At the Republican National Convention in Tampa on August 28, the Republican Party approved a platform that calls for the elimination of funding for Amtrak. The 62-page document calls for “the federal government to get out of the way [sic] and allow private ventures to provide passenger service to the northeast corridor. The same holds true with regard to high-speed and intercity rail across the country.”

“Adopting a policy that calls for the outright demise of Amtrak is an eye-opener for all railroad workers in the United States,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. “The fate of our Railroad Retirement system is tied to steady employment levels in the railroad industry over a long period of time. The sudden elimination of 20,000 Amtrak jobs could likely sound the death knell for Railroad Retirement as we know it.”

The Republican platform comes a few weeks after Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney himself called for the elimination of Amtrak. In an interview with Fortune magazine, published on August 15, he said: “There are three major areas I have focused on for reduction in spending,” Romney said. “So first there are programs I would eliminate. Obamacare being one of them but also various subsidy programs — the Amtrak subsidy, the PBS subsidy, the subsidy for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities.”

On August 29, Wisconsin Representative Paul Ryan accepted the Republican party’s nomination as its candidate for Vice President. Ryan is the architect of the infamous Ryan Budget, which would have devastating effects on the retirement security of all active and retired railroad workers.

“Remember in November,” President Pierce said. “Don’t support politicians who are actively seeking to destroy your pension and way of life.”

The Ryan Budget Proposes To:

- Eliminate the “60/30” provision, which allows railroad employees to retire with full benefits at 60 years of age with 30 years of service;
- Eliminate the Railroad Retirement Occupational disability program for rail workers who can no longer perform their railroad duties due to disability;
- Increase the minimum retirement age for railroad workers to 62 years of age with a reduction in benefits;
- Increase the minimum age for spousal annuities with a reduction in benefits;
- Eliminate Medicare as we know it and increase the Medicare eligibility age to 67 with drastically reduced coverage;
- Increase the annual out-of-pocket medical costs paid by railroad retirees and cause the costs of railroad retiree health insurance under GA-46000 to soar; and
- Replace Medicare’s guaranteed benefits with a voucher system that is not guaranteed to cover the cost of equivalent care currently provided under Medicare.

In July, the BLET’s Advisory Board voted unanimously to endorse Barack Obama for reelection as President of the United States. The Republican nominee stands on a decidedly anti-rail worker platform. Mitt Romney has promised to slash Amtrak’s budget, which would endanger the jobs of thousands of unionized Amtrak employees, thereby undermining the stability of the Railroad Retirement System. Romney has also voiced public support for the infamous Ryan Budget, which would eliminate important Railroad Retirement Tier 1 benefits. For more information, visit: www.ble-t.org/ryanbudget
A bout five months ago we began reporting on an attack on our pension and occupa-
tional disability benefits initiated by passage of House Commis-
ion Resolution 112, which is commonly known as the “Ryan Budget,” named after its author, House Budget Chair and Republican Vice Pres-
idential Candidate Paul Ryan (R-
W1). Accompanying the Resolution was House Report No. 112-421, which states — on page 101 — the following: “Conform Railroad Retirement Tier 1 Benefits to Social Se-
curity Benefits. Tier 1 benefits for railroad retirees are supposed to mimic Social Security benefits, but they are more generous than Social Security in many ways. This option further reduces the trajec-
tory of the Social Security Retirement System, I supported a deficit re-
solution which would cut spending, reduce the size and scope of the federal government, and reform unsustainable health and retire-
ment security programs to make them viable for future genera-
tions. Tier 1 railroad retirement benefits are designed to mimic Social Security benefits, but, like Social Security, the program risks going into default and must be changed to keep it solvent. Currently, the general federal Treasury is already covering the federal government, and reform that would not be controlled by fact check-
ers, destroy the middle class that they won't let the facts get in the way of their misrepresentations and outright lies. Beware of spin, from politicians and talking heads alike. Do your own research and your own homework by finding the actual relevant documents, reading them and then drawing your own conclusions… and then remember in November.

BLET National Division Electronic Communications Policy

Do your own research and your own homework by finding the actual relevant documents, reading them and then drawing your own conclusions… and then remember in November.

MISTAKES, MISINFORMATION OR MENDACITY

RYAN BUDGET INFO CENTER

Check out the BLET website for the following information
BLET.ORG/RYANBUDGET

Paul Ryan letter to California constituent, May 14, 2012
North Platte Bulletin article regarding Rep. Adrian Smith meeting:
Rep. Robert Hurt letter with factual inaccuracies regarding Railroad Retirement finance

Railroad Retirement Board press release documenting financial strength of system

Earlier this month, another Republican — Virginia Repre-
sentative Robert Hurt — re-
responded to a BLET constituent with information that is utterly and blatantly false. Hurt wrote: “The House Budget, H. Con. Res. 112, makes a number of re-
forms that would cut spending, reduce the size and scope of the federal government, and reform unsustainable health and retire-
ment security programs to make them viable for future genera-
tions. Tier 1 railroad retirement benefits are designed to mimic Social Security benefits, but, like Social Security, the program risks going into default and must be changed to keep it solvent. Currently, the general federal Treasury is already covering the federal government, and reform that would not be controlled by fact check-
ers, destroy the middle class that they won't let the facts get in the way of their misrepresentations and outright lies. Beware of spin, from politicians and talking heads alike. Do your own research and your own homework by finding the actual relevant documents, reading them and then drawing your own conclusions… and then remember in November.

Fraternally,
DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President

That “unions are spreading big lies in a rush to get their mem-
rists, bearing a signature, being received in the House of Repre-
sentatives, and — contrary to the threat. We, in turn, provided links on our website to the actu-
al documents that supported our reporting so the member
could make an independent judg-
manship of the facts.

If several rank-and-
file members of the BLET have taken in their meetings. They, too, have been considered the impact of the Ryan Budget on Railroad Retirement benefits. Those responses, which have been shared with the National Division, vary widely in their quality and number. One example of this is the case of understanding of how Rail-
road Retirement works, an effort to avoid misinformation, or a de-
liberate attempt to deceive BLET members and others regarding the proposal and its impact.

In a May 14, 2012, letter to a constituent in California, Rep.
drew, as “You know, Tier 1 Retirement Benefits are fund-
den through payroll tax and are invested in special non-market-
able bonds, just like with Social Security Retirement System. These benefits are suppos-
ed to mimic Social Security benefits, and one poten-
tial reform would be to conform Tier 1 Retirement Benefits, so that its benefits would be equal-
to those of Social Security.” By this letter, Rep. Ryan implied that he proposes to eliminate the “60/30” early retirement and occu-
pational disability benefits.

In August, Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NJ) held a Town Hall meet-
ing in North Platte, Nebraska. According to the local newspa-
per, the North Platte Bulletin, the Congressman issued a state-
ment regarding the Ryan Budget which read in part: “As a mem-
ber of the Ways and Means Com-
nittee, which has jurisdiction over trust fund operations relat-
ing to the Railroad Retirement System, I supported a defi-
cit re-
The Greatest Generation recognized that if people have a right to capitalize their ideas and their country’s resources, then people also have the right to capitalize their labor. When the Greatest Generation ran the country, workers bargained collectively for the fair share of the prosperity they created.

Collective bargaining built America’s great middle class after World War II. It created a virtuous loop that strengthened the American economy. Los Angeles and Detroit had the highest percentage of homeowners after World War II for one reason: Collective bargaining rights were protected for workers in the automotive and aerospace industries.

Collective bargaining also allowed employers and employees to negotiate their differences productively, to work together to solve problems, to find efficiencies and to build better products. Those rights have been weakened by job-killing trade deals that let employers pit American workers against low-paid, unskilled foreign workers. “Made in America” now means that a U.S. manufacturer managed to survive despite the onslaught of cheaper goods from China or Mexico. Collective bargaining rights are under attack, threatening our middle class. It’s no coincidence that the middle class is shrinking as collective bargaining rights are being taken away.

We’re all painfully familiar with the difficulty of surviving in this economy, but here are some statistics that should scare you: The U.S. Census Bureau says the middle class makes up 51 percent of adults, down 16 percent from 1971. In the past decade, the median income for the middle class fell to $69,847 from $72,956, and median wealth fell 28 percent.

It’s time to rebuild our middle class by going back to the values of the Greatest Generation. It’s time to protect collective bargaining rights the way we did in the 40s, 50s, 60s and early ’70s.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President
Preserving America’s middle class and protecting Railroad Retirement were key themes during opening ceremonies of the 74th annual meeting of the BLET’s Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA) on August 21 in Atlantic City, N.J. EUMA Chairman Mark Kenny opened the ceremonies while Arrangements Chairman Matt Kronyak welcomed everyone to Atlantic City on behalf of the members of Division 235.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce delivered remarks regarding the need to get union members involved and participating at the ballot box in November. “There can be no American Dream without a strong middle class, and there can be no middle class without a strong union movement.” President Pierce said.

Also addressing BLET members were New Jersey Representatives Frank A. LaBiondo (R, 2nd District) and Bill J. Pascrell Jr. (D, 8th District). John Tolman, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative, introduced both Congressmen. The Representatives gave rousing presentations and each speaker received standing ovations from the membership.

Walt Barrows, Labor Member of the Railroad Retirement Board, also addressed the membership, along with Anita Caruso, National President of the BLET Auxiliary.

The week-long meeting continued with intensive training workshops for BLET members and concluded the evening of August 23, where members of the EUMA Committee announced the names of the annual scholarship winners.
Due to Federal Election Commission (FEC) regulations, our 2012 endorsements are viewable in the members-only area of the BLET website: www.ble-t.org/members.
EXPRESS SCRIPTS AND MEDCO ARE NOW ONE COMPANY

Express Scripts and Medco Health Solutions, Inc., have come together as one company to manage your prescription benefit. Express Scripts will be the new prescription drug provider to many BLET members. Members should experience no change in the quality of service as a result of this merger.

Please continue to refill your prescriptions as you normally would by using your current prescription drug ID card, member ID number, mail-order refill forms, www.medco.com, and the toll-free member services telephone number on your ID card.

The combined company is also in the process of changing the name on all of its communications to Express Scripts. Until the renaming process is complete, you may see messages from both Express Scripts and Medco.

Frequently Asked Questions:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: WHO IS EXPRESS SCRIPTS?
A: Express scripts, like Medco, is a prescription benefit manager that helps make the use of prescription drugs safer and more affordable for millions of people. Express Scripts recently merged with Medco Health Solutions, Inc. The combined company will now be known as Express Scripts.

Q: WHY ARE THE TWO COMPANIES COMBINING?
A: Combining Express Scripts and Medco will allow the new company to do even more to help improve patient health while driving down the cost of prescription drugs.

Q: HOW DO EXPRESS SCRIPTS GET MY PRESCRIPTION INFORMATION?
A: Since Medco and Express Scripts have come together as one company to manage your prescription drug benefit, the information Medco had on file for you is now available to the merged company. Please be assured that Express Scripts will protect your private health information with the same level of security you’ve always received.

Q: IF I NEED TO CALL MEMBER SERVICES, DO I USE THE SAME PHONE NUMBER I’VE ALWAYS CALLED?
A: Yes. Continue to call the number on your prescription drug benefit ID card.

Q: WILL MY MEMBER ID NUMBER CHANGE?
A: No. Continue using your current prescription drug benefit ID card and the member ID number on the card.

HOME DELIVERY

Q: CAN I CONTINUE ORDER NEW PRESCRIPTIONS AS I NORMALLY WOULD?
A: Yes. Please continue to submit new home delivery prescriptions by mail or have your doctor send them via fax or e-prescribing. Also, continue using your member ID number, order forms, www.medco.com, and the toll-free Member Services number on your ID card.

Q: CAN I STILL ORDER REFILLS ON THE MEMBER WEBSITE OR BY PHONE?
A: Yes. Please continue to use www.medco.com or call the toll-free number on your ID card. You can also use the refill forms enclosed with your prescription orders.

Q: WILL MY HOME DELIVERY PACKAGES LOOK DIFFERENT?
A: The packaging may look different because your medications may be shipped from an Express Scripts Pharmacy or the Medco Pharmacy, depending on factors including weather, medication supply, and the distance between the pharmacy and the delivery address. There may be differences between bottle caps, bottle colors, and the labels used to package temperature sensitive medications. There will be no changes to your medications or the merged company’s delivery methods.

PARTICIPATING RETAIL PHARMACIES

Q: CAN I STILL USE THE SAME PARTICIPATING RETAIL PHARMACY THAT I DO TODAY?
A: Yes. You can still use the pharmacies in the current retail network.

TRANSITION TO THE EXPRESS SCRIPTS NAME

Q: WHAT NAME CHANGES MIGHT I EXPECT TO SEE?
A: Certain communications and organization names such as those listed below won’t change on September 1, but will likely change over time.

- The Medco Pharmacy
- Accredro Health Group, Inc. (specialty pharmacy)
- Prescription drug ID cards for existing Medco cardholders

Any questions or concerns regarding this matter should be directed to your prescription drug provider, whose name can be found on the back of your prescription ID card.

BLET SAFETY TASK FORCE INVESTIGATES TWO MAJOR INCIDENTS IN JULY

The BLET’s Safety Task Force was granted Party Status to help assist the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) with on-scene investigations at two major rail incidents in July.

On July 31 at approximately 3 a.m., a trainman received fatal injuries while performing switching duties at the Union Pacific yard in Mason City, Iowa. Brother Tom Hebert (BLET Division 312) was assigned as STF Primary Investigator for this incident.

On July 12, the BLET National Division has dispatched members of its Safety Task Force to the scene of a major derailment in Columbus, Ohio. Around a dozen cars of a 98-car Norfolk Southern freight train derailed near Columbus, Ohio at approximately 2 a.m. on July 11, causing a large fire. Preliminary reports indicate there were no train crew injuries, but residents within a one mile radius of the crash site were evacuated. Columbus fire officials have reported to the media that some cars carrying ethanol ruptured during the derailment. Carl W. Fields, Coordinator of the Safety Task Force, and Brother Hebert were assigned to assist the NTSB.

The Safety Task Force is the rail industry’s first union-based accident investigation team.
Important changes for the 2013 calendar year open enrollment period

Railroad Enrollment Services has announced an upgrade to the upcoming open enrollment process, which will be switched to online open enrollment for the first time.

The open enrollment process for railroad employees, scheduled for this coming September/October, may be accessed using the Railroad Information Depot home page (www.rrinfodepot.com) within the “Alerts and Important Dates” section. During the enrollment period, you will be able to link directly into the Railroad Enrollment Services secured portal.

In September, you will receive a personalized letter with information about how and when to access the Railroad Enrollment Services portal. Members who have qualified for their same benefits and who wish to keep their current benefit options the same are advised that they do not need to do anything.

Instructions on how to obtain a paper kit will be available to those who are unable to complete the web-based enrollment process in the September mailing. Again, you will not need to access the Railroad Enrollment Services portal if you elect to keep your current benefit options for the 2013 calendar year or do not want to opt out.

If you have questions, or for assistance with the online enrollment website, please call Railroad Enrollment Services at (800) 753-2692. •

The new web-based online enrollment portal will be available 24/7 during the designated online enrollment period this fall and will provide the following capabilities without all of the paper of the traditional enrollment kit.

• A step-by-step review of personalized benefit election choices with quick links to everything needed to enroll for the upcoming year.
• Links to your medical provider’s network.
• A quick and easy way to update your information.
• The ability to add, delete, and/or change dependent information.
• The option to review enrollment information in Spanish.
• Flexibility to make multiple changes during the open enrollment period.
• An immediate confirmation statement once you complete your selections.
• If you use the online portal, there is no need to mail any paper enrollment forms.

(— If you’re adding a dependent who is not listed, you will be required to send in the specified documentation before the dependent can be added to the Plan. Information on what is needed and where to send this information will be provided on the site.)

Important Dates

July 28-August 1, 2013
75th annual Eastern Union Meeting Association (EUMA)
BALTIMORE, MD.
Arrangements Chairman Fred Cox, Local Chairman of BLET Division 52, welcomes all BLET members to Baltimore for the 2013 EUMA. More details to come!

SAFETY TASK FORCE HOTLINE
(800) 306-5414
Report major accidents when they happen
SOUTHERN THUNDER: At E & S Southern Railway locomotives run at the roundhouse of the North Carolina Transportation Museum during a violent thunderstorm. Photo taken on June 26, 2011. Photo courtesy: Bill Member D.W. Younts, Oregonon Drainage 46, NPCJ

IMPORTANT REMINDER: REGISTER TO VOTE!

With just under 90 days until Election Day, the BLET's National Legislative Board is reminding all members to register and vote in the upcoming November elections. National elections will be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2012.

Members can use the Teamster website to find voter registration information in their state. www.teamster.org/content/register-vote

Members can also use the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's (www.eac.gov) website to download the National Mail Voter Registration Form. The form allows you to register to vote, update registration information due to a change of name, make a change of address, or register with a political party. The National Form also contains voter registration rules and regulations for each state and territory.

It is available here: www.eac.gov/assets/1/529635742362033/MI_Voter_Registra-tion_Form_English.pdf

Additionally, members are advised that different states have recently passed voter identification laws, which require voters to produce some sort of identification when voting. This may be a change from what you are used to when voting prior to the November elections. For information on voter ID laws in your state, please visit the National Conference of State Legislatures website:


BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce advised all members of the importance of voting, particularly in the current political climate.

“This year’s national election is the most important in our lives,” President Pierce said, “because we are faced with two very different choices, with vastly different outcomes for the economic security for our families, loved ones, and friends. It is imperative that every Teamster vote in November, and an amember who may possibly be working that day needs to arrange to cast an early or absentee ballot.”