As this issue of the Newsletter goes to press, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce is urging President Barack Obama to veto the anti-worker FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012.

A Division of the Teamsters Rail Conference, the BLET is one of 19 labor unions opposed to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill, which amends the Railway Labor Act (RLA) in ways that strip railroad and airline workers of some of their rights, and could subject the National Mediation Board to political interference in the future.

Anti-worker legislators in the U.S. Congress are attempting to condition reauthorization for the FAA on changes designed to weaken the RLA, which also governs labor-management relations in the aviation industry. FAA reauthorization has been a political football on Capitol Hill for more than a year, and the agency was temporarily shut down in 2011 when funding ran out.

Late on February 5, the U.S. Senate voted to advance the bill and it was forwarded to the White House for President Barack Obama’s signature. On February 7, President Pierce sent a letter to the White House urging President Obama to veto the anti-worker bill. “The bill contains several non-germane anti-worker provisions that accomplish nothing more than to advance the agenda of anti-labor ideologies in Congress, and reverse more than 75 years of labor-management cooperation in the rail and airline industries,” President Pierce wrote. “Although we, too, would like to see funded long term reauthorizations for the aviation industry, we cannot support the funding of FAA at the expense of railroad and airline workers’ legal rights.”

Pierce urges Obama to veto Railway Labor Act changes

TRANSPORTATION LABOR BLASTS ‘DEAL’ THAT TRADES WORKER RIGHTS FOR FAA REAUTHORIZATION

“Although we, too, would like to see funded long term reauthorizations for the aviation industry, we cannot support the funding of FAA at the expense of railroad and airline workers’ legal rights.” — Dennis Pierce

HOUSE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL: Bad for BLET, bad for all rail workers

The BLET and its members are opposing H.R. 7, the “American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act,” the House of Representatives’ transportation spending bill for 2012. In spite of its title, this legislation will kill jobs, decrease safety and erode labor protections for all workers.

The bill was passed by the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on February 3 and its passage is a priority for the House Republican majority.

“While the BLET has supported a long-term surface transportation funding bill, this bill simply has too many profoundly negative elements to be even worthy of consideration,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. “The provisions in this legislation will cause nearly 15% of Amtrak employees to lose their jobs and will push back the implementation of Positive Train Control.”

President Pierce activated the BLET’s Mobilization Network to let Congress know of the BLET’s opposition to the bill.

MAJOR CUTS, JOB LOSSES FOR AMTRAK

The bill calls for the privatization of several aspects of Amtrak’s operations — including food and beverage service and state-supported services receiving federal subsidies. By putting both these aspects of Amtrak services in the hands of private contractors, the bill would...
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n my January Message, I asked all members to join me this year in an effort to mount a defense against the attacks targeting BLET members and the working class. For far too long, working Americans, and their unions, have been blamed for what ails this country. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the only way we can correct the political nar- rative in this country is to stand up and be heard, in union. Organized labor, along with non-union working class Americans, must mobilize as the working class backbone of our great na- tion and let those who would harm the working class know that we will not allow their at- tacks to go unchallenged.

Some have told me that it’s too late to awaken America to what is really going on in the working middle class, but I disagree. Some have thrown in the towel and feel that we must ac- ept government that works for corporate America at the ex- pense of the working class, but I disagree. I believe that the op- posite is true — that if all hard working union men and wom- en stand together, and refuse to succumb to these attacks on the working class, others will join us. We must lead by example, and we cannot afford to allow any individual to derail us. Only humanity and support of our interests.

To overcome this singular challenge of our time, we must continue to unite internally. Since becoming your National President, I have worked to fos- ter unity and to promote a mobilized and participat- ing membership. I have travelled to Union meetings of all kinds across this great land to ask our proud membership to get involved in fighting for our own fu- ture. The message that comes back to me loud and clear at every one of those meetings is that BLET mem-

bers want a union that will lead on the key issues of the day. The membership wants a union that they can be proud to be part of. To that end, the BLET Na- tional Division kicked off a new PROUD TO BE AMERICAN, PROUD TO BE UNION cam- paign in February. We started that campaign with my letter to Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), which was reproduced in the Winter 2011 edition of the Locomotive Engineers & Train- men Journal. That letter made it very clear to all who would lis- ten that this Union will not sit back and allow the rights of the working class to be destroyed. As Union members, we are not only proud Ameri- cans; we are the backbone of the middle class that made this nation the great coun- try that it is.

In this President’s Message, I am proud to tell you that in the coming weeks all BLET members will be issued new membership cards that will reflect their years of membership. Our retired mem- bers, who led the way for us for decades, will also receive a new retired member card in apprecia- tion for their service. This may seem like a minor step, but it’s part of a bigger effort this year to reinvigorate our members and strengthen their ties to our union. On the heels of the new member- ship cards, we will also be an- nouncing a new line of BLET logo gear. Our goal is to get as many members as possible to proudly wear their union “col- ors” wherever they go; to Little League games, to Memorial Day and July Fourth parades, and even to the grocery store. The message that we can send as a proud un- ited membership is a powerful one: we are standing up for all working class Americans, and we are the first line of defense against the corporate effort to distribute even more of this country’s wealth to the 1% at the expense of the 99%. Not only must Union offi- cers lead by example, but the full membership must set an exam- ple for the rest of the American society to see.

I know that there will be nay- sayers inside and outside our union that will try to diminish our effort. There will be those who continue their nega- tive representations about unions, but you should ask yourself who these union attackers ac- tually serve. Whether he or she be political candidates, or po- litical pandits, we must look beyond attractive sound bites and, instead look at whose interests the politician or pundit actually serves. We must all be wary of those who claim to side with us on a social or moral issue, while they work to enact policies that undermine the middle class of this country.

As I stated the following in my address to the delegates at our 2010 BLET National Convention: “... I am the officer who was elected to lead the work of this great Broth- erhood to improve the eco- nomic condition of our mem- bers and their families, to secure their health and welfare, to pro- tect their pensions, and to do ev- erything within my power to make sure that BLET members return to their families safe and sound after every day’s work. ...

“...The yardstick we apply when we review candidates for election to political office is whether their deeds match their words in sup- porting our position on the issues pertinent to our representation of BLET members. What this means is that we may endorse someone for office who supports the BLET’s agenda over an op- ponent that has personal values on social issues that are more in line with ours.

“If our endorsements were based on social values alone, ig- noring the issues that are im- portant to the BLET’s purpose as a union, then we would be unfaithful to our obligation to you as officers.”

My comments from 2010 are still relevant today; our ability to meet our membership’s ex- pectations is directly affected by the politicians that we collec- tively elect. Join, get involved in your union and by get in- volved in our effort to elect those who will truly work to advance the cause of the BLET and the Amer- ican working class.

Fraternally,

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President

BLET National Division Electronic Communications Policy

Official communications be- tween BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspon- dence, bearing a signature received by the National President to be consid- ered an “official communication.” This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they have refer- ence to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

The volume of e-mails received makes it impossible for the National President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET that e-mails addressed to the National Presi- dent will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a time- ly response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient in- formation concerning the sender to en- able National Division staff to confirm the sender’s membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This policy is intended to allow the National Presi- dent to be aware of the opinions and sug- gestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member. If a reply is necessary, a response is necessary, without need- lessly expending limited BLET resources.

ADOPTED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO ON JULY 22, 2010.
New Battlegrounds in the War on Workers

Already this year, state lawmakers have opened brutal new fronts in the war on workers. And America’s workers are fighting back as never before. In Michigan, anti-worker bills aimed at weakening labor unions are gaining traction in the House. HB 5025, for example, would require employees’ annual written authorization to have their union dues deducted from their paychecks.

Working families in Indiana, Florida and Arizona are under especially fierce attack. State politicians loyal to their Wall Street paymasters are trying to lower workers’ wages, benefits and working conditions. They’re trying to turn taxpayer assets over to for-profit corporations, along with fat contracts and tax giveaways, at the expense of government employees.

These politicians claim they’re helping their states’ economies. Does anyone believe them? What they’re really doing is perverting democracy by failing to represent the people who elected them.

Gov. Mitch Daniels supported a law to make Indiana a right-to-work-for-less state, breaking a campaign promise that earned him labor’s endorsement. Last week, he signed the law in secret and held no press conference to announce the deed. That’s not what I’d call bold leadership.

In Florida, Gov. Rick Scott and some lawmakers want to turn many of the state’s correctional facilities over to a private corporation with a poor track record of safety and savings. Prison privatization would put 4,000 correctional officers out of work. Nearly all of them live in poor rural counties where good jobs just don’t exist.

Florida’s working families are bringing the fight to Tallahassee. Correctional officers come almost daily to the Capitol to lobby against the bill, joined by hundreds of other workers including nurses and teachers who fear they’ll be next. Their perseverance is inspiring, and it just may win the battle.

Radical politicians in Arizona are trying to ban collective bargaining. What’s being proposed is worse than what Gov. Scott Walker rammed through in Wisconsin last year. Arizona’s working families are making plans for protests, Capitol sit-ins and possibly a recall of the state’s governor.

Michigan politicians contemplating similar anti-union legislation should proceed at their own peril. Michigan’s working families are mobilizing right now and will certainly remember in November.

We may not win battles in every state this fall. It may take years, but in the end, I’m confident we’ll win the War on Workers.

Fraternally,
James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

Standard Building goes on the market

In January 19, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Building Association announced it has contracted with Chartwell Group, LLC of Cleveland to put the BLET’s Standard Building, an official historic Cleveland landmark, on the market for sale.

Built in 1924 by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, the Standard Building is an elegant 21-story tower that overlooks the busy intersection of Ontario Street and St. Clair Avenue, which has undergone major changes over the last two decades. The corner of Ontario and St. Clair Avenue is transforming into a busy and vibrant area with construction of the city’s new Medical Mart and Convention Center underway, and other real estate projects in the works.

The 400,000 square foot landmark has a grand terra cotta façade and outstanding views of the surrounding city and Lake Erie.

National President of BLET Dennis R. Pierce said that the resurgence of Downtown Cleveland was the major factor in the decision to put the property on the market.

“With the $500 million Medical Mart and Convention Center under construction across the street and the $400 million Horseshoe Casino under restoration on Public Square, this is the perfect time to realize the value of the Brotherhood’s most valuable single asset,” Pierce said.

“We have undertaken an extensive historic pre-development study,” Pierce added, “and have determined that a total historic redevelopment of the building is a very viable development strategy for a future developer.” Chartwell Group anticipates interest for the landmark tower from across North America.

The BLET is the oldest labor organization in the United States. Cleveland was selected in 1870 as the union’s headquarters city due to its central location for serving U.S. and Canadian members. From 1910 to 1989, the union’s national office was located in the Engineers Building, across Ontario Street. This building was sold in 1988 to make way for the Marriott Tower. The BLET’s bylaws require that the National Office be located in the Cleveland area, and this will be unaffected by a sale of the building.

For sale: In 1924, the Brotherhood’s wholly-owned Standard Building opened for business. Today, the BLET’s headquarters building is for sale.

Register at www.ble-t.org to get Brotherhood news emailed to you.

The News Flash alerts are news articles from the BLET National Division website that are sent automatically to you.

To register, just go to www.ble-t.org. In the lower right-hand corner of the page, you will find an area to enter your email address to begin receiving the most current news from the BLET National Division. It is a great way to keep informed on the most recent issues impacting your job, your contract and your Brotherhood.
February 8: Short line operator Genesee & Wyoming reported fourth quarter 2011 net income of $33.3 million, compared to $19.9 million in the fourth quarter of 2010. (GWL press release)

February 8: Short line operator RailAmerica reported fourth quarter revenue of $147.1 million, up from $127.4 million in the fourth quarter of 2010. (RailAmerica press release)

February 9: Association of American Railroads announced intermodal volume for the week ending February 4 was 16.8% higher than the same week of 2011. (AAR press release)

February 9: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ordered the Union Pacific to pay a $1.5 million civil penalty for Clean Water Act violations in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming. (EPA press release)

February 11: U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said the House GOP’s transportation bill would be disastrous for Illinois. (Star Courier)

February 12: An editorial in the Los Angeles Times condemned the House GOP’s transportation bill’s attack on Positive Train Control. (Chicago Tribune)

February 13: The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the GOP transportation bill would bankrupt the Highway Trust Fund by 2012. (Progressive Railroading)

February 13: Amtrak filed a complaint against Canadian National Railway with the Surface Transportation Board, blaming the freight railroad for delaying 99 percent of its train speeds from 95-mph to 110-mph on 80 miles of a 97-mile stretch of track between Kal- amazoo, Mich., and Porter, Ind. The announcement followed the FRA’s approval of a positive train control system. (Chicago Tribune)

February 15: Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced a controversial transportation spending bill (See Page 1 of this issue for more details).

February 16: While the House GOP’s transportation spending bill seeks to privatize Amtrak food service, the bill contains language that would force taxpayers to cover any losses that private contractors may lose. (Buffington Post)

February 7: In 1982, President Ronald Reagan championed legislation that dedicated a penny per gallon from the federal gas tax to mass transit. The House GOP’s transportation spending bill would eliminate that direct source of funding, hurting agencies like NJ Transit, SEPTA, and others. (Newark Star-Ledger)

February 7: The Federal Railroad Administration announced a proposal to require railroads to establish training standards for employ- ees in safety-related positions regarding federal railroad safety laws, regulations and rules. (DST press release)

February 7: U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood reaffirmed the Obama Administra- tion’s commitment to California high-speed rail at a meeting with the Mayor of Los Ange- les and various business leaders. Construction of California’s 220 miles-per-hour high-speed rail system is expected to begin in Fresno later this year. (DST press release)

February 8: Amtrak announced increased train speeds from 95-mph to 110-mph on 80 miles of a 97-mile stretch of track between Kalamazoo, Mich., and Porter, Ind. The announcement followed the FRA’s approval of a positive train control system. (Chicago Tribune)

January 19: Norfolk Southern opened its newly improved double-stack “Heartland Cor- ridor” rail line between Columbus and Cincin- nati, Ohio. The project raised clearances at five tunnels along the 124-mile route. (NS press re- lease)

January 20: Union Pacific announced a $1 billion long-term investment in the state of Ne- braska, including $70 million to expand capac- ity at its North Platte rail yard. (UP press release)

January 23: Metro-North unseated Long Island Railroad as the nation’s largest commuter railway in 2011. LIRR’s ridership dropped to 81 million while Metro-North grew to 82 mil- lion. (Associated Press)

January 24: Hackers, possibly from abroad, executed an attack on a Northwestern U.S. rail company’s computers, which disrupted traffic and railway signals for two days in December. The name of the railroad was not released in a transportation security administration’s memo regarding the attack. (www.nextgov.com)

January 25: Teamsters denounce strong- arm tactics used by Indiana Republicans to force passage of right-to-work law. (Teamster press release)

January 25: The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey’s (PATRNJ) Port Author- ity Trans-Hudson (PATH) rail system reported ridership of 76.6 million commuter trips for 2011. (Progressive Railroading)

January 25: Norfolk Southern announced it has budgeted $2.4 billion for capital spending in 2012. (Progressive Railroading)

January 27: Teamsters Canada Rail Con- ference (TCRC) announced its L.800 locomotive engineers ratified a new five-year collective bar- gaining agreement with CN, giving workers a 9 percent pay increase over the life of the agree- ment. (TCRC press release)

January 30: The Association of American Railroads said U.S. freight railroads will spend $13 billion on capital expenditures and hire more than 15,000 workers in 2012. (AAR press release)

January 30: Long Island Railroad will spend $31 million to upgrade its electrical system, which was damaged by a lightning strike in September 2011. (Associated Press)

January 31: Union Pacific said 2011 was its most profitable year ever, thanks in part to shipments of coal from Wyoming’s Powder River Basin. (Associated Press)

February 1: BNSF Railway announced it will spend $3.9 billion on capital improvements in 2012. (BNSF press release)

February 1: Teamsters completed the BLET Education and Training Department’s Advanced Local Chairman Workshop. This workshop was held October 30-November 5, 2011, on the campus of the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md. This workshop went into greater de- tail than the regular Local Chairman class regarding claims handling, writ- ing and investigations. Among other assignments, the students complet- ed training sessions on Duty of Fair Representation (DFR) and the Rail- way Labor Act (RLA). The highlight of the workshop came when attendees participated in a simulated disciplin- ary hearing.

10 officers complete Advanced Local Chairman training
Weick elected Chairman of North Dakota State Legislative Board

Brother Charles Weick was elected by acclamation to serve as Chairman of the North Dakota State Legislative Board during its quadrennial meeting in Fargo, N.D., on January 24. Brother Weick is a CP Rail locomotive engineer and is Legislative Representative of BLET Division 160 (Harvey, N.D.). He has been a BLET member since April 1, 1998. Immediately prior to his election as Chairman, Brother Weick served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Board. He was elected to fill the vacancy created by long-time Chairman Mike Muscha (Division 671, Enderlin, N.D.), who is retiring.

In addition to Brother Weick, also elected were: Secretary-Treasurer D.L. Hamre, Division 671 (Enderlin, N.D.); 1st Vice Chairman T. J. Pauli, Division 69 (Grand Forks, N.D.); and 2nd Vice Chairman R.S. Tentis, Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.).

Representing the BLET National Division were: National President Dennis Pierce; Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman; National Vice President Cole Davis; National Vice President Mike Priester; and Coordinator of Education and Training Ken Kroeger.

“I congratulate Brother Weick and thank him and all the members of the North Dakota State Legislative Board for their dedicated service to the Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “The Board has 100 percent participation in the BLET PAC fund, which shows the commitment they have to bettering our organization.”

Additional guests in attendance were: Canadian Pacific General Chairman Pete Semenek; Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Craig Gilchrist; Minnesota State Legislative Board Chairman R.S. Tentis, Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.); CP Rail System-U.S. General Chairman R.S. Tentis, Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.); and Minnesota SLB Chairman Dave Brown.

Delegates, members laying over in Fargo were invited. Also attending the reception were several state political officials, including: Senator Tim Mathern; House Minority Leader Jerry Kelsh; and State Democratic-Nonpartisan League Party Chairman Greg Hodur.

The assembled group acknowledged the hard work of retiring Chairman Mike Muscha and thanked him for his years of service to the Brotherhood.

“I would like to thank both Mike and his family for their many years of hard work and sacrifice for this Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “Mike spent countless hours working on legislation in the state and at the federal level. The time spent by Mike working on the railroad and for the BLET was time that was taken away from his family and I would like to acknowledge Mike and his entire family for their commitment.”

Brother Muscha hired out in September 1970 and was elected Division Legislative Representative in 1981. He was elected Chairman of the North Dakota State Legislative Board in 1996, held the position until 1999, and was reelected in 1996. He also served as a regional chairman for the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairman for 13 years.

Mike is not only a brother but he is a dear friend, and has been an absolute joy to work with over many years,” Vice President & National Legislative Representative Tolman said. “Mike, along with the rest of the North Dakota State Legislative Board members, worked tirelessly for the BLET members of North Dakota, but he also worked hard for all of the members around the country as the BLET’s representative at the National Conference of State Legislatures.”

ST Workshop attendees vist BLET headquarters

Brother Charles Weick was elected the new Chairman of the North Dakota State Legislative Board (NDSLB) at the quadrennial meeting in Fargo, North Dakota, on January 24, 2012. He was elected by acclamation to serve as Chairman of the board and will hold this position for the upcoming four years. Weick was previously the Secretary-Treasurer of the board, a position he held for 13 years. The board also elected Mike Muscha as their new Secretary-Treasurer.

Additional guests in attendance included National President Dennis Pierce, Vice Presidents Michael Priester and Cole Davis, and Coordinator of Education and Training Ken Kroeger.

The group acknowledged the hard work of retiring Chairman Mike Muscha and thanked him for his years of service to the Brotherhood. Mike Muscha was a CP Rail locomotive engineer and was the legislative representative of BLET Division 160 (Harvey, North Dakota). Muscha began his career in 1970 and was elected Division Legislative Representative in 1981. He became the chairman of the National Legislative Board in 1996 and held this position until 1999. Muscha also served as a regional chairman for 13 years.

In addition to Muscha, other elected board members included:

- T. J. Pauli, Division 69 (Grand Forks, North Dakota)
- R.S. Tentis, Division 746 (Mandan, North Dakota)

Delegates, members laying over in Fargo, and other notable guests attended the reception. They included:

- Canadian Pacific General Chairman Pete Semenek
- Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Craig Gilchrist
- Minnesota State Legislative Board Chairman R.S. Tentis
- CP Rail System-U.S. General Chairman R.S. Tentis
- Minnesota SLB Chairman Dave Brown

The assembled group acknowledged the hard work of retiring Chairman Mike Muscha and thanked him for his years of service to the Brotherhood. They also acknowledged the hard work of all the board members and thanked them for their dedication to the BLET.

**ST Workshop attendees vist BLET headquarters**

BLET members who attended the Education & Training Department’s Secretary-Treasurer Compliance Workshop in Cleveland visited the office of BLET National President Dennis Pierce at BLET headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio, on December 14, 2011. After completing the workshop, which was held at the nearby Hyatt Arcade, the members toured BLET headquarters and met with National Division officers and staff.

**ST Workshop attendees vist BLET headquarters**

The reception was held in conjunction with the meeting, and in addition to the delegates, members laying over in Fargo, and other notable guests attended the reception. They included:

- Canadian Pacific General Chairman Pete Semenek
- Montana State Legislative Board Chairman Craig Gilchrist
- Minnesota State Legislative Board Chairman R.S. Tentis
- CP Rail System-U.S. General Chairman R.S. Tentis
- Minnesota SLB Chairman Dave Brown

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Ronnie Rhodes reelected
UP-Central Region General Chairman

Ronnie E. Rhodes was reelected to the office of General Chairman at the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment’s quadrennial meeting held during the first week of January at North Little Rock, Ark. Brother Rhodes is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and a member of Division 915 (Alexandria, La.). He first joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1980. Brother Rhodes has been serving as General Chairman since October 1, 2011. He was elected to the office of 1st Vice Chairman at the GCA quadrennial meeting in January of 2008. Also elected were: Kyle Bagby, 1st Vice Chairman (Division 81, Kansas City, Kan.); Bob Law, Kansas City Hub Vice General Chairman and 1st Alternate Vice General Chairman (Division 491, Kansas City, Mo.); Dave Grimes, St. Louis Hub Vice General Chairman and 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman (Division 491, Kansas City, Mo.); Dave Grimes, St. Louis Hub Vice General Chairman and 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman (Division 491, Kansas City, Mo.); and Norman Baker, North Little Rock Hub Vice General Chairman and 3rd Alternate Vice General Chairman (Division 585, North Little Rock, Ark.). Kevin Leyerle of Division 81 (Kansas City, Kan.) was re-elected to the office of GCA Secretary-Treasurer. The following alternate officers were also elected: Chris Mullin, Kansas City Hub Alternate Vice General Chairman (Division 336, Osawatomie, Kan.); Brian Young, St. Louis Hub Alternate Vice Chairman (Division 48, St. Louis, Mo.); Jay Callaway, North Little Rock Hub Alternate Vice Chairman (Division 858, Pine Bluff, Ark.); and Scott Thibodeau, Alternate Secretary-Treasurer (Division 81, Kansas City, Kan.). Special guests attending the meeting included: BLE National President Dennis Pierce; 1st Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary Bill Walpert; National Vice President Gil Gore; National Vice President Mike Twombly; Union Pacific-Western Lines General Chairman Bill Hanahan; Union Pacific-Southern Region General Chairman Warren Dent; Texas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Briggs; Arkansas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Todd; and Louisiana State Legislative Board Chairman Arlin Todd. "I offer my congratulations to General Chairman Rhodes and all officers of the Union Pacific-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment," National President Pierce said. "Brother Rhodes is a dedicated General Chairman and our Union Pacific Brothers and Sisters will no doubt benefit from his diligence and hard work. I have every confidence that these officers will move the General Committee forward together in the spirit of Brotherhood and solidarity." On October 1, 2011, Brother Rhodes moved from the 1st Vice Chairman’s position to the General Chairman’s office following the retirement of Charlie Rightnowar. Brother Rightnowar, a member of BLE Division 724 (Seattle, Wash.), had served as General Chairman of the UP-Central Region General Committee since July of 1990. The BLE’s UP-Central Region General Committee of Adjustment encompasses 20 BLE Divisions in six different states (Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Illinois, Kansas and Iowa), and represents approximately 1,400 members.

BLET Asks for Obama Vote

President Pierce also reminded President Obama of his March 20, 2011, Statement of Administration Policy, which reads in part: "If the President is presented with a bill that would not safeguard the ability of railroad and airline workers to decide whether or not they would be represented by a union based upon a majority of the ballots cast in an election or that would degrade safe and efficient air traffic, his senior advisers would recommend that he veto the bill."

The proposed changes to the RLA would end the discretion of the National Mediation Board (NMB) in deciding when a representation election will be held, and would increase the ‘showing of interest’ necessary to compel an election for an unrepresented bargaining unit by over 40%. In fact, the proposal would result in a higher threshold to hold a representation election than is currently in effect to prevail in the election. The change also would promote legal challenges by railroads and make it extremely difficult for unions to continue to exist on smaller carriers that are merged with a larger, non-union carrier.

Further, when two unions are on an election ballot today and between them they garner more than a majority of votes, there is a runoff between those two unions. The bill will change that by requiring a runoff between the top 2 vote-getters, including ‘no union,’ even if a majority of the employees vote for representation. For example, if one union gets 40%, the other union 29% and ‘no union’ 31%, the runoff will be between union #1 and ‘no union,’ thereby giving management two opportunities to defeat unionization of the workforce. The legislation also would subject the NMB to significant oversight in ways that set the stage for politicization of what is supposed to be an independent federal agency.

In a joint statement released January 30, the unions said they remain strongly committed to passage of a clean FAA Reauthorization bill, but that aviation safety and security bill is no place to impose unrelated and controversial labor provisions that will ultimately serve to harm both airline and railroad workers. They pointed out that the proposed RLA changes would drastically rewrite a statute that was crafted by labor-management agreement and has not been changed for over 75 years without the agreement of both employer and employee representatives.

"It is not surprising that the shameless, anti-worker ideologues in Congress chose to take aviation safety hostage in an attempt to rob air and rail workers of their rights, but it is stunning that some of our so-called friends are going along with this," President Pierce said. "The War on Workers is now in our front yard, and all BLE members must make careful note of who supports us and who does not, because Election Day is just 10 months away."
TRANSPORTATION BILL
Continued from page 1
assure major job losses at the passenger railroad.

The contracting out of the food and beverage service would cause over 2,000 jobs to be lost, and while Amtrak has the right in the legislation to bid for the services, the process has been rigged against them as private operators could significantly reduce labor costs by offering minimum wage and no benefits. Thousands more employees work on state supported lines.

Additionally, Amtrak would also see significant cuts to its operating funding in fiscal years 2012 and 2013. In 2012, its funding would be decreased from $606 million to $466 million, and in 2013, it would be reduced from $631 million to $463 million — or nearly one-third. There are other provisions in the legislation that significantly hurt Amtrak and its employees by making it more difficult for the railroad to run its operations.

DELAY OF_PosITIVE TRAIN CONTROL

The legislation also strikes at a key provision of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, compromising rail safety for the railroad to run its operations.

The course covers procedures and different levels of response and worker protection in a hazardous materials or emergency release. For federal funding for this course covers transportation, lodging and meals for training participants. This training is also available from May 1-5, 2012, and May 8-12, 2012. For more information or to register online, please visit: www.hazmatgmc.org

July 29-August 1, 2012

Western Convention (IWC) - H Indonesia, ME

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Craig Gilchrist (Montana State Legislative Board Chairman, BLET Division 298) and Co-Chair D.B. Kenner (Division 769) are hosting the 2012 IWC at Disney. For details, visit www.SMA2012.com. Contact Brother Kenner: skaeperf@bmu2012.com.

August 19-24, 2012

74th annual Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) - Atlantic City, NJ

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Craig Gilchrist (New Jersey State legislative Board Chairman and Division 231 Local Chairman), the 2012 EUMA will be at the Knife Fork and Boardwalk (1900 Pacific Ave.).

Atlantic City, NJ 08401, phone: (609) 349-7233, www.bldagandy.com. Contact Brother Gilchrist: bldagandy@hotmail.com or (201) 978-6436.

September 9-13, 2012

77th annual Southern Convention (SWCMC) - Galveston, Texas

Hosted by Arrangements Chairman Jack Sweeney, Division 776 Local Chairman, the 2012 SWCMC will be at the Moody Gardens Hotel (Seven Seas Blvd., Galveston, Texas 77554; phone: (888) 388-8848; www.moodygardenshotel.com). Contact Brother Sweeney: jsweeney@ccentral-link.net.
Olsen appointed BLET Special Representative

R ichard A. Olsen, a member of BLET Division 746 (Mandan, N.D.), has been appointed as a special representative by BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce.

Brother Olsen started his railroad career in 1973 working as a summer help with the Burlington Northern’s track department, transferring to the operating department in 1974 as a brakeman. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1978 and has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood since February 1, 1984.

“Rick brings a broad range of experience to our National Division staff, and he will be a huge asset to the Organization in his new position,” President Pierce said.

Brother Olsen served as Division 746’s Chairman of the Local Committee of Adjustment for over 14 years, after being elected Local Chairman in 1997. He has also represented Division 746 as Delegate to three BLET national conventions and served as 1st Alternate Vice General Chairman on the BNSF/MRL General Committee of Adjustment.

Brother Olsen has served on the BNSF System Cab Committee since 2001, and has held the position of Labor Co-Chairman. He was also appointed BLET Safety Coordinator in 2006, a position he held until April 1, 2012.

Brother Olsen is a member of the BLET’s National Mobilization Team since 1998 and has served as a BNSF/MRL CCA Coordinator and BNSF System Coordinator. As a Special Representative, he will provide various support services for all levels of the Organization, as assigned by the National President. His appointment becomes effective March 1, 2012.

Brother Olsen comes from a railroad family, including his father, Bud Olson, who was a conductor for Burlington Northern and served as an elected union leader for the UTU and AFL-CIO for over 40 years. Brother Olsen and his wife Sandy have been married for 35 years. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.