



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

This is addressed to all those members who think there may be a “War on Fossil Fuels” namely coal and the long range employment in the railroad industry usually done as a political statement.

First let’s start about job loss in the railroad industry over the past 35 to 40 years and it affect on railroad retirement. Let’s commence with the 1974 amendments to the Railroad Retirement Act. This was the first time that railroad employees could retire at age 60 with 30 years of service. I worked for BNSF and the carrier started offering buyouts to clerical employees because most of us had life time protection under the BNSF merger of March 1970. We were called “orange book” employees. Many senior clerks who qualified under 30/60 left at that time.

Along came passage of the Staggers Act in 1980 that deregulated the railroads. Here again all Class 1 railroads started offering buyouts to their employees, clos-

ing terminals, initiating mergers and decentralizing operations or what they call downsizing. We heard no outcry or political statements as to the clerical craft being decimated by computers, fax machines or large customers directly coinciding with their own computers with the railroad carriers therefore bypassing the clerical craft altogether.

No one came to the aid of operating personal when they went from 5 person crews down to 2 man crews of today. How did that loss of jobs affect railroad retirement? What about contracting out of work of track workers to outside contractors such as rail gangs. There was no outcry at that time about the affects on railroad retirement.

All of the above led to a huge loss to the railroad retirement fund. We had to amend the law in 1983 to

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FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

Congress just returned from a seven-week recess on Sept. 6th, and faced with a boat load of unfinished work, discussions still persist on how to start their next recess. The fiscal year ends September 30, 2016, and that leaves little time to reach agreement(s) on all budget appropriations. That reality has most discussions centered on not shutting the government down, just weeks ahead of the general election. The answer will be to agree on a stopgap measure that will give Congress extended time to tend to the business of governing, or at least keeping it open for business. Internal conflict within the House Republican Party now has Speaker Ryan and others worried about the Senate taking the lead on possible legislation that would have them heading for home

as early as September 16th. The biggest problem in the Senate beyond their spending measures, is to settle on a funding provision to combat the spread of the Zika virus. Recently, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced their agency would run out of funding for programs to combat the virus by the end of this month. While that fact is pushing this entire issue, a solution to the fiscal year-end deadline will be accomplished by passing a continuing resolution (CR), in order to keep the government open. Most lawmakers are agreeing that any long-term CR that leads into the new year should be off-the-table. While the Senate is scheduled to be in session through October 7th, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has stated he is working on a CR strategy to fund the govern-

ment into December that is paired with a funding mechanism to combat the Zika virus. McConnell surmises that If they passed most of the annual spending bills before the end of next week, they could immediately adjourn, leaving the House hostage to any blame for shutting down the government. Senate members running for election have expressed their need to return home to campaign in their states. Chrm. Hal Rogers (R-KY) of the House Appropriations Committee has stated a three-month CR could also pass the House with votes from moderate Republicans, Democrats, and defense hawks once his committee attached a \$1 billion funding provision for the Zika virus. The obvious opposition comes from the House Freedom Caucus, which is notorious on Capitol Hill and within their own Republican party

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From the National Vice President —



With a month to go to the Presidential Elections of November 8, I want to impress to you how important it is to go Vote. This year will set a new area of politics for both Republican and Democratic Parties from what we have experience respectively from a fractional divide. While NARVRE does not advocate preference, we keep an eye on those candidates that will affect our

Railroad Retirement Pension Annuity and security for our Railroad Retirement-Medicare and Health Care. Your vote is your VOICE. God Bless America. With that in mind I continue to ask all of our Area Directors to continue to promote NARVRE's sole purpose to **promote, preserve, and protect our Railroad Retirement**. Our campaign to continue to increase membership and form new Units has been slow, but I know we have not stopped trying. While there are many areas where railroad retirees once flourished, they are no longer there because of railroad mergers and abandonments. So, we concentrate in States where railroads continue to prosper making hefty profits and where they continue to hire and are short of workers who will be our future retirees. **Good example in California, seeking to promote NARVE**, on Aug. 23rd - 25th, 2016 in Long Beach, CA Area 8 Director **Rick Olson** and Assistant area Director **Gary Watkins** attended and **manned** an Informational-NARVRE-Table at a Western Regional Meeting of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen BLE-T where during the meeting they distributed NARVRE information and applications to many BLET members with some signing up at the meeting. **Also**, Rick Olson with Los Angeles Unit 27 officers, **President and Assist Director Bob Aparicio** and **Steve Lee**, Secretary-Treasurer, setup an informational table on Friday, September, 16th at a RRB Pre-Retirement Seminar in West Covina, CA. All current union members planning on retiring within the next 5 years were invited to attend this very important informational RRB Seminar.



Photo (1.) Seated Left to Right: BLET Div. 553 Local Chairman Kenny Abell and Assist Area 8 Director Gary Watkins at the NARVRE Informational Table @ the BLET Western Regional Mtg, Aug 23-25, 2016 in Long Beach, CA. **Photo (2)** L to R -- NARVRE Area 8 Director Rick Olson with friend & former BNSF Co-Worker with the same name, Rick Olson, the BLET Assistant to BLET President Dennis Pierce at the BLET Regional Meeting at Long Beach, CA on Aug. 23rd, 2016.

Area 4 Director Gary Nelson set up another successful informational-meeting to save Unit #175 in Des Moines. IA which was in the brink of closing.

With the help of Robert Tollakson, Gary Nelson, past President Whitey Westphal and President Tom Dwyer they were able get 50 people to attend on August 17, 2016. The next step is to formally get new officers to save the unit. "Many signed up for membership this day and others are also joining," said Area 4 Director Gary Nelson.

This is a reminder to ask you to begin to prepare and sponsor a delegate to the next 2018 NARVRE National Convention which will be in Council Bluffs, IA. Unit 30 President Orval D. McGee has agreed to host the Convention.

"Brother McGee, it is with extreme gratitude that Unit 30 has agreed to host the 2018 41st National Convention at the Hilton Garden Inn in Council Bluffs, IA. This was brought to my attention by Past President A.W. Westphal who worked with you and your Committee to get it off the ground," said President Tom Dwyer.

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

In Memoriam...

Virginia Richards
Lorine M Carter
Annabelle Seckel
Elise Patterson
Gloria Olson
Helen Smith
Lucy Shine
Dorothy Johnstone
Harlan "Skeet" Erikson
Clarence "Bud" Wachter
Henry Solomon
Tom Parker
Cecil H Crews
Marie Erickson
Stanley Fletcher
Honus Richards

Donations

Many thanks to Victor Sundquist and all the good members in Unit 21 Marysville KS with Unit President Delores Klug.

Area 1 Vacancy

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina & Tennessee.

Area 7 Vacancy

Idaho, Montana, Oregon & Washington

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(National Legislative Director from page 1)

for obstructing the normal process of moving sensible legislation. This caucus, made up of 40 plus Members of Congress has continually drawn criticism from fellow GOP colleagues. With reference to the importance of strategies being debated to avoid a government shutdown, Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla) stated “in essence we have one constitutional thing we need to do and that is pass appropriations bills”. He summarized his remarks by criticizing the usual actions of the Freedom Caucus stating that “these conservatives won’t vote for it anyhow”. NARVRE understands that frustration as we have been fighting their misleading and job-killing amendments to destroy Amtrak since the inception of their Caucus.

With reference to Appropriations, our work has been focused on adequate federal funding for Amtrak and the increased investments for all of the transportation and infrastructure improvements as prescribed in the bipartisan Fast Act of 2015. We are also concerned with the RRB FY17 appropriations, which we supported by contacting Congress with a precise request developed by this office and colleagues at the RRB administration. That communication expressed the unified support from NARVRE on the RRB request for funding to maintain appropriate staffing levels, modernize an outdated mainframe for faster and efficient service, and upgrade security technologies necessary in the administration of our retirement benefits. Thanks to all Units and members that followed through in contacting Congress in support of the RRB’s specific request. This was crucial business that demanded that NARVRE members from across the country remain consistent with the recommended message from the experts at the RRB. Thank you.

On November 8th, remember to cast your ballot for those that will protect railroad retirement and Railroad Medicare. We need to elect Representatives that respect issues important to seniors and retirees.

— Gary Faley, Legislative Director

(National President’s Column from page 1)

eliminate the 30/60 provision which penalized those who did retire at that age of a 20 percent reduction in Tier 2 to those at age 61 to a 10 percent reduction.

Now lets address the coal issue. As business groups like to say it is the free market system that prevails. The NARVRE organization supports the railroads in their ability to haul coal. The coal industry is in decline as other types of energy have surfaced such as wind, solar, renewable energy and natural gas which are all cheaper to produce. Peabody Industry the world’s largest privately-owned coal company filed for bankruptcy on September 7, 2016. Their reason..... it is not because of Barack Obama’s so-called war on coal. Peabody cited “unprecedented industry downturn in it’s statement announcing the bankruptcy. “Industry pressures in recent years include a dramatic drop in the price of metallurgical coal, weakness in the Chinese economy (exports), over production of domestic shale gas and ongoing regulatory challenges, the company said. How-

ever, Peabody does site “regulatory challenges” but only after listing much more powerful market forces undermining the industry globally.

Read this carefully. While environmental regulations do affect the industry, the major Obama administration rules that coal defenders claim will gut the industry and shut down coal-fired power plants **haven’t gone into effect. The Clean Power Plan, which curbs greenhouse gas emissions at new and existing power plants, has been paused by the Supreme Court for now. But even if it survives in court, states don’t have to submit plans for meeting the targets until 2018.**

So it is not Obama’s regulations that are killing coal. What’s driving the coal industry into bankruptcy is the **free market**. Competition from cheaper, more abundant natural gas and renewable energy. Meanwhile, the costs of mining coal have increased. Coal production decreased in 2015 and predictions it will fall another 16 percent in 2016.

The bottom line is coal is just no longer a profitable industry in the United States.

—Tom Dwyer, National President

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Over the past few years, we have had a policy to attract and recruit new members. Any person who joins NARVRE after July 1 of the current year would be paid through the end of the current year and then through December of the following year. For example, if a new member enrolls September 5, 2016 and pays \$13.50 for one year, this applicant’s dues would be good through December 2017. This policy is only available to new members once and is not to be used by members for renewal. Please take the time to review the NARVRE website. Our webmaster has made several changes to improve accessibility of information. Editable forms are also being made available.

— James (Phil) Steward,
National Sec/Treas

What’s Going On

October 15 9th Fall Railroad Reunion, 1919 4th Street Berkeley CA

November 12 unit 60 presenting National RR Retirement Trust William Walpert, 11AM, 7500 N Millbrook Ave, Fresno CA

NARVRE Unit 43 Conneaut OH had their 4th Annual Picnic, August 8. Ohio Association President Ruth Teper and NARVRE Past President Whitey Westphal were on hand as special guests. OVER 50 members and families attending.

August 10 dinner meeting, NARVRE Unit 147, Bellevue. JJ Grabner, Area 2 Director, featured speaker.

Unit 175 Des Moines 50 retirees attended an informational meeting, Aug 17, conducted by National Pres. Tom Dwyer; Past President Whitey Westphal; and Area 4 Director Gary Nelson.

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From Palmetto, GBA

Open Enrollment 2017: Watch for It Soon

October is just around the corner, and that is the start of the Medicare Open Enrollment period. Open Enrollment typically falls between October 15th and December 7th. You will receive your 'Medicare & You' handbook shortly, and it offers helpful information on the services that Medicare covers.

Open enrollment allows you to make changes to your health care and drug plans, which include Part A (hospital insurance), Part B (doctors, labs, ambulance services, etc.), Part C (Medicare Advantage Plans) and Part D (drug coverage).

Railroad Medicare is your Part B coverage.

Some of the benefits of having Medicare Part B are preventive and screening services, which cost you nothing if your doctor accepts Medicare assignment. These services include the following (this is not an all-inclusive list):

- Your first 'Welcome to Medicare' visit, also known as the Initial Preventive

Physical Examination (IPPE)

- Annual Wellness Visit
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening
- Colorectal Cancer Screening (Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT), flexible sigmoidoscopy and colonoscopy)
- Cardiovascular Disease Screening
- Diabetes Screening Tests
- Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) Vaccination
- Pneumococcal Vaccination
- Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test
- Screening Mammogram
- Screening Pap Test
- Screening Pelvic Exam
- Seasonal Influenza Virus Vaccination
- Screening for Depression

Once you receive your handbook, read it thoroughly. If you have questions or need help with picking the right plan for you, your State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) may be able to assist. Its volunteer staff offers free local insurance counseling to people with Medicare. SHIP counselors

are not connected to any health plan or insurance company.

Besides one-on-one assistance by phone, SHIP performs face-to-face counseling and conducts public education presentations. Here are a few of the topics that SHIP volunteers can help:

- Your Medicare rights
- Complaints about your medical care or treatment
- Billing problems
- Plan choices related to enrollment period

To find the telephone number of the SHIP in your state, 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. You can also visit the State Health Insurance Assistance Program section at www.Medicare.gov and use the 'Search by Organization Name' feature to find your local SHIP.

— **Jennifer Johnson**