment never get worse, and a few eventually get better." Be

one who gets better. Call your doctor today.

If you need help locating a doctor, you can call our Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. We invite you to use our free internet portal, MyRRMed, to access claim status, historical Medicare Summary Notices, and review any individuals you have authorized to have access to your private medical information. You can visit MyRRMed at [www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed](http://www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed).

We also encourage you to visit the Mayo Clinic website, which discusses Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) here: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mild-cognitive-impairment/symptoms-causes/syc-20354578>.

You can also access the Alzheimer's Association website, which discusses cognitive assessment services, by visiting here: <https://www.alz.org/professionals/health-systems-clinicians/cognitive-assessment>

— Jennifer Johnson, Palmetto, GBA