



- SINCE 1937 -

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) is an independent nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that researches the impact of economic trends and policies on working people in the United States. They monitor both Democratic and Republican administrations.

EPI examined the Trump Administration labor policy during the past four years and concluded corporations and big business were the benefactors. The Administration accomplished this mostly through Executive Orders such as E.O 13836 - shorten the time frame expected to complete bargaining and directing agencies not to bargain over certain topics; E.O. 13837 - limited use of official time for collective bargaining activities; E.O. 13839 - weakened due process protections for federal workers subject to discipline.

E.O 13897, which revoked an executive order from the Obama administration that gives employees of federal contractors the right of first refusal for employment on a new contract when a federal service contract changes hand.

The Trump Administration went after workers leaving millions without overtime through rule changes. Undermining union elections where the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) finalized a rule making it harder for workers to win and keep a union. The rule made it harder for workers to get a fair election by allowing union elections to proceed even when the employer violates the law during the campaign. Moreover, the rule made it harder for workers who get a union to keep their union. Instead of giving workers reasonable time to bargain their first contract with their employer following volunteer recognition, the rule allows for a union to be de-certified in as little as 45 days undermining the union recognition and destabilizing the bargaining process.

None of this was done by legislation but by executive orders and rule changes. The bottom line here is when you have a presidential election the new president appoints a Cabinet and a Secretary of Labor who recommends these changes and in this recent administration there were not many advocates for working people. Case in point was states that passed two-man crew legislation were over ridden by federal exemption.

— Tom Dwyer, National President



Unit 087 Daytona was invited to participate in Veteran's Day celebration prior to meeting. Pictured left to right: Michael Frustaci, Louise Olesen(Secr.), Joyce Frustaci (VPres.), George Boatwright (Florida State Pres), Alan Fontana (Pres.) and spouse Lydia. Missing Leonard Carbone,(Treas.)

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Bar none, the most important issue today (12/14/20) surrounds the news that the first vials of vaccines have been loaded in trucks for delivery to designated locations. God speed to all of those responsible and involved in this worldwide vaccination campaign. Kudos to the researchers, investors, virologists and epidemiologists that got us to this point in time for Christmas and the Holiday Season.

It's been more than a month since the election of November 3rd, and all contests have been called, except for two House races in a couple of Congressional Districts in Iowa and New York. And, as of today, November 14th, the presidential election has effectively been settled by over 300 duly appointed presidential electors from all states, favoring Joseph R. Biden with 306 electoral votes. It is now by all means...over. The Consti-

tution however, does mandate that on January 6, 2021, Congress is obligated to certify the state's electoral votes and pronounce the outcome of the election. On January 20th, Joe Biden will take his oath of office, but with limited attendance and virtual coverage due to the pandemic. Another unrelated and unsettled issue remains as Congress has not, at this point in time, agreed to a fiscal spending bill, which still remains in effect, fully funded, but under the umbrella of a second continuing resolution (CR), which has a deadline of this Friday, December 18th. Word from Capitol Hill is that the 12 fiscal 2021 appropriations will be a center piece of a larger omnibus bill, and include a possible amendment for a Covid-19 relief package for small businesses, essential workers and funds targeted

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From the National Vice President —

Happy New Year to all the NARVRE family as we begin a new more positive future. I feel our RRB Pension Annuity is more secure as we will be facing a new outlook for the country with a new leadership in the Whitehouse securing a better Transportation agenda on rail issues as we were in danger of losing Amtrak and losing the fight for rail workers in general. We are very fortunate to have the earned opportunity to receive a RRB Pension in the form of Taxes paid from both the Employee and employer while working and therefore we continue to be vigilant the task to Promote, Protect and Preserve our Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity from those trying to infringe and raid our two tier RRB pension fund –the Tier I (Social Security Tax) and Tier II (RR Tax). Under the circumstances of the Covid19 pandemic we continue to have a secure Medicare and Medicaid health program under the RRB Palmetto GBA. Currently, National NARVRE has about 13,924 paying members in 102 Units in 48 States. Secretary Treasurer Philip Steward has contacted all 801 members to advise them

of the dues renewals. I encourage all Area Directors to try to call all the unit officers in their respective Areas to set up calling committees to bring about the membership dues for 2021. We look forward to increasing our membership and develop new Units. We have two new NARVRE Area Directors appointed by NARVRE President, Tom Dwyer, to serve on the Governing Board. I want to welcome them and congratulate them in their appointment. Jack Bengtson (jack_bengtson@sbcglobal.net 616-304-8350) was appointed on 12-4-2020 to Area 2 Director and Adrienne Natoli (AdrienneNotoli@gmail.com Cell 908-397-4760) was appointed Area 3 Director on 10-30-2020. President Dwyer also appointed Carl Shumpert (765-469-5176) (udown56@yahoo.com) from Peru, Indiana on 12-5-2020 to be Assistant Area 2 Director. That fills all the Area Director Vacancies we had. We represent approximately 500,000 retirees in the rail industry most of which are covered under the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) Pension and Railroad Medicare satisfactorily under the Contractor represented by Palmetto, GBA. While it has been difficult to have in person meeting in the last year, some Area Directors continue to work on preserving and in some cases increasing membership and establishing

new Units. We are far short of the efforts to grow. While many Units closed we also were able to maintain our membership under the at-large membership Unit 801 status. Our Secretary Treasurer Phil Steward has been able to track the Members in the 801 Unit during 2019 and 2020. We look to see a change as corona virus is being subdued but at the same time, we are not sure how the pandemic antivirus vaccines will work for us to go back to normal. I am proud of our Area 1 Director, as he is also President of the Florida Association, who in spite of the epidemic he continues to successfully work to increase the membership in his Area in units in the brink of collapsing. Once again, I want to thank all members that made NARVRE contributions to augment our finances and ask you to continue to promote our NARVRE organization. Recognize a member by sponsoring some one's Anniversary, Birthday, Graduation, Grandson's Graduation from High school or College, wedding, baptismal or honor a memorial of a railroader, etc. Your sponsorship will be recognized in our NARVRE's Newsletter. Thanks in advance for this voluntary promotion above your NARVRE dues.

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

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.

Victor Sundquist • David Corless • Steven Martin • Lonnie Jarrell • Adrian McCulloch • Richard Carroll • D C Dishon • James Bosley • Lloyd De Mille • Theodore Gentry • Michael Cheeks • Richard Yagodinsky • Clarence Branch • Jeffery Shuum • Steven Habeck • John Risch • E G Geiner • Sheldon Nutz • Jean Hogan • Roy Harju • Therese Melbar • Glenn Malloy • Paul Biegel • Felix Perez • M J Gullingsrud • Linda Olesiak • M E Michael • John Frasier • Virginia Olson • Michael Ionnone ...

Due to an overwhelming response, we will be publishing our contribution list over the course of the next three months. We are grateful for the continued support.

Memorials

Donald Henley • Jesse L Anderson • Ann Frenel • Herman Fischer • Alfred DiBaggio • Joseph Borrelli • Merle HELMER • Margaret Pavey • Beverly Sibert • Florence Urankar • Robert Knotek • Clifford M Matta

Zoom Meetings Becoming a Necessity and the Future Norm



Unit 61, Oakland CA:
Top (left to right): Brian Lewis, Philip Steward and Robert Paulson. Middle (left to right): Tom Hervey, Ralph Etheridge and Pam Cunningham. Bottom (left to right): Niece Patterson, Patrick O'Callahan and Cathy Von Ibsch.

Joe Constantines's Railroad West Bound Obits:
Top Row L-R: Tom Egan, Joe Constantine, George Boatwright and Jim Donahue. Middle Row L-R: Ted Celen, Charles Barker, Philip Steward and Robert Beck. Bottom row: Tom Galloway, Tom Rider, Bob Binion and John Muller.



From the National Secretary-Treasurer —



Over the past several weeks, there has been remarkable news concerning the COVID-19 vaccine's safety with multiple candidates showing test levels that surpassed top public health officials' expectations. If all goes to plan, vaccines will start being distributed to healthcare workers and the rest of the population over the coming months.

The vaccinations were recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration's emergency authorization of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine during the second week of Dec. 2020.

The first shot was given in the American mass vaccination campaign on Monday, December 14, 2020, opening a new chapter in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic. The U.S. coronavirus death toll is quickly approaching 300,000, with a steady surge in new cases daily. The end of Covid-19 Pandemic is within sight. Here in the Memphis area nationally based FEDEX is playing an important

role in distributing the vaccine throughout the country. The leading healthcare professionals are predicting an increase in cases during the foreseeable winter months before improvement is achieved. Continue to be cautious and mindful of the precautions we have taken during the last several months and review prevention tips from the CDC which are in previous issues of this Newsletter or you can visit the CDC website www.cdc.gov.

We have previously stated most of our units have chosen to postpone their meetings during the pandemic, while others have met periodically, complying with CDC guidelines. Recently several units have been conducting Zoom meetings. Unit 61 Oakland, CA and Unit 140 Topeka, KS have conducted 3 meetings each. Please contact the National office if you would like to plan a Zoom Meeting or need assistance in doing so.

We have received a significant response to our 2021 membership renewal drive and the amount of members making donations as listed in the donations section is more than appreciated. Incidentally, we have had more members donate than we were able to publish in this edition. Those members will be listed in future issues.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our new member, Joe Constantine who worked as track foreman, yardmaster, trainmaster for LVRR, Conrail, NS railroads

from 1975 - 2010. Presently Joe administers the Rail Road West Bound Obits which has over 1200 members. Area 1 Director George Boatwright and NST Phil Steward have participated in Joe's monthly Zoom meetings informing their members about NARVRE. So far we have acquired 10 new members as a result of these presentations. Visit Joe's Facebook page Rail Road West Bound Obits.

Congratulations to newly appointed Area 2 Director Jack Bengtson, Area 3 Director Adrienne Natoli, and Assistant Area 2 Director, Carl Shumpert.

Area 2 encompasses the states of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia.

Area 3 encompasses the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

For additional contact information regarding the Area Directors visit our website www.narvre.us click the Staff Button also like and join our Facebook pages and invite your railroad friends and acquaintances to do the same.

I personally appreciate the many "thank you's" and notes of appreciation plus the overwhelming amount of donations. As the publisher indicated, we will list everyone in future issues.

Happy New Year!

— **James (Phil) Steward,**
National Secretary/Treasurer

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

at the people facing mortgage foreclosures, past due rent, and/or all things related to the effects of the pandemic. And the states need additional funding for the distribution and processing of the vaccines. The last financial assistance for American families was issued last May in the CARES ACT. Since then, the Senate has been stuck in the mud over party-line politics and arguing over federal relief on issues ranging from litigation protection for big business to employees being kept on their jobs and those already furloughed. The Senators on both sides of these arguments can no doubt rationalize their own positions, but certainly, the plight of their constituents caught-up in an economic pandemic should transcend politics and warrant some bipartisan action. The Senate leadership should re-visit the original CARES ACT of last May. That legislation contains a provision that the states are mandated to spend all the money allocated to them by Dec.30, 2020. Many state

legislatures adopted the policy of holding onto portions of that federal funding, saving it for a "rainier day". A recent news release (Associated Press) now reports that as a result, tens of billions of dollars remain unspent. This report, from an editorial board, suggests the current and stalled Senate and the current President should make it a priority to mobilize public opinion in favor of extending the Dec. 30 deadline and seize upon the opportunity to release those CARE ACT federal funds for the American people (we agree). We will hope that relief aid funding for Amtrak will be in this omnibus bill, to help restore daily service across the national network, while protecting tens of thousands of rail transportation jobs.

Incidentally, but noteworthy, is a legislative bill needed to cover members of the military and other important issues involving our soldiers, both active and inactive, and their families. This legislation, known as the NDAA, is an authorization bill that will fund the entire operations for FY2021 military and defense department. The massive \$732 billion piece of legislation was passed by the Senate

on Dec.11th, and was delivered to the White House on the next day. However, the President has stated that he would veto this bill as written, and the Constitution allows him ten (10) days to sign or veto a bill, by Dec. 23rd in this case. This legislation would authorize Congress to fund appropriate raises in pay for members of the Military, as well as spending for the construction work on military housing and other facilities for military families. Trump has expressed his displeasure because the bill does not repeal legal protections for social media companies and because it would require the Pentagon to rename military bases named after confederate soldiers. The NDAA bill was passed and adopted by both chambers with large bipartisan numbers...335-78 in the House and 83-14 in the Senate. Numbers like that would indicate that a veto from the President will prompt an override vote. To pass a bill and override a Presidential veto requires a two-thirds vote in each chamber. No one knows, but the President may reconsider. More to come in 2021. Keep the Faith.

—**Gary Foley, National Legislative Director**

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Beware COVID-19 Scams Are Happening

Note: The information in this article is directly from content on the OIG Fraud Alert website, which can be found at <https://oig.hhs.gov/coronavirus/fraud-alert-covid19.asp>.

After a harrowing year and the beginning of what may be a long winter, hope is on the way with new vaccines to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). With that hope in mind, scammers are targeting Medicare beneficiaries to cash in on any COVID-19 payday they can create. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG), here are some ways they are doing it:

1. Scammers are hacking social media and sending messages to beneficiaries while acting as a "friend" or "government employee." The person says they are responsible for government grants and tells the beneficiary to call a number to collect the funds from a grant. The beneficiary calls and is told to pay a "processing fee," giving away private information about their banking accounts or credit card data. The beneficiary never receives the "grant money." But the scammer has all the information they need to perpetrate future crimes.

2. Other entities are asking Medicare beneficiaries to take COVID-19 tests. To do that, the beneficiary need only provide their personal information. The services are often

not approved or covered by Medicare and are not billed to Medicare. It's the personal information that the fraudsters are after.

3. In one more scheme, some labs are going into retirement communities and are drawing blood and saying that they are conducting COVID-19 tests. This should be a key – COVID-19 testing is not performed this way at this time. These labs are billing Medicare and other federal healthcare programs for these bogus services.

4. Lastly, some schemers are offering beneficiaries \$200 for a Medicare prescription card that doesn't exist.

Here are ways to protect yourself:

- Never give money or your personal information to anyone over the phone. Government and State employees and officials won't contact you like that (or by going door to door) to get information that they say will give you access to the vaccine.

- In the same vein, be very suspicious of anyone asking for your personal information (health and private information) over the phone, in social media, and by email. Specific to the telephone, Medicare will not call you to offer you any product or services related to COVID-19.

- If you see an email about COVID-19 from anyone you do not know, do not click on any of the links. Doing so can let a hacker have access to your computer.

- The same is true of text messages. If you receive a text with hyperlinks from someone you don't know, do not click on the links.

- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately.

- If you suspect you have been approached by someone trying to commit COVID-19 health care fraud, you should report it immediately by calling 1-800-HHS-TIPS (1-800-447-8477) or by visiting the OIG website at <https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/report-fraud/>.

If you have a question about service you may have had, you can call our Beneficiary Contact Center Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455 or for TTY, call 877-566-3572. Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET. You can visit our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me. We also encourage you to use our free, beneficiary website portal called 'MyRRMed'. MyRRMed provides you with access to your Part B claims information, along with historical Part B Medicare Summary Notices, and a listing of individuals you have authorized to have access to your protected health information (PHI). MyRRMed is located at www.PalmettoGBA.com/MyRRMed.