LEm President Dennis R. Pierce blasted a careless and inaccurate report published in the Washington Post, calling on the newspaper to issue an apology to the men and women who operate Amtrak’s locomotives.

On September 28, the Washington Post carried an article claiming to be based on a recent report by the Amtrak Inspector General. The headline read, “Amtrak watchdog says drug and alcohol use by train operators on the rise, causing safety risks.” The article’s lead sentence makes claims that “zero of Amtrak’s locomotive engineers tested positive for drug and alcohol in 2011, and only one positive test ever from 2006 through 2011.”

President Pierce said, “Zero of Amtrak’s more than 1,400 locomotive engineers tested positive for drugs and alcohol use in 2011, and zero Amtrak locomotive engineers have tested positive for drugs and alcohol in post-accident testing since 1987.” In a Letter to the Editor of the Post, President Pierce set the record straight.

He wrote that the September 28 article is contradicted by facts found in the Report of the Amtrak Inspector General (IG), upon which the article claims to be based. In direct contrast to the inaccurate headline, the Amtrak Inspector General report clearly states that “[n]one of Amtrak’s locomotive engineers tested positive in 2011.” Further, the IG report indicates that “locomotive engineers averaged only one positive test per year from 2006 through 2011.”

While one positive test per year is one too many, that rate simply does not justify the nearly hysterical headline and lead sentence used in the article,” President Pierce said.

He also credited Operation RedBlock (ORB), the peer-to-peer drug and alcohol abuse prevention program called Operation RedBlock was implemented in 1987.

Pierce concluded by calling on editors to apologize to the professional locomotive engineers who operate Amtrak’s trains.

“Both Amtrak management and Amtrak labor have worked hard for a substance-free workplace for more than a quarter of a century. My membership has as strong an interest in achieving this goal as the traveling public does, and your article undermines that effort. The Post owes its readers much more stringent attention to detail in its reporting, and equally owes the men and women who operate Amtrak’s trains an apology.”

TEAMSTERS RAIL CONFERENCE BACKS HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT

In a September 27 letter to Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation, Teamsters Rail Conference President Dennis R. Pierce voiced a strong support for the DesertXpress/Highspeed XPressWest project which will provide good middle class jobs for tens of thousands of Americans in the Southwestern United States,” President Pierce wrote. “Equally important, the project will help our nation turn the corner in developing a 21st Century transportation system that is efficient, cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

DesertXpress/XPressWest would allow passengers to bypass highway traffic, traveling at speeds of up to 150 mph non-stop between southern California and Las Vegas in approximately 80 minutes (compared to an average highway drive time of approximately four hours).

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail workers employed as locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way workers across the United States as members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division.

THE LETTER IS AVAILABLE ON THE BLET WEBSITE:

SANDY’S DEVASTATION

In late October, Superstorm Sandy slammed into the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, adversely impacting millions of Americans and severely disrupting the region’s rail and transportation infrastructure. Thousands of Teamster families — including many BLET families — have lost their homes. The BLET’s National Division swung into action to assist, informing members whose railroads are shut down or slowed by Sandy’s impact may be eligible for Railroad Retirement unemployment benefits (see Page 7). Additionally, members living in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York may be eligible for financial assistance from the Teamster Disaster Relief Fund (also see Page 7). Some members were still without power as this issue of the News went to press. In this photo, MTA employees are at work on Sandy’s devastation in New York City. (Photo courtesy: MTAPhoto’s Flickr Photostream)

See Page 7 for RRB Unemployment Insurance information and Teamsters Disaster Relief fund assistance.

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Open Enrollment
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On November 6, Barack Obama was reelected to his second term as President of the United States. He collected more than 300 electoral votes. The BLET's Advisory Board, the organization's highest governing body, voted unanimously to endorse President Obama at a meeting on July 31. In congratulatory remarks issued on November 7, BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce wrote: "To President Obama I offer my congratulations on a victory that overcame many odds, not the least of which was the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, which has been tentative, and on an onslaught of obscene amounts of corporate and billionaire campaign contributions that were unprecedented in this nation's history. Mr. President, you earned your reelection and you deserve a second term."

On October 4, President Obama thanked BLET members for their support. "I am writing to you today to personally thank you for your recent endorsement of my candidacy for re-election to the Presidency of the United States," President Obama wrote. "It is an honor and a privilege to accept the endorsement of an organization that represents the hardworking men and women who help build our nation's middle class and keep our nation's railroads running safe and sound."

"Railroads represent the veins of commerce and tourism in our nation, and BLET/Teamsters members, and workers across the union family are the backbone of our country. The service you provide the American people is invaluable, which is why I will continue laying the foundation for economic security and opportunity for all women who help build our nation's middle class and trainmen who support," Obama continued.

In Congressional elections, Democrats retained control of the Senate while Republicans retained a majority in the House of Representatives. Key leaders of the House's Transportation & Infrastructure Committee were all reelected, leaving the Committee's make up for the 113's Congress virtually unchanged.

President Pierce also advised President Obama that the Organization will be keeping an eye on his support of key issues over the next four years. "We know, Mr. President, that you agree with us about what needs to be done to fully restore our nation's economic preeminence and we know you want to do it. The BLET will remain involved and will continue to mobilize the issues on importance to locomotive engineers, trainmen and all workers, and we will make you do what is necessary to restore the American Dream for working and middle class citizens. We will struggle every day to make sure that Washington does right by BLET members and all workers, Mr. President, because we're proud to be American and proud to be Union."
Teamsters’ GOTV effort helps re-elect President Obama

Barack Obama’s re-election was aided by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters’ largest political effort ever. The Teamster Power 2012 program not only helped the president to victory, but was instrumental in ballot initiative victories in several states and the election of pro-worker candidates at the state and federal level.

Working people proved something on Election Day: When they fight, they can win against a corporate, anti-middle-class candidate, even after the Citizens’ United decision. President Obama stood up for working families during one of our nation’s most difficult economic times. That’s why he won wherever unions put their resources.

I congratulate President Obama and Vice President Biden on their well-deserved victory, and our Teamster members who worked tirelessly on their behalf. Tens of thousands of Teamsters volunteered for the union’s massive member mobilization efforts. General Secretary-Treasurer Ken Hall, and myself, barn-stormed key battleground states across the country, motivating Teamsters to volunteer and go to the polls for Obama.

The Teamster Power 2012 program builds on the strengths of previous campaigns and uses new technologies to communicate with even more Teamsters. Teamsters registered tens of thousands of new voters, conducted precinct walks, canvassed neighborhoods, drove voters to the polls and countless other activities.

Teamsters fought successfuly against Prop 32 in California, which would restrict union money in politics but exempted billionaires. They also defeated the voter suppression amendment in Minnesota. In states such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Missouri and Indiana they worked extremely hard to defeat anti-worker extremists.

Now let us all come together and support the President in order to continue to create good-paying jobs in America. The gridlock in Washington must end. I call on the Republican leadership to stop opposing efforts to create jobs. Instead of trying to thwart the President, I hope they will work to find common ground.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA

Teamsters General President

Tim Craver reelected Chairman of Virginia State Legislative Board

Tim R. Craver was reelected by acclamation to his second term as Chairman of the Virginia State Legislative Board at its quadrennial meeting in Richmond, Va., on September 29.

Brother Craver is a member of BLET Division 532 in Richmond. He joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 1998, and was first elected Chairman at the Board’s quadrennial meeting on October 21, 2008.

All officers of the State Legislative Board were reelected by acclamation during the session, including: 1st Vice Chairman Michael W. Coleman, Division 561 (Richmond, Va.); 2nd Vice Chairman Gary A. Myers, Division 301 (Roanoke, Va.); Alternate 2nd Vice Chairman Barry L. Fannon, Division 167 (Andover, Va.); and Secretary-Treasurer, Jeffrey E. Wood, Division 26 (Richmond, Va.).

Invited guests included: BLET International President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; District of Columbia Legislative Board Chairman Herbert Harris Jr., BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs Vincent G. Verna; and Virginia AFL-CIO President Doris Crouse Mays.

President Pierce addressed the delegates on a number of important topics, including the upcoming November elections, electronic devices, and the BLET membership card program.

I thank Brother Craver for his continuing dedication to the Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “He and all members of the Board have done an excellent job of representing our hard-working members in Virginia, as evidenced by their unanimous re-elections. I commend them and thank them for the job they’ve done.”

During the session, Chairman Craver announced that the Board has recently established a new website, www.vslt.org. The site contains many important features, including an “Unsafe Condition Form” to help members document dangerous conditions at work. He also updated the delegates on efforts to secure crew van legislation in the state, which would improve safety conditions for members traveling in off duty vehicles, and stressed the importance of supporting and growing the BLET PAC fund.

The Virginia State Legislative Board represents more than 1,200 active and retired members belonging to 11 different Divisions throughout the state.
Jim Wilmesher was reelected by acclamation to the office of Chairman of the BLET’s Colorado State Legislative Board during the Board’s Fifth Quadrennial meeting in Denver, Colo., September 20-21, 2012.

Brother Wilmesher was first elected Chairman in 2008. He is a BNSF locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 256 (Denver). He joined the Brotherhood on February 1, 1998. Also elected by acclamation during the meeting was: 1st Vice Chairman Kevin Utterback, Division 47 (Denver); 2nd Vice Chairperson Steve Ward, Division 488 (Grand Junction); Secretary-Treasurer Paul Pearson, Division 135 (Denver); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Michael Bevitt, Division 940 (Denver).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert; Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman; National Vice President Mike Twombly; and Special Representative and Coordinator of Education and Training Ken Kroeger.

All officers of the Colorado State Legislative Board have done an outstanding job representing their members’ political and legislative interests in the state,” President Pierce said. “I congratulate them for winning election by acclamation and I know they will carry on with their hard work over the next four years.”

Additional BLET guests in attendance included: Sereena Hogan, National Vice President of the BLET Auxiliary; Cory Runion, Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman; Dave Geisler, Union Pacific-Eastern District General Chairman; and former Colorado State Legislative Board Chairman George Last, Division 940 (Denver) and Mike Weston, Division 186 (Denver).

For the first time, the Colorado State Legislative Board’s quadrennial meeting was a two-day event. The first day was the Board’s regular business session while the second day was an “open forum” meeting for all members in Colorado, which featured speakers from across the state as well as the BLET National Division officers addressing the membership.

Special guests on the second day included: Mike Carbo, President of the Colorado AFL-CIO; Sal Pace, Representative for the Federal Railroad Administration in Colorado; representatives from job insurance associations; and representatives from various legal counsel firms.

Chairman Wilmesher said the two-day open forum style was well-received by the membership.

“It was the first time we had attempted this style of meeting with various speakers and question and answer sessions,” Chairman Wilmesher said. “Many said afterwards that it was well done.”

He also said spouses of BLET members were encouraged to attend the open forum, and that an impressive turnout led to discussions of forming a new branch of the Auxiliary in Colorado. Chairman Wilmesher himself is a dues-paying member of the Auxiliary, and encouraged the Legislative Representatives in attendance to explore joining the Auxiliary as a member-at-large.

Chairman Wilmesher expressed his gratitude to those who helped plan the event and thanked everyone who attended.

Nick Johnson was reelected by acclamation to serve as Arizona SLB Chairman.

Brother G.N. “Nick” Johnson was reelected by acclamation to continue serving as Chairman of the Arizona State Legislative Board at the Board’s triennial meeting in Tucson, Ariz., on October 23.

Brother Johnson is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer who first joined the Brotherhood on April 1, 1999. He serves Division 28 in Tucson as Secretary-Treasurer and Legislative Representative. Brother Johnson was first elected by acclamation to serve as 1st Vice Chairman of the Board in October of 2009. On August 1, 2011, he was elevated to the Chairman’s office when Vince Verna was appointed to serve the Organization in Washington, D.C., as Director of Regulatory Affairs.

Also elected by acclamation during the meeting were: First Vice Chairman Manny Perez III, Division 647 (Phoenix, Ariz); and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Whitman, Division 28 (Tucson).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John T. Tolman; Special Representative and Coordinator of the Education and Training Department Ken N. Kroeger; Director of Benefits A. Dan Cook III; and Director of Regulatory Affairs Vince Verna. General Chairman Bill Hannah (Union Pacific-Western Lines) also gave a presentation to the delegates. David Bradley, a Candidate for Arizona State Senate, was also on hand to meet the delegates.

“I thank Brother Johnson and all members of the Arizona State Legislative Board for their dedication to the Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “There is an extremely well educated, active and involved membership in Arizona and Brother Johnson and his team represent the best of that culture. These Board members and our Arizona membership have their work cut out for them in the days ahead, but I have every confidence that they are up to the task.”

In addition to the informational presentations from guest speakers, the session consisted of a business meeting and training. The evening was an information program and banquet for the Board and BLET Division 28 members, which was attended by more than 100 members and spouses. BLET Auxiliary National Vice President Sereena Hogan, a member of the Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28, organized the dinner along with help from Kathy Hurst and other members of the Auxiliary.

“It was a fantastic day and the delegates did an outstanding job accomplishing the work that we had on the agenda,” Brother Johnson said. “I would like to thank our invited officers, guests and delegates for an extremely successful meeting.”

Brother Johnson helped coordinate events so that the State Legislative Board meeting was held the day before the regular meeting of BLET Division 28 in Tucson. The planning helped to afford maximum opportunity for BLET National Division officers and staff to meet with as many local members and officers as possible.

The BLET’s Arizona State Legislative Board represents more than 600 active members.
MEMBERS ATTENDING THE BLET’S 77TH ANNUAL SOUTHWESTERN CONVENTION MEETING (SWCM) in Galveston, Texas, held a moment of silence for victims of 9-11, as the convention’s opening ceremony fell on the 11th anniversary of the worst terrorist attack in American history.

SWCM Arrangements Chairman Jack Sweeny (Local Chairman, Division 776) called the meeting to order while Keith Stone, Chaplain of Division 776, presided over the “empty chair” ceremony where the Organization recognized BLET members and all other railroaders who lost their lives in the line of duty in the 12 months since the 2011 SWCM.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce spoke about the importance of the November elections and addressed many other issues of national importance to the Brotherhood and its members. Additional guest speakers during the opening ceremony included: Texas State Representative Craig Eiland (D-23); BLET Auxiliary National President Anita Caruso; and Railroad Retirement Board Labor Member Walt Barrows. One of the highlights of the opening ceremony came when Texas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Briggs presented a retirement plaque to Brother James Ussery, the long-serving Secretary-Treasurer of both the Texas State Legislative Board and Division 834 in Mineola, Texas.

Members participated in workshops on mobilization, hazardous materials training, conductor certification, and health care benefits. There were also workshops for Secretary-Treasurers, Legislative Representatives and Local Chairmen.

Guest speaker and political activist Jim Hightower was a highlight of the banquet on September 13.

Next year’s SWCM will be held in New Orleans, La., August 25-29, 2013.
Open enrollment for BLET Short Term Disability Plan runs through December 14

Open Enrollment for 2013 under the BLET’s Short Term Disability insurance plan began on November 1, 2012 and runs through December 14, 2012. If you are a locomotive engineer working on a railroad that participated in the Wage/Rules portion of the National Agreement dated December 16, 2003 (BNSE, NS and Amtrak did not participate in this Plan and this information does not apply to engineers working on these properties), then your coverage under Part A (described below) of the BLET Short Term Disability Plan will automatically continue. Last year, if you opted out of Part B Coverage (also described below), you may opt back in during this enrollment period. If you currently participate and wish to opt out of Part B coverage, then you can also do so during this enrollment period.

PART A – NON OCCUPATIONAL DISABILITIES
Effective January 1, 2013, there will be no changes to Part A coverage:
• Your eligibility and $40 premium is subscribed by the railroad on a monthly basis.
• Part A pays $402 per week for non-occupational disabilities only.
• Occupational disabilities are not covered.
• Each eligible member is insured for $50,000 of AD&D coverage.
• The benefit is not considered taxable income.
• The premium will be payroll deducted with your monthly union dues.

NOTE: UTM members working as engineers are eligible for Part A and may purchase Part B coverage by making an annual payment of $527 to the BLET Trust Fund. (Complete the form at the link below and return to address noted by December 14, 2012.)

FILING A CLAIM FOR BLET SHORT TERM DISABILITY
• Call 1-800-858-6506 – MetLife Claim Center.
• Tell them you would like to file a claim under BLE-T Short Term Disability.
• Provide information requested, including contact information for your attending physician(s).
• A Case Manager will be assigned and you will receive a file number, which you must keep available for future reference.
• Following the call, you will receive an authorization for release of medical information.
• Sign the document and return to MetLife.

IMPORTANT:
Eligibility for Part B is dependent on your eligibility for Part A. In order to be eligible for Part B, you must have seven (7) starts in a month with one (1) start as an engineer in the month prior to filing for disability. If you are furloughed to train service and become ineligible for Part A coverage, you must notify the Secretary-Treasurer of your local division immediately. At that time, you have three options:
1. Continue coverage of Part A and Part B by paying $40 directly to the BLET Short Term Disability Trust Fund, by the 10th of the month and continuing payroll deduction of $23 for Part B. Coverage may only be continued for six (6) months under this option. If you choose this option, you will need to contact the Plan Administrator for additional instructions.
2. Discontinue coverage of Part B temporarily until you return to engineer status and become re-eligible for Part A. Engineers who lose Part A coverage due to no fault of their own, may resume coverage for Part B, once they return to engineer status and become re-eligible for Part A. You must keep the Secretary-Treasurer of your local division informed of your status.
3. OPT-OUT of Part B by complet ing an OPT-OUT form (link below). If you choose to opt out of Part B, you may only resume coverage during a subsequent annual enrollment period.

CHOICES THAT MUST BE MADE BY DECEMBER 14, 2012
If you currently do NOT participate in Part B and choose to do nothing, you will continue to be eligible for Part A coverage only. If you are currently enrolled in Part B and wish to remain enrolled, then you are not required to take any action.
If you currently do NOT participate and would like to sign up for Part B coverage during this open enrollment period, or if you DO currently participate and would like to opt-out of Part B coverage, you must complete and return the attached form (see below), by December 14, 2012, to the Secretary-Treasurer of your local division. Your election will become effective on January 1, 2013.

Members, who OPT-OUT of Part B coverage effective January 1, 2013, will not be eligible to enroll for the coverage until the next annual enrollment period.

DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY(IES)
You are able to designate your beneficiary(ies) for the AD&D coverage on-line. If you would prefer to submit a paper beneficiary form, it is available on MetLife’s website. A simple registration process is required the first time you access www.metlife.com/my-benefits. Designating your beneficiary(ies) will ensure that your benefit proceeds are paid according to your wishes. If you do not have a designation of beneficiary(ies) on file, proceeds will be paid according to the AD&D plan’s fac ulty of payment clause. Beneficiary designation for this coverage will not impact beneficiary designations for any other Life Insurance or AD&D plans that you may have with MetLife.

QUESTIONS
Anyone with questions regarding BLET Short Term Disability should contact Jim Bradford, BLET Short Term Disability Administrator, at 216-241-2630 (ext. 205) or email Bradford@ble-t.org.

A COPY OF THE OPT-IN/OPT-OUT FORM IS AVAILABLE BELOW OR AT:
2013_STD_opt_in_out.pdf

If you desire to OPT-IN to Part B coverage for 2013 under the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, you must be eligible for Part A. If you purchased coverage for 2012, your coverage will end on December 31, 2012. Complete the remainder of this form. Be sure to include your signature and the date, and deliver to your Division Secretary-Treasurer by DECEMBER 14, 2012.

• If you desire to OPT-IN to Part B coverage under the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, complete the remainder of this form. Be sure to include your signature and the date, and deliver to your Division Secretary-Treasurer by DECEMBER 14, 2012.

“I ___________________________ (Print your name here and sign below), hereby choose to: (Mark an ‘X’)
OPT-IN
OPT-OUT

of the BLET Short Term Disability Insurance Plan, Part B. I understand that if I OPT-OUT, I may only seek enrollment in Part B during a future open enrollment period.”

Signature: __________________________ Date: __________________
BLET Div. #: __________________
Phone Number: __________________

DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 14, 2012
**HURRICANE SANDY**

Teamsters offer disaster relief assistance in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey

The Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund is accepting applications for assistance from members who live in Connecticut, New York and New Jersey after Superstorm Sandy caused major damage to homes and property on October 29, 2012.

Available from the BLET website are Teamster “Disaster Relief Alerts” and “request for help” forms. If you live in the affected area and experienced a loss due to this FEMA-declared major disaster, please download and fill out the forms. For questions, contact the Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund office at (202) 624-9871.

**NEW YORK**

Members living in one of the following New York counties are eligible to apply: Bronx, Kings, Nassau, New York, Queens, Richmond, Suffolk.

DOWNLOAD “REQUEST FOR HELP” FORM HERE:

www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/NY_disaster_relief_110212.pdf

The deadline for application is January 31, 2013.

**NEW JERSEY**

Members living in one of the following New Jersey counties are eligible to apply: Atlantic City, Cape May, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean or Union.

DOWNLOAD “REQUEST FOR HELP” FORM HERE:

www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/NJ_disaster_relief_110212.pdf

The deadline for application is January 31, 2013.

**CONNECTICUT**

Members living in one of the following Connecticut counties are eligible to apply: Fairfield, Mashantucket, Pequot Indian Reservation, Middlesex, New Haven or New London.

DOWNLOAD “REQUEST FOR HELP” FORM HERE:

www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/CT_disaster_relief_110212.pdf

The deadline is January 31, 2013.

**HELP SPREAD THE WORD**

To help increase awareness of this valuable benefit, members who live and work in the affected areas are asked to print and post these Disaster Relief Notices at their places of work.

Previous notices are archived on the National Division’s website, www.ble-t.org/disaster.

Also, members are advised that the Teamster National Division does not administer this program. Questions regarding the application process, pending applications or other inquiries should be directed to the Teamster Human Rights Commission at the telephone number provided above.

**BLET, Teamsters seek donations for members impacted by Sandy**

The BLET New Jersey State Legislative Board, in conjunction with Teamsters Joint Council No. 73, is soliciting donations to help the victims of Hurricane Sandy.

“As you are aware, thousands of families in New Jersey within the jurisdiction of Joint Council No. 73 have suffered physically and economically from Hurricane Sandy,” wrote Alphonse Rispoli, President of Joint Council No. 73. “One of our members lost his life and Teamsters’ homes have been lost or severely damaged; personal property has been destroyed; and many are homeless, without food and shelter. All need our help.”

Brother Matt Kronyk, Chairman of the BLET New Jersey State Legislative Board, is asking BLET members who wish to help to consider making a donation to the Joint Council No. 73 Food Bank/Sandy Relief Effort.

Kronyk helped to coordinate a food drive the weekend before Thanksgiving. He and the Joint Council leaders are also putting together a list of impacted members who have children so that the donations can be used to help give the kids a Merry Christmas this year.

The Joint Council No. 73 Food Bank is a charitable 501c3 corporation, which has been authorized to provide economic as well as physical assistance to all Teamster and BLET members and their families in their recovery from losses suffered by Sandy.

Donations should be made payable to “Joint Council No. 73 Food Bank / Sandy Relief Effort” and mailed to the Joint Council office at: 150 Morris Ave., Suite 204, Springfield, NJ 07081. Questions should be directed to Joint Council President Rispoli at (973) 467-9108, or to Brother Kronyk via email, mckronyk@aol.com.

**Railroad unemployment benefits available for qualified Sandy’s victims**

Superstorm Sandy impacted a huge portion of the nation in late October, and it is likely that work for many BLET members will continue to be unpredictable for some time. As a result, some will be eligible for unemployment benefits pursuant to the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA), which is administered by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB).

In order to qualify for benefits, an employee must have creditable railroad earnings in calendar year 2011 of at least $3,325.00, counting only the first $1,330.00 in earnings in each month. Additionally, a new employee must have railroad service in at least five months in 2011 in order to be eligible for RUIA benefits at this time.

National President Dennis R. Pierce urged BLET members to pull together in this time of urgent need. “Thousands and thousands of BLET members, their families, and the communities in which they live are facing the challenge of a lifetime right now,” Pierce said. “Let us keep our Brothers and Sisters in our thoughts and prayers, and help them out in big ways and small. One concrete way we can do that is to put information in their hands that helps them claim benefits to which they may be entitled.”

The RRB’s website is www.rrb.gov. Members should use Railroad Retirement Board Form UB 10, which includes an Application for Unemployment Benefits and Employment Service: http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Form_UB10-2012-03.pdf.

Application and claims can be filed at: https://secure.rrb.gov/mep/ben_services.asp.

To use online services the member must have a PIN and Password (PPW) account. The website explains how to open a PPW account.

**There is a difference.**

Compare monthly costs. Get the best value from the BLET. The BLET is the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences and is committed to remaining affordable. You could save up to $672 each year. The BLET offers you the best price, value and service.

The BLET is a not-for-profit organization with a proven track record of giving back to members and the rail labor community. The BLET created the North American Railway Foundation to help make things better for all of us.

**Compare apples to apples. It’s clear the BLET works for you.**

To apply for membership and become a part of the BLET, act today... ask a BLET member where you work for an application or visit our web site at www.blet.org or call toll free at 800.233.7080.
LENT National President Dennis R. Pierce announced that Division 3 Local Chairman John F. Fink has been appointed to a position on the President’s staff, effective Monday, October 22.

A Cleveland native, the 31-year old Fink held a position as a Trainman and Yardmaster for the New York Central Railroad starting in 1990, and served as President of United Transportation Union Local 378 for two terms. He earned promotion to locomotive engineer on October 8, 2004. Fink joined the BLET in 2007, and has served as Vice Local Chairman and as a Local Chairman of Division 3 in Cleveland.

Brother Fink is a fourth generation railroadman. His great grandfather, Fred, worked as a Yardmaster and Yardmaster for the New York Central Railroad, starting at Collinwood Yard in 1930. His grandfather (Jim Fink) also worked at Collinwood as a Trainman for the New York Central, the Penn Central and Conrail from 1930 until 1989, and was a former member of the County Board.

Brother Fink’s father, Fred, hired on the Penn Central in the Car Department in 1974 and later worked for the Pensacola Central, Conrail and CSX. He has been President of Transport Workers’ Union (TWU) Local 2019 for over 20 years, and for the past eight years has been an International Representative for the TWU, where he represents that Union on the Federal Railroad Administration Safety Advisory Committee, and AAR Safety Certification Task Force.

Brother Fink has two children — 5-year old daughter Addison and 3-year old son Cohen — and enjoys fishing and watching the Cleveland Browns, the Cavaliers and the Indians.

“John Fink brings a rare combination to the National Division, which will serve the BLE’s membership very well,” said President Pierce. “He brings the energy of youth to all his endeavors, which is focused by a lifetime of understanding, first-hand, the importance of railroad unions and service to the membership. In the year that I have known him, I have come to appreciate the blend of talents John applies to work of representing BLE’s members.”

In accepting the appointment, Brother Fink said, “It is an honor to serve my fellow brothers and sisters. But you are the president of this organization. It is my duty and privilege to work hard every day to serve you and my fellow brothers and sisters.”

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Pierce appoints John Fink to President’s Staff