

# National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc



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.us  
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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

October 2018

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

I just spent a great deal of time at the Minnesota State Fair talking to seniors about issues. One of the major concerns they have among others is social security. The annual report of the Social Security Board of Trustees details the actuarial status of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and Disability Insurance (DI) Trust Funds. The Trustees for example indicated that the DI Trust Fund would be depleted in 2032. Both funds combined would be in deficit by 2034.

The question is how do we remedy the situation. Some members of Congress would raise the retirement age to 67, others would be to cut benefits while some mention privatizing social security all together to the financial institutions. During 2017, an estimated 174

million workers had earnings covered by social security. Employees pay a 6.2 percent contribution from earnings up to a maximum of \$128,400 in 2018, which their employers match.

A simple solution is this. The Cap on Social Security payroll taxes lets the wealthy wage earners enjoy a low tax and it prevents today's young people from getting full benefits when they retire. If you make \$128,400 or below you pay 6.2%. If you earn \$237,000 you pay 3.1%. If you make \$475,000 per year you pay 1.5%. Finally if you make \$1 million per year you only pay 0.75%.

The answer to all this is "scrap the cap" of \$128,400 and tax all wage earners equally. It will resolve the problem and ensure today's young people full benefits when they reach retirement age.

— Tom Dwyer,  
National President

## FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

The ongoing battle with the leadership at Amtrak over the Southwest Chief and long-distance train service has been receiving favorable notice in Congress, but we must keep contacting Congress to win this war. The bill passed out of the Senate (H.R.6147) is now headed for a conference committee in the House to reconcile the differences in spending bills from both chambers. As we do not have the concise time frame on this, it is necessary to carry this update in this Newsletter, because of the large number of members that do not receive our email alerts. We must try to reach as many members as possible. We have followed this Amtrak issue for many months and we have sent out regular updates via email, and this information was just sent on 9/8/18. Again, the vast majority of NARVRE members are not receiving our emails. If you haven't called your Reps in the House, please do so. We need to protect the Amtrak network and the rail jobs this could adversely affect. The following Representatives are assigned to the House Conference Committee, and this is a priority: Republican side: R. Aderholt (AL), M. Simpson (ID), K. Calvert (CA), T. Cole (OK), M. Diaz-Balart (FL), T. Graves (GA), D. Young (IA), and J. Rutherford (FL). Democrats are: D. Price (NC), S. Bishop (GA), B. McCollum, (MN), M. Quigley (IL), and C. Pingree (ME). If your Rep is on this list, call them immediately.

The message is to ask them to support HR 6147, and keep specific language requiring Amtrak to retain existing service on its national network, to include the entire Southwest Chief Route. We want our Reps to oppose any efforts to water down the Moran/Udall Amendment language in the conference committee negotiations. That specific language is part of the Senate bill which had strong bipartisan support. Also, ask them to support the improved funding levels for

passenger rail and transit which passed in House & Senate transportation committees. HR 6147 is the overall minibuss funding bill and was passed 92-6, with zero anti-Amtrak amendments (thanks to everyone). Ask the committee members to require Amtrak to honor all Federal Railroad Administration Positive Train Control exemptions as Amtrak management wants to ignore these exemptions threatening the Southwest Chief and possibly other main train routes to include the Cardinal, CA Zephyr, TX Eagle, Downeaster, Vermonter, Ethan Allen, and the City of New Orleans. So, we're asking that NARVRE members make the calls to these specific negotiators on the House Conference Committee listed above. If members have not called their Representatives who are not on the conference committee, that should be done as well. All supporting groups involved want everyone to know that our work is having a positive effect. Thank you. You can contact the Congress Switchboard @ 202-224-3121, or use our familiar NARVRE numbers @ 877-668-3864 & 877-668-3866.

HR 6147 includes \$1.3 billion for Amtrak's Nat'l Network, and \$650 M for the N/E Corridor. It also provides over \$14 B for other rail and transit grants which will help grow passenger train service and increase rail jobs across the country, and that serves to protect our railroad retirement system. At this time of the year, we should all be thinking and preparing for the General Election on November 6th. Keep in mind that NARVRE members are directly involved with issues and legislation that may affect results on Amtrak, Medicare, and our railroad retirement system. We need Congressional offices that will assist in our efforts, and we now have opportunities this November to build on those supporting numbers. Currently, there is a serious lack of balance in the Congress, as the Republican party controls the majority in the House, the Senate and the White House,

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## From the National Vice President —

The end of the year is near and the midterm elections are fast approaching as we continue to stay informed about the candidates we select to vote for in the upcoming November General Elections.

Given the nature of the political season many will be focusing on who are our friends. We encourage all members to go out to vote. We must go out to vote for candidates who are not afraid to stand strong; while guarding the essence of our NARVRE organization to promote, protect and preserve our pension benefits from being weakened. We get-out-the-vote for those who are, in fact, fiends who will stand up to protect our Railroad Retirement Benefits, our Social Security which is our Tier II of our railroad Retirement and our Railroad Medicare and Medicaid and vote right on

### *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 186 Abilene, KS: Pres Tony Schmitt,  
Doyle Reed Sec/Treas — in memory  
of Henry "Hank" Sanchez Secretary  
Treasurer

Arnold and Christopher Marotta  
Gene Hoffman  
Michael and Patrice Bailey  
Kenneth Joyce E Gillmore Living Trust  
Arnold Strauss  
Leo Stratman  
Richard and Gladys Workman  
Paul and Frances Brown in honor of former  
Grand Rapids MI Unit  
Mary Acosta  
Michael Bessette  
Victor and Barbara Sundquist  
James Earl White in memory of Past Pres-  
ident Whitey Westphal  
Mary Schmitt  
Wayne and Nadine Haskamp  
Michael and Sharon Climer  
Roger Livingston  
David Corless  
George Joyce Jr  
Darwyn Meyers  
Jermone Barth  
Dale Vrana Sr  
Douglas Gorr  
Paul Johannis  
Donald Riehm  
Charolette Dargie  
Paul Brown  
Stephen Leichter

Labor and Senior issues to have an affordable health care, and affordable prescription drugs for our families.

The final Appropriations bills are being finalized while the administration is trading funding to pay for tax cuts for the top one percent of the wealthy on the backs of seniors. For us, Amtrak funding is priority.

The Administration proposed to cut long distance trains, thereby eliminating jobs of railroaders who pay into the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund and thereby hurting the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund.

We were able to lobby the Transportation and Appropriations Committee members to ask them to reject cuts of Amtrak long distance Trains and we prevailed in that effort, but they are not done yet. I call on all of our Area Directors to help promote, preserve and protect our Railroad Retirement Benefits by making sure we reach out to find new members and organize new units as we do every year.

Traditionally, about this time of the year, we scramble to get new members to join NARVRE so it is much less a factor to form new units, but if every member just brought in one friend to join, and include the spouses who also are beneficiaries, our RRB Pension Annuity, we would grow.

Much of the time remaining in 2018 will be spent with our families to the end of the year. In the upcoming Holiday Season we will be celebrating with our families, with our children, grand-children and our NARVRE family to celebrate those holidays. This fall we wish you all a cheerful time during Halloween, Thanksgiving, and upcoming Christmas and New Year.

The Governing Board of NARVRE will continue to assure that we stay active and will not relent to protecting our pension

benefits including our Railroad Retirement, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and an Affordable Health Care.

This year we made some accomplishments and made positive changes during the NARVRE National Convention in May, 2018. While we had many Units close, we did increase our membership. Many units declined membership because members and officers suffer old age, death, sickness of both spouses and death; and new officers do not step up to fulfill emerging vacancies and leadership positions.

However members were not lost, but were moved to the at-large Unit 801. But, having said that, I have to say I am proud of those who stay and tackle that commitment of protecting our Railroad Retirement pension to continue the fight. We continue to find them.

One fact is that many retirees do not even know there is a NARVRE organization in existence to protect their pension. We will never fully alert all retirees, but we are making headway to making improvements to seek new members. The use of our promotional tactics to help attract new members though Facebook is working. I know how frustrating it can be when officers want to attend meetings that may not have enough value to offset the economic cost to attend, but considering and evaluating by case basis, most of the time we attend these areas to attract new members.

On another note, I want to thank all the members, who continue to make donations to NARVRE above their membership dues. We appreciate all donations, no matter what amount it is. If you want to memorialize a member with a donation we will recognize you in our NARVRE Newsletter.

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

### NARVRE UNIT #95 ON SEPT. 12, 2018 AT THE NEW DAV BUILDING, KCMO





## (National Legislative Director from page 1)

as well. That, of course, means all committees in the House and Senate are chaired by the GOP, and each and every committee is ruled by a majority of GOP members. This translates into the current situation whereby Congress governs without meaningful bipartisanship, with no regard for what is referred to as "regular order". There are 435 members of Congress that should be allowed to fully represent their constituents, no matter the party. Representatives from both the majority and the minority should be recognized and allowed to introduce amendments. Members of both parties should be afforded the time to explain and possibly progress their proposal(s) through the committees on which they serve. That is not the norm in today's Congress. The biggest obstacle to regular order is the flood of money that continues to fill the coffers of our federal election campaigns. Common sense regulations on campaign financing have been repealed, or watered down to the point that the money, even foreign money, has zero transparency. With all of the controversy on the hacking and outright theft of information

and files via the Internet, the adverse impact on certain elections by Russian operatives should be dealt with in Congress. However, related legislation which was recently introduced in the Senate (and House) is not being discussed in a bipartisan manner. It seems that the attitude of "party first, over and above country" still prevails, and this is according to Sen. John McCain in his remarks on the floor of the Senate prior to his death. Some of this could change because we have a chance to affect a change in November. Whatever we do, let's plan to vote. Who do we trust to protect our right to vote, and who will swear to protect our earned benefits, such as Medicare. Who promises to protect that earned benefit, and who threatens it? And who will pronounce themselves as our elected Representative or Senator willing to protect railroad retirement? What Congress gives, Congress may take away if we give them enough power. Are all of our fellow members registered to vote, and is everyone aware of the ease and simplicity of the Absentee Ballot? Let's help and urge all of our members to get out and vote. Tuesday, November 6, 2018.

— Gary Faley,  
National Legislative Director

## NARVRE UNIT #95 ON SEPT. 12, 2018 AT THE NEW DAV BUILDING, KCMO



## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Over the last two years, we have been able to drive down our mailing costs by reducing the number of members receiving the newsletter via USPS with members electing to receive the newsletter through our email system. Additionally, costs were driven down by the number of "Return to sender/ Not deliverable" from the United States Postal Service, because those members were removed from the mailing list until notification of the new address. If you know of any current paying member not receiving their newsletter, please send the change of address to the National Office or email the address to [narvre@gmail.com](mailto:narvre@gmail.com).

## Tribute to Glenn Kullman, a Devoted Volunteer

Glenn Kullman, a longtime VF volunteer and NARVRE member in the Kansas City area passed away earlier this year of Wegener's granulomatosis, a rare disease. Glenn and his wife Arlene were both involved with VF, NARVRE, and often represented the Wegener's Granulomatosis Support Group at medical conferences.

— James (Phil) Steward,  
National Secretary/Treasurer

## What is Going On

Annual Fall Luncheon  
and Railroad Reunion

Saturday, October 20th, at 12noon  
River View Lodge, #1 I Street,  
Antioch CA 94509

Contact John Herrmann at 530-925-0325 for details, Total cost is: \$27.00 which includes tax and gratuity.

## Memorials

Janet Ann Schally  
Charles Keel age 96  
Henry "Hank" Sanchez Secretary Treasurer Unit 186  
Rossie Willis  
Ricky D Jones  
Robert and Mary Atkins  
Elizabeth Kadlechik  
Joyce Sutton  
Al Ringsmuth  
Charles Schafer  
Mrs Garland Boyd  
Williams Mallard

## NARVRE NEWSLETTER

### Volume 32 Number 9

**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

# "Patients Over Paperwork:" Medicare is reviewing regulations to reduce provider burden



The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is reviewing regulations that mandate how doctors and other practitioners document the services they provide. The focus is on the following:

- Reducing unnecessary burden
- Increasing process efficiencies

- Improving the patient's experience with their provider

CMS is beginning this process with evaluation and management services (office or outpatient visits). The goal is to increase the time providers spend with their patients and decrease the time spent documenting services. At the same time, CMS consistently seeks to reduce provider errors and unnecessary appeals.

CMS Administrator Seema Verma explained: "...we are moving the agency to focus on patients first. To do this, one of our top priorities is to ease regulatory burden that is destroying the doctor-patient relationship. We want doctors to be able to deliver the best quality care to their patients." To see more information about the Patients Over Paperwork initiative, please visit the CMS website at <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/story-page/>

[patients-over-paperwork.html](https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/story-page/patients-over-paperwork.html).

If you have questions about your Railroad Medicare coverage, you may 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 also encourage you to visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/myrr-medicare/>

We also welcome you to visit our free online Beneficiary Portal at [www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed](http://www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed). This tool offers you the ability to access Railroad Medicare Part B claims data, historical Part B Medicare Summary Notices (MSN), and a listing of individuals you have authorized to have access to your personal health information.

— Jennifer Johnson