



National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

NARVRE National Office

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

Many of us may not know what is going on in the Social Security Administration which eventually could affect those of us under Railroad Retirement. How many spouses of railroad retirees are drawing pensions in their own right under Social Security should take heed. In the modern world of technology things are changing fast with the lack of communication with government agencies and human contact.

Here are some facts we need to consider which are already happening in the Social Security Administration (SSA). Is Railroad Retirement far behind? The targeting of SSA Field Offices for eventual elimination has been a proposal for some time now. Congress has commissioned the National Academy of Public Administration to draft a report called "Vision 2025" These type of think tanks are infiltrated by what are called "futurists" who look at things quite differently than from reformers of the past. Currently eleven thousand staff positions

have been cut, almost 80 field offices have been closed, the hours during which these offices are open to the public have been reduced and vital field office services, including Social Security number printouts, are being eliminated.

The SSA is committed to an exclusively on-line system for the public to interact with Social Security. Questions would no longer be answered by qualified trained staff, in fact questions would no longer be answered at all. The millions of older and disabled Americans with no access to computers, no access to broadband or just no desire to make permanent financial decisions without advice, will be left with no alternative to online forms.

Any government agency dealing with the public such as the Railroad Retirement Board could be in the future subject to these same guidelines as the Social Security Administration is experiencing now.

NARVRE has discussed in the past of doing our newsletter electronically to save money which is the largest expense we have on a yearly basis. How do you think railroad retirees will react if they eliminated regional offices throughout the country. These are decisions we could face down the road in the modern era of technology.

— Tom Dwyer, National President

From the National Legislative Director —

The Congress is currently on a five week recess. They did come to agreement and easily passed a bill to increase funding to pay for veterans to obtain medical care at private facilities due to the intentional overloading of waiting lists at VA hospitals. It also provides for \$5 billion to allow the VA to hire more doctors, nurses, and medical staff. Hopefully, this legislation will begin to reform what has proven to be a national embarrassment over the fouled mis-treatment of our military personnel. The House & Senate also passed out a temporary measure that will fund the highway and transit accounts for infrastructure repair on roads, rails, and bridges, but only through the next ten months. NARVRE has been reporting on this lame reaction to a well publicized account of funding sources running out of money. So, this Congress, which only governs from crisis to crisis has again ignored their responsibility to reach an agreement for the American people and failed to pass a comprehensive multi-year bill that would allow businesses throughout the states to make long term decisions on projects that would sustain jobs in every mode of transportation. This short-term funding will run out right before the new construction season begins in 2015, so

NARVRE will be joining with hundreds of other organizations that will be reminding Congress that they must begin to work early, months ahead of that new deadline, before the same threats force the layoffs and furloughs of hundreds of thousands of workers. Hopefully, come November, the voters will replace many Members of Congress that have openly worked against building a national transportation system, while working to destroy Amtrak. We need to support those in Congress that support Amtrak and a national transportation & infrastructure bill that includes a viable passenger train system. Be prepared in November.

We have been receiving many emails relative to H.R. 3040, which mandates that freight trains have a 2-man crew. We are also heard from members, both retired and active, on a recent Crew Consist Agreement that will allow for engineer-only operations on portions of freight trains on the BNSF Railway. Of course, the later is a collective bargaining agreement issue to be decided by active employees. This office wants to remind the membership that we addressed the matter of H.R. 3040, or The Safe Freight Act, in our legislative column of the April 2014 Newsletter. We wrote on the content of the bill and mentioned compelling press releases from the Federal Railroad Administration

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Area Director Vacancies

Area 6 Director

Responsible for the States of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming.

Area 8 Director

Responsible for the States of Arizona, California Nevada and Utah.

From the National Vice President —

This delivery is to remind all Area Directors and Assistant Area Directors that between August and December, we should be concentrating on establishing new Units where possible in areas where large group of retirees reside. So far, this year, we have not had an Area Director establish a new Unit with the exception of Area 5 Director, G. G. Gonzales who organized a new Unit in Harlingen, Texas. Former Area 8 Director Bob Bloomer continues to be the best example for seeking to form new a Unit later in September. He scheduled an informational meeting in Covina, CA September 16 beginning at 10:30 a. m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall 4315 N. Vincent Avenue in Covina. With this information and the press releases arranged by LDC Whitey Westphal, we expect to have a large turnout,

especially that the Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board is scheduled to be there as one of the speakers along with others.

I know that it is not easy to bring together new railroad retirees to meetings but we need to continue to find ways to do so. The Area Directors are the masters of your respective areas. You know you are best qualified to begin to explore areas for forming new NARVRE Units.

If you get a group together, do not hesitate to ask for help to have presenters at the meeting to form a new Unit. President Tom Dwyer, DLC Whitey Westphal and I are available to help. It is not enough for an Area Director to be invited to speak or be at a particular Unit meeting but it is up to you to wisely choose to attend. The presidents of the units should know that Area Directors cannot be traveling to too many long distant meeting, but instead if they need help or for advice they may be able to resolve the question over the

telephone. **If an Area Director is invited to every meeting of his Area and accepts to be there, NARVRE would deplete its finances in one month.** So be wise in attending none troubled Units. But, instead concentrate in establishing new Units. That is the primary job of the Area Director.

NARVRE is fortunate to have Whitey Westphal, Retiree Representative of the Moody Law Firm, to sponsor and arrange many of the local railroad day picnics and State Railroad events we participate in without cost to our membership. If you need assistance all you have to do is ask.

We are still behind about 1900 Unit members that have not paid 2014 dues which includes a few from the 801's. Don't forget to promote, protect, and preserve your railroad retirement benefits.

— **Tony Padilla National Vice President**

From the National Secretary-Treasurer

I am happy to announce that G.G. Gonzalez of Houston, TX Unit 187, President has been appointed as the new Area 5 Director for NARVRE, G.G. Lives at 18331 Forest Elms Drive, Spring, TX 77388-5843.

At the Convention in May we discussed sending the newsletter by e-mail or NARVRE website.

All members have a choice in how they wish to receive the newsletter. This applies to Unit members as well as members at large Unit 801.

We will still maintain the mailing by US Postal System which delays getting the information out in a timely manner to our members. We are asking only those members that have a computer and wish to receive the newsletter by that source to tell their Unit Officers and the Officer will compile the list of members and send to the National Office so that we may adjust our files accordingly. When an e-mail is changed we would appreciate you contacting the National Office and your Unit if you belong to a unit we want our members at large to also have this opportunity to sign up for e-mail of the newsletter.

Please call the National Office with your choice 1-800-551-2588 or 660-269-8895 submit your list by e-mail at narvre@gmail.com We appreciate your attention to this request.

The reason we need a definite response to this question is so we can remove your address from our system file so you will

not receive both e-mail and mailing of the newsletter in the future. If you do not have a computer do not worry we will still mail your newsletter, e-mail is only available to those that want to receive their newsletter in this manner.

We are preparing letters for our fall mailing to Secretary/Treasurers for 2015 renewals and also member at large notices. If you have not received notice of the National Per Capita remittance changes for 2015 they are:

Unit Single member \$13.50 and Unit Couple \$20.50 the Members at Large 801 Dues are \$16.00 per single and 23.00 per couple adopted at the 2014 Convention.

Congratulations to Units 001 Jacksonville, FL, and Unit 186 Salina/Abilene, KS and Unit 115 of Wichita, KS and Unit 19 Cleveland, OH for sending their requests for e-mail of the newsletter which will start with this Sept issue.

— **Joyce A. Burton, National Sec/Treas**

7th ANNUAL FALL Luncheon And RAILROAD REUNION Saturday October 25th, 2014

This year we will again be gathering in the Atlantic and Pacific rooms, Spenger's Seafood And Fish Grotto, 1919 Fourth Street, Berkeley CA 94719 (510-845-7771), which have their own entrance on Fourth St. Just North of the former fish market. Doors open at 12:30 PM for the Reunion which will run from 1:00PM to 5:00PM with lunch served at 2:00PM.

Menu will include Caesar Salad with Croutons, sour dough rolls with butter, coffee, iced tea (available at the bar) your choice of Pasta Primavera with veggies, Salmon, Chicken Breast Marsala, and Grilled Sliced Sirloin of Beef with mushroom glaze. Entrees will include vegetables and potatoes. The meal will conclude with Chocolate Truffle Cake and raspberry sauce. There will be a limited number of fruit plates available (15) for those who are diabetic. The price of the lunch which includes tax and tip is \$35.00 with the reservation, of \$40.00 at the door.

For reservations send your check for \$35.00 to: Mr. John Herrmann, P O Box 4763, Walnut Creek, CA 94596. Be sure to note your choice of entrée and if you'll be requesting a fruit plate on the check or note to John. Additional information can be had at 925-465-4122 or John's cell at 530-925-0325. NOTE: Spenger's is opposite the Berkeley Amtrak Station which is a Capital Corridor Train stop. Also, validated parking will be available opposite the restaurant. Additional information regarding musical entertainment will be forthcoming.

NARVRE Unit 061 Oakland, CA meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 AM at the Sons of Norway Hall aka Old Rails Hall, 2258 MacArthur Blvd. Oakland, CA 94619. Additionally, the NARVRE members are welcome to stay for the Old Rails Meeting and Raffle which will be at 12noon the same day and at the same place.

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

(FRA) that federal regulation needs to be implemented for two-man crews on our nation's freight trains. We also mentioned that the Rail Safety Advisory Committee was expected to make recommendations on crew size and hazardous material trains. Based on sound safety issues, and the number of active employees paying into our railroad retirement system, we encouraged our membership to contact their members in Congress asking them to support this legislation, and to also consider becoming a co-sponsor of H.R. 3040. Today, we are reminding everyone that this aforementioned Crew Consist Agreement is isolated to active rail employees represented by certain divisions of a rail labor union, and they alone will vote to ratify this specific agreement affecting certain employees under certain circumstances along portions of the BNSF Railway. As information, the RRB actuaries have not yet released information on this agreement indicating any harmful threats on the solvency of the Railroad Retirement System. H.R. 3040, however, is a matter of pending legislation in Congress, and as constituents, and members of NARVRE, we have the opportunity to address and advise.

Recently, NARVRE officers became aware of a current petition that has been circulating advising that Rep. Paul Ryan is proposing to change and/or threaten certain programs under our Railroad Retirement System. The language in the petition is all very familiar and it is apparently behind the times because there is no threatening proposal in Ryan's 2014 Budget Report this year. We believe that this petition now being circulated among rail retirees is most likely referring to the proposal from Chrm. Paul Ryan's Budget Committee Report back in 2012. As everyone knows, that issue was addressed at length and eventually put to bed. Therefore, we would encourage everyone to ignore this outdated email. Please do not forward this email onto other members. There is no new proposal pending and no legislation has been introduced that threatens the Railroad Retirement System, so we do not want to call on Congress on a bogus issue. However, we will never forget Chrm. Ryan's attack on our retirement system, so we do want to continue to communicate with our own Representatives in Congress on the importance of knowing the truth on Railroad Retirement. They should all be aware of Railroad Retirement and become familiar with the Railroad Retirement Act,

which most recently was amended in 2001, giving railroad workers the ability to retire with full benefits at age 60 with 30 years of railroad service. They need to know that program and others, as well as our benefits under Railroad Retirement are completely funded by taxes paid by railroad employees and employers. Changing those benefits in the Railroad Retirement system to mimic benefits in Social Security would not save the federal government or the

American taxpayer a single penny. Are your Representatives in the House & Senate aware? Letting them know what you know will immediately make them aware that you are an active constituent, so let them know you're a member of NARVRE. If they don't actively support and protect Railroad Retirement and Medicare, they need to be replaced by someone that will. Be prepared in November.

— Gary M. Faley, Legislative Director

Certificates Of Appreciation

Monday May 12, 2014 NARVRE Unit #43 Conneaut, Ohio presented certificates of appreciation for the following local media, and the Conneaut Eagles #408 and members that have supported our Unit #43. Accepting from the Conneaut Eagles Club #408 for the use of their facilities and furnishing the refreshments for our meeting, Jim Lyon, Treasurer, Lawn McCormack, Trustee also, the local TV. station AM Live Conneaut, Pat Williams, From Radio Station WWOW, Bill Shannon, Making candy for fund raisers for the unit, members Bob and Penny Neiswonger, We also presented Certificates of Appreciation to our local news papers, The Conneaut Courier/Gazette, Martha Sorohan, Ashtabula Star Beacon, Mark Todd, Greenville, Pa Greenville Argus, Holly Patterson, Girard, Pa. West County News Journal, MaryAnn Mook, Erie, Pa. Tri State Senior News, Cheryl Adams. Thank you Communications Officer #43 David M. Harlacher



Winning ticket was held by Unit 046 member Ray Ege left with Max Starkey helping to hold for this picture the 1890 Train Afghan was handmade by Irma Rodgers member of Convention Host Unit 065.

Mark Your Calendars November 1, 2014

HELLO, MARK YOUR CALENDARS TO ATTEND THE KANSAS STATE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING/NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED AND VETERAN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES, NOVEMBER 1, 2014 AT THE AIRPORT HILTON DOUBLE TREE, 2098 SO AIRPORT RD WICHITA, KS 67209, HILTON PHONE 316-945-5272 NO ADMISSION FEE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND ALL YOU DO TO PROTECT YOUR RAILROAD RETIREMENT.

MEETING STARTS AT 10:00 AM, SPEAKERS ARE WHITEY WESTPHAL, MOODY LAW FIRM REP., TOM DWYER, NARVRE NP, TONY PADILLA , NARVRE NVP, MICHAEL COLLINS, RRB, BRING A RAILROAD RETIREE WITH YOU. HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.

Roger W. Barr NARVRE, KSLC Secy. - Treas., Legis. Rep.

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From Palmetto, GBA

Visiting Abroad: When Do You Need Travel Insurance?

When planning a foreign trip, it's highly unlikely your first thought would be: "Will Medicare pay if I get injured or have a medical emergency before I get back home?"

Many patients think their Medicare benefits will provide coverage, wherever they go. Unfortunately, this isn't true and can lead to costly, and avoidable, mistakes.

Generally speaking, Medicare doesn't pay for medical services to patients outside of the United States. When we say 'United States,' we mean the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territorial waters adjacent to these areas.

'United States,' in this interpretation, would not include any United States Armed Forces bases. So whether you are heading to Europe, the Caribbean, or anywhere outside the U.S., you may wish to consider travel insurance. Here's why:

Medicare only pays, under very limited circumstances, for a limited number of services outside the United States.

Medicare won't pay for medical treatment or prescription drugs, even if you receive them on board cruise ships, unless the ship is in U.S. territorial waters. 'Territorial Waters' means the ship is in a U.S. port, or within 6 hours of when the ship arrived at, or departed from a U.S. port.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) have listed the rare instances in which other coverage may exist, such as for:

* Emergency inpatient hospital services if you fall ill in the U.S. but the closest hospital that can treat you is outside of the U.S.

* Emergency treatment at a Canadian hospital if you are traveling straight through Canada (between Alaska and another state) and the closest hospital you can be treated at is in Canada.

Should the services meet criteria for payment in those situations, physician and ambulance services may be covered as part of, or immediately prior to, that stay. However, Medicare will not pay for transport back to the U.S. after a medical emergency which occurs outside of the U.S.

Knowing this, when you plan a trip abroad, you may want to look into what coverage you do have. Some Medigap or Medicare supplemental plans have travel-related benefits. If you don't have a supplemental plan, or that plan does not pay for services you might receive outside of the United States, you may want to purchase a travel insurance plan that includes medical coverage.

Don't let the expense of an unplanned medical emergency ruin your travels. Plan ahead and have a great trip!

If you have questions about your Medicare benefits, you can call our toll-free Beneficiary Contact Center at 800-833-4455, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. ET. We offer a TTY/TTDD line at 877-566-3572. This line is for the hearing impaired with the appropriate dial-up service and is available during the same hours Customer Service Representatives are available.

We encourage you to visit our website at www.PalmettoGBA.com/RR/Me. You can receive email updates about changes to the Railroad Medicare program by visiting our website and signing up in our 'Stay Connected' portion at the bottom left of the site.

We also invite you to visit our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/MyRRMedicare.
— **Jennifer Johnson and Gayle Patterson**