Call to
2010 convention

BLET to hold Second National convention in Reno, Nevada

Approximately 530 delegates will convene in Reno, Nevada, from October 4-7, 2010, for the BLET’s Second Quadrennial National Convention.

The delegates will represent nearly 37,000 active locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States. They will be charged with analyzing and voting on changes to the Brotherhood’s bylaws. The National Convention is held every four years, and this will be the second such convention since the Organization’s merger with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters effective January 1, 2004.

In previous years, delegates in session at national conventions have elected the top Brotherhood officers. Beginning with the 2010 convention, however, BLET leaders will be elected using a “one member, one vote” system where individual members vote directly for the various candidates.

Official forms and documents for BLET members seeking to run for office in the 2010 National Division Officers Election were made available on the BLET website on April 15, 2010.

The program Adobe Acrobat is required to download and view the documents, which are available here: http://ble-t.org/2010election

The new website provides interested parties with all election-related documents in one convenient location.

Section 49 of the National Division Rules of the BLET Bylaws governs the election of National Division Officers. Additionally, the BLET Advisory Board adopted Rules for the National Division Officers Election on May 29, 2009.

The documents being made available on the new website include the Election Rules, interpretations to the Election Rules (also known as Election Rules Advisories), nomination forms, forms for members to declare their candidacy for office, and various other financial reporting forms that are required by the Election Rules.

Pursuant to Section 20, Paragraph (g) of the BLET Bylaws, the list of delegates to the upcoming National Convention are published on Page 6 of this issue.

The BLET’s Second Quadrennial National Convention is slated for October 4-7, 2010, at the Grand Sierra Resort in Reno, Nevada. 

List of 2010 National Division Convention Delegates pg 6

CSX at Harper’s Ferry, WV.

Frequent BLET News contributor Gary Knapp snapped this stunning shot in Harpers Ferry, WV, at 3:07 a.m. on June 3, 2009. It is one of the many photos he took last year as part of a seven-week, 9,860-mile journey through the South to photograph CSX trains at night.

Advisory Board Meets
Mobilization, Rail Safety Improvement Act are main topics of discussion pg 7

IWC in North Dakota
International Western Convention is July 13-17 pg 3

Legislative Elections
State Board Chairman reelected in Neb. & Wyo pg 4-5

Register for News Flash email alerts at: www.ble-t.org
A Birthday Present for the BLET

This month our Brotherhood celebrates its 147th birthday. We always identify ourselves as the oldest rail labor union in North America, and — even after all these years — a chill still runs down my spine every time I think about what that means. I want to devote this space to a reflection on our founding and what we can learn from our history. I also want to ask you to give your Brotherhood a birthday present: some of your time.

When twelve brave men gathered in secret at the home of William D. Robinson in Marshall, Michigan, to create the Brotherhood of the Footboard on May 8, 1863, the world was a very different place than it is today. There was no right to organize and bargain collectively, no limit on the number of hours a locomotive engineer could be required to work, no railroad retirement system, no health insurance and no FELA.

I began writing this as I prepared to return to Cleveland from our latest national negotiating session in Washington, D.C. Well, in 1863 Washington was the capital of a nation that was split down the middle and engaged in a horrific civil war that pitted brother against brother in many places. I would think that Brother Robinson could hardly conceive how much would change between then and now.

These twelve heroes were just the leading edge of a mass movement by locomotive engineers to take control over their jobs and economic futures. In just over 2½ years some 70 Divisions had been organized, and the Brotherhood had expanded into Canada. We continued to build from the bottom up, terminal by terminal, railroad by railroad, throughout the United States and Canada, and even into Mexico.

Almost overnight our union was tens of thousands of members strong and actively pursuing the interests of locomotive engineers in three nations. This occurred without the communications technology we enjoy today, such as the Internet, electronic mail, cell phones and computers. The most advanced form of communications technology in those days was the telegraph, which had only linked up the east and west coasts of the U.S. about a year and a half before our founding.

How did our founding and the early efforts of our leaders enable such success? To be sure, the earliest leaders of our Brotherhood undertook great personal risk, and they and their families made sacrifices for the good of the Order. But those risks and those sacrifices fell just as hard upon the rank and file of the BLET, because mere membership in the union was grounds for dismissal. Worse, known union members were routinely blacklisted throughout the railroad industry.

The BLET of the 19th Century grew because everyone — officer and member alike — made the shared sacrifices of active membership. We could not have made it if the majority of the membership, whether through apathy or indifference, simply left the affairs of the Brotherhood to those who accepted the added burden of holding office; it would have been easy for the carriers to simply pick off the relative handful of leaders and decapitate the organization. What protected all BLET members was the exposure they shared by actively supporting and participating in the Brotherhood’s activities.

All of us have heard stories about aggressive BLET representatives being singled out by management. But have you ever stopped to think that one reason this Brother or Sister can be victimized is because so many of the other voices at that location are silent in the face of carrier abuses?

I remember being fascinated as a boy learning about pulleys and levers, and how you could produce a whole lot of motion with a relatively small amount of effort. Believe it or not, we have such a tool at our disposal, and it’s called mobilization. Mobilization really is a pretty simple concept: it takes contemporary communications technology and applies it to the type of organization building that our founders used to create our Brotherhood.

Information or calls for action flow from the National Division through General Committees or State Legislative Boards (depending upon the issue) to the Divisions, to Team Captains, each of whom is directly responsible for passing the message to no more than 10 members.

We have used mobilization numerous times over the past 15 years with notable success. We marched on Washington to demand an end to the slaughter of members on the job in Operation Thanos. We picketed the NMB in defense of our craft. And, most recently, we mobilized a portion of our membership to flood the Congressional switchboard in opposition to the so-called “Cadillac Tax” provision in the health care reform legislation.

Until the most recent mobilization our network had fallen somewhat into a state of disrepair, and that exercise went far in cleaning off the rust on the portion of the network that was deployed. This was a good start, but it is not nearly enough. We are actively rebuilding those portions of the network that have languished and it’s called “mobilization.”

What does this have to do with you? All of us have a rich history we can call upon to guide us into our next century and a half. I plan on using my message in the coming months to review the lessons of our history and I hope you will join me on a tour of the past that will focus us on success in the future.

In his inaugural address nearly 50 years ago, President John F. Kennedy captured the imagination of a generation when he said “Ask not what your country can do for you ... ask what you can do for your country.” As we mark the 147th anniversary of our founding, I likewise request that you ask not what the BLET can do for you, but what you can do for the BLET. And what you can do today is join our mobilization effort by becoming a Team Captain.

Paul Sorrow

Founding president William D. Robinson (left), a typical locomotive from the late 1800’s (above) and the original charter of the Brotherhood of the Footboard, signed by Robinson in 1863.
Registration continues for 2010 IWC in Bismarck-Mandan, N.D.

Registration is now open for the 70th annual International Western Convention, slated for July 13-17, 2010, in beautiful Bismarck-Mandan, N.D. The 2010 IWC is hosted by Co-Chairs Mike Muscha and Ron Huff and the members of BLET Division 671 and Division 746.

Guests will stay at the Radisson Hotel Bismarck and reservations can be made by calling (701) 255-6000.

On-site registration will open on July 13 and continue through July 15. The annual IWC golf outing will take place on July 14 at the challenging Hawktree golf course, a 7,085-yard par 72 course.

For the non-golfers, the IWC arrangements committee is planning a spouse’s trip to the Old Governor’s mansion, the state capital and heritage center on July 14. At the end of the day, everyone is invited to attend the welcome reception the evening of July 14.

Members can still register the morning of July 15 when the convention kicks off with opening ceremonies. The afternoon includes closed meetings for the BLET and the BLET Auxiliary. Guests will enjoy dinner on the evening of July 15 along the Lewis & Clark Riverboat tour.

A number of valuable educational opportunities will be made available on July 16, including workshops for BLET Secretaries-Treasurers and Legislative Representatives, and there will be a special arbitration workshop to be held for Local Chairmen. The IWC will also offer a workshop on mobilization.

All members will benefit from presentations regarding radiation handling and electronic evidence/event recorders.

People not attending the workshops will enjoy a trip to the Mandan railroad museum, which includes a hobo lunch. There is also a trip scheduled to Fort Lincoln State Park, home of the famous General George Custer house and the home of Custer’s 7th Calvary.

The closing banquet is slated for the evening of July 16. Registration forms for the IWC and for the IWC golf outing are currently available on the BLET National Division website: http://www.ble-t.org/info/meetings/iwc.

Early registration is encouraged. Those who register by June 15 will receive a $30 discount on registration fees, and the first 250 to register will receive a free 2010 IWC commemorative t-shirt.

“The 2010 IWC Planning Committee members from Divisions 671 and 746 are putting together a great agenda for the 70th International Western Convention,” Chairman Mike Muscha said. “Please join us for four days of educational opportunities and fun activities.”

For more information, contact Mike Muscha (701-437-3881 or loceng671e@mlgc.com) or Ron Huff (701-355-0576 or trainrhuff2@bsn.midco.net).

St. Louis Secretary Treasurer’s Workshop

The following BLET members successfully completed a BLET Education & Training Department workshop in St. Louis, Mo., from February 21-24, 2010:

Seated, from left: Brad Bell, Secretary-Treasurer, Division 9; Jack Huddleston, Jr., S.T., Div. 602; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education and Training, BLET National; Bob Broka, Director, Records Department, BLET National Div.; William Walpert, National Secretary-Treasurer & Director of Education & Training, BLET National; John Boye, S.T., Div. 269; Kenya Phillips, S.T., Div. 609; Amy Noble, and David Pape, S.T., Div. 345.


Third Row: Josh Wagner, S.T., Div. 155; Dr. Elaine Reese, Director, Office of Tax Compliance, BLET National; Stanley Watts, S.T., Div. 334; Jeffery Woodcock, S.T., Div. 754; Brian Root, S.T., Div. 114; David Hanson, S.T., Div. 642; John Wallace, S.T., Div. 595; Albert Scale, S.T., Div. 620; Dave Noble, S.T., Div. 135; William Honeycutt, S.T., Div. 285; and Walt Schmidt, Director of Online Services, BLET National Division.

Calendar & Events

May 21, 2010
Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences
Little Rock, Ark., and Billings, Mont.
The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board will hold free informational conferences for elected officers of all railroad labor unions throughout 2010. Registration for all meetings begins at 8 a.m., with the programs beginning promptly at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 12:30 p.m. Meetings on May 21 will be held in Little Rock, Ark. (Holiday Inn-Airport, 3201 Bankhead Dr.) and Billings, Mont. (Willow Garden Inn, 1465 Grant Rd.)

June 4, 2010
Railroad Retirement Board Informational Conferences
Duluth, Minn. and Kansas City, Mo.
Registration for all meetings begins at 8 a.m., with the programs beginning promptly at 8:30 a.m. and ending at 12:30 p.m. On June 4 are slated for Duluth, Minn. (Radisson Hotel Duluth, 505 W. Superior St) and Kansas City, Mo. (Embassy Suites, Kansas City International Airport, 7640 N.W. Tiffany Springs Parkway).

June 13-18, 2010
33rd Annual Southwestern Meeting Association, Cincinnati, Ohio
Hosted by Jerry Studidian and the members of BLET Division 110, the 2010 SMA will be held at the Cincinnati Netherland Plaza 35 West Fifth, Cincinnati, OH 45202. (Phone: (513) 421-9100. Rate: $139). For details, contact Brother Studidian by email: gstudidian@gmail.com.

July 13-17, 2010
70th Annual International Western Convention, Bismarck-Mandan, N.D.
Co-Chairs Mike Muscha and Ron Huff and the members of BLET Division 671 and Division 746 host the 2010 IWC at the Radisson Hotel Bismarck (605 E. Broadway Ave., Bismarck, N.D. 58501). (Phone: (701) 255-6000. Rate: $189). For details, contact Brother Muscha by email: loceng671e@mlgc.com.

August 8-12, 2010
72nd Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Hosted by Tom and Sue Caruso, Division 333, the 2010 EUMA will take place at the Sharon Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pa. (200 Heat Station Square Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2000. Phone: (412) 261-2000. Rate: $89). For details, contact Brother Muscha by email: loceng671e@mlgc.com.

September 12-16, 2010
75th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting, San Antonio, Texas.
Hosted by Russell Elley, Local Chairman of Division 197, the 2010 SWCM will take place at the Sheraton Riverwalk San Antonio, on the River Walk at Paseo de Alamo (123 Locosa St., San Antonio, Texas, 78205. Phone: 888-421-1442. Rate: $155). For details, contact EUMA2010@verizon.net.

October 4-7, 2010
BLET National Division Convention, Reno, Nevada
The BLET’s Second Quadrennial National Convention will be held at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno. See Page 1 for details.

Events Calendar
Randy Meek re-elected Nebraska State Legislative Board Chairman

Randy Meek of BLET Division 98 (Lincoln, Neb.) was re-elected Chairman of the Nebraska State Legislative Board at their Triennial Meeting on March 1-4, 2010, in Lincoln. Brother Meek has been a member of the BLET since September 1, 1980 and has served as the State Legislative Board Chairman since 1996.

BLET National President Paul Sorrow congratulated Brother Meek on his reelection and expressed regret that his schedule prohibited him from attending the meeting. Also elected at the meeting were: Pat Pfeifer, 1st Vice Chairman (Division 88); Ron Ross, 2nd Vice Chairman (Division 621); Jeff Vogt, Secretary-Treasurer (Division 98); Lance Flohr, Executive Committee (Division 622); and Eric Wood, Executive Committee (Division 98). The Auditing Committee is made up of Brother Flohr, Brother Wood and Sam Caruso, Division 183.

BLET First Vice President Dennis Pierce attended the meeting, and updated the members about the work of the National Division. “It was great to be back in my home state of Nebraska,” Pierce said. “I appreciate the work of Brother Meek and all the Brothers and Sisters of the Nebraska State Legislative Board.”

BLET Vice President & National Legislative Rep John Tolman also attended the meeting and discussed legislation the BLET is working on in 2010, the upcoming political races and regulatory issues.

“I would like to congratulate Brother Meek on his re-election as Chairman of the Nebraska State Legislative Board,” Tolman said. “He has served the Brothers and Sisters in Nebraska very well over the past 14 years, and I am sure, with the help of the other Brothers elected, will continue to do so.”

Brother Meek thanked those who attended the meeting. “This was one of the best Triennial meetings I have ever been a part of,” he said. “It was a pleasure working with the delegates and the information and advice provided by Vice Presidents John Tolman and Dennis Pierce added greatly to the experience and education of all. I would like to thank everyone who worked to make this the success it was and also our National Secretary Treasurer Bill Walpert for providing the tools and advice that we used to restructure our by-laws and policies.”

Photos: submitted by Randy Meek
Cory L. Runion was reelected by acclamation to serve as Chairman of the Wyoming State Legislative Board at triennial meetings in Cheyenne, Wyo., on February 9.

Brother Runion, a member of BLET Division 115 (Cheyenne), is beginning his first full term as Chairman. He was serving as Vice-Chairman when he elevated to the Chairman’s office on September 28, 2008, following the retirement of former WSLB Chairman Terry R. Jones.

Brother Runion is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer who first joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 2000.

Also reelected during the meeting were: WSLB Secretary-Treasurer Lawerson and Brianna Jones of the Wyoming State Policy Center; Kim Floyd of Dan Neal and Sarah Gorin of the Equality State Policy Center; Kim Floyd of the Wyoming AFL-CIO; and Leslie Peterson and Brianna Jones of the Wyoming State Democratic Party.

BLET National President Paul Sorrow congratulated Brother Runion and the other officers upon their election. President Sorrow also thanked all Legislative Representatives throughout Wyoming for their involvement in the affairs of the Brotherhood as well as their active participation in national, state, and local politics.

Tim Smith, Chairman of the BLET California State Legislative Board and National Association of State Legislative Board Chairman (NASLBC), attended the meeting and conducted a workshop for the Legislative Reps who were in attendance.

Additional guest speakers included: Ken A. Esquivel of BLET Division 115 (Cheyenne), who serves as a member of the Wyoming House of Representatives; Dan Neal and Sarah Gorin of the Equality State Policy Center; Kim Floyd of the Wyoming AFL-CIO; and Leslie Peterson and Brianna Jones of the Wyoming State Democratic Party.

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J. M. Robb, International President
M. A. “Tony” Wolford, Assistant International President
J. E. Taylor, International Secretary-Treasurer
K. L. May, Director
K. E. Helman, Director
J. R. Spivey, Director

Members of the Wyoming State Legislative Board visiting the Roundhouse/Steam shop in Cheyenne, Wyo., during their triennial meeting. From left: Carl Hunt, Div. 869; Louis Esperanza, Div. 142; Troy Hadley, Div. 31; Kevin Schmit, Div. 624; Richard Sanchez, Div. 142; Lamy Wessel, Div. 103; Chairman Cory Runion, Div. 115; and Shop Foreman Mike Fielder, Div. 207.

“On behalf of the 2010 Wyoming State Legislative Board, I would like to thank all who participated in making the triennial meeting and banquet a huge success,” Chairman Runion said.

Electronic Communications Policy

The policy currently in effect is that official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence — with a signature — being received by the National President — to be considered an ‘official communication.’

This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they have reference to a specific request and can be used in future correspondence.

Due to the volume of e-mails it would be impossible for the President to answer all unofficial communications. Therefore, it is the policy of the BLET National Division Office that e-mails addressed to the National President will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a timely response. In other words, an email message is not considered an official communication.

This will allow the President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member, if a response is necessary.

Safety Task Force Hotline
(800)306-5414
Report major accidents when they happen

Safety Task Force
BLET
**List of 2010 National Division Convention Delegates**

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The Brotherhood’s Advisory Board convened in Cleveland on April 6 and 7 for two days of productive meetings. The Advisory Board is made up of the union’s top 11 officers — the National President, First Vice President, National Secretary-Treasurer, and eight National Vice Presidents.

The Advisory Board is the Brotherhood’s top governing body and is led by the Executive Committee — National President Paul Sorrow, First Vice President Dennis Pierce, and National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert.

During the two-day meeting, the Advisory Board discussed many issues of importance to the Brotherhood and its membership, including: Amendments to the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008; the Designated Legal Counsel program and possible sites for the 2014 National Division convention.

Board members also spent a significant amount of time analyzing the BLET’s mobilization network and discussed ways to improve the network.

"Mobilization is a valuable tool to quickly spread accurate information throughout the Brotherhood," National President Sorrow said.

President Sorrow has stated that improving communications is the foundation of his Administration, and said mobilization will be a key component of his communications strategy.
**April 2010**

**Photo of the Month**

Steam Locomotive No. 844 is the last steam engine built for the Union Pacific Railroad. It was delivered in 1944 and saw limited duty in freight and passenger service before it was rendered obsolete by diesels. UP saved it from being scrapped in 1960 for use in special service. Freight and passenger service before it was rendered obsolete by diesels. The locomotive is the last steam engine built for the UP.

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**America’s Middle Class**

America is the first country ever where a majority of its citizens were able to join the middle class. Labor unions created that middle class. And no country in the world has ever had a stronger middle class than America. Americans to blame unions for the problem of our economy. But the fact is we’re in this together. The fate of the middle class is tied to the fate of the union movement.

Nobility is fighting for America’s working families except for unions. When unions are under siege, the middle class is under siege. And today, the middle class is under siege in a very big way. The gap between rich and poor is widening. Foreclosures are at record levels. Real wages are stagnant, the costs of health care and tuition are through the roof.

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**Advisory Board February 2010 Activity**

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly:

**National President Paul T. Sorrows** — National Director, Trainmen’s Dept.; General supervision of BLET activities; Chairmen of office duties; Various correspondence and telephone communications. Supervision of office administration. Overseen the suspension of Special Representative, Teamsters Rail Conference, Advisory Board, etc. ODB winter meetings, Miami, Fla. May 3-6th. WTVY ABC News.

**First Vice-President Dennis R. Pruitt** — Director ofOCCM, Advisory Board, etc. Miami, Clerk of office duties.

**Vice-President Stephen B. Speagle** — Assigned to Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Missouri Valley Lines, Missouri & Arkansas & Illinois Northern, etc.

**Vice-President L.E. “Lee” Pruitt** — Assigned to Amtrak, SEPTA, BLET, etc. Pennsylvania, etc.

**Vice-President Mike Tomynow** — Assigned to Delmarva & Delaware; Springfield Terminal, St. Louis & Maryland, Maryland Missouri & Arkansas & Illinois Northern, etc.

**Vice-President Willard B. Knight** — Assigned to Amtrak, Southern Central Committees, Wheeling, West Virginia, etc.

**Vice-President Mike Colwell** — Assigned to Amtrak, etc. Atlanta, etc.

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**Message from Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa**

It is obviously obvious that our economic interest is bound to unions. Corporations want it that way. It’s in their interest for non-union, middle-class Americans to blame unions for the problems in our economy. But the fact is we’re in this together. The fate of the middle class is tied to the fate of the union movement.

Nobility is fighting for America’s working families except for unions. When unions are under siege, the middle class is under siege. And today, the middle class is under siege in a very big way. The gap between rich and poor is widening. Foreclosures are at record levels. Real wages are stagnant, the costs of health care and tuition are through the roof.

And millions of jobs are leaving our shore. America’s working families are falling out of the middle class like never before.

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**Fighting Back**

Because of these trying times for working people, unions are more relevant than ever. In the past two years, the Teamsters organized nearly 80,000 workers. We’re working overtime to save good jobs in our core industries. We’re fighting for pension relief and financial reform. We’re lobbying hard for bills that create jobs, reform labor law and reverse our misguided trade policy.

I am asking all Teamsters to get involved and help fight for America’s middle class. Volunteer as an organizer, lobby your elected representative or just spread the word on why unions are part of the solution, not part of the problem. We still have to fight to get a fair shake. We will lose everything that we have gained if we don’t.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa

Teamsters General President