Members elect Dennis Pierce BLET President

NST Walpert reelected to third term, VP Ruef to second; Briggs elected alt. VP and NLR

An historic first in the 147-year history of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, three National Division officers and one Alternate have been elected by a direct vote by rank-and-file members. By a 57%-43% margin, members reelected Dennis R. Pierce to the office of National President. He is the 23rd President in the 147-year history of the BLET and the first elected by a popular vote of all active membership.

Members also reelected National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert to the BLET Advisory Board by a 57%-43% majority, marking Brother Walpert’s third term as the BLET’s top financial officer.

All were elected to four-year terms that begin on January 1, 2011.

Direct election of officers

In years past, each BLET Division elected a delegate to attend the National Convention, and it was the delegates who cast their votes for the BLET’s National Division officers. Due to changes to the BLET’s bylaws, however, the first-ever direct election of officers by a membership-wide vote took place this year.

“This was indeed a major event in the long history of our proud organization,” President Pierce said. “I am humbled by the support shown by thousands of BLET members, and accept the mandate they have given me to progress the organization forward in the spirit of unity and Brotherhood.”

Nearly 40% of eligible BLET members cast a ballot in the first-ever membership election of National Division officers.

Brother Walpert credited the hard work of the BLET’s National Mobilization Team for helping to energize BLET members and encouraging them to exercise their right to vote.

Dennis R. Pierce

Pierce, 52, started as a union officer at the grassroots level, working his way up through all of the levels of the Organization. He is a member of BLET Division 687 (Sioux City, Iowa) and is a BNSF/MRL locomotive engineer. He has been a BLET member since April 1, 1980. He was elected to serve his Division as Local Chairman in 1991 and four years later was elected to the office of full-time Vice General Chairman of the BNSF/MRL General Committee of Adjustment. He held that office from 1995 until elevating to the office of General Chairman in 2003. He served as General Chairman until elevating to the Advisory Board in 2008.

Pierce was promoted to the office of National Vice President on April 8, 2008. He was elected to the office of First Alternate National Vice President in June of 2006 at the BLET’s First Quadrennial Convention in Las Vegas.

On December 17, 2009, the BLET Advisory Board elected President Pierce to the position of First Vice President & Alternate President, the second-highest office in the union.

He elevated to the BLET’s highest office on July 1, 2010, following the retirement of National President Paul T. Sorore.

As General Chairman from 2001-2008, Pierce presided over the BLET's largest General Committee of Adjustment. The BNSF/MRL General Committee represents 3,500 members from 44 separate BLET divisions.

About Bill Walpert

Brother Walpert was first elected General Secretary-Treasurer of the BLET on September 26, 2001, at the BLET’s Fifth Quadrennial Convention in Miami. He was subsequently reelected by acclamation to the BLET's top financial office on June 19, 2006, at the BLET’s First Quadrennial Convention in Las Vegas. As General Secretary-Treasurer of the BLET, he was in charge of the BLET Finance Committee that helped merge the BLET with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. As National Secretary-Treasurer of the BLET, he has custody of all funds of the BLET and has supervision over the financial and record department personnel of the BLET. He is under direction of the Executive Committee in regards to matters pertaining to his duties.

Brother Walpert also continued to serve on the BLET’s Officers Association Board, which is responsible for representing the interests of the BLET membership, and its various committees that finance, design, and maintain the BLET administration’s human factors research program.

Harvard Med School, WGBH team with BLET on fatigue project

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is working in conjunction with Harvard Medical School, the WGBH Educational Foundation, and the United Transportation Union to create a website for railroaders that provides them with practical information about sleep, sleep disorders and fatigue management.

Experts from the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School and media producers from the WGBH Educational Foundation are developing an educational website for BLET and UTU members and other railroaders. They are seeking input from BLET members in developing the site.

“The BLET wants to help these experts understand what information will be most important for you, as railroaders,” BLET National President Dennis Pierce said. “I urge you to participate in the survey to help them design the best website for our members.”

The survey is anonymous; members will not be asked for their names or other identifying information, and it should take you no more than 15 minutes to finish.

“Please consider this message as an encouragement to complete the survey frankly,” Pierce said.

The WGBH Educational Foundation is PBS’ largest producer of educational web and television content, such as the science series NOVA. The website is sponsored by the federal Railroad Administration’s Human Factors R&D Program and supported by the Office of Safety.

If you need more information concerning the survey, please contact BLET Director of Regulatory Affairs Steve Bruno (202-624-8748) or Bruno@ble-t.org, or Arthur Smith at WGBH at 617-300-3927 or arthur.smith@wgbh.org.

“Thank you for taking the time to complete this important survey,” Pierce said.

Survey Links

Please visit the following link to begin the survey:

www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BBLHSEXZA

You can find regular updates on website progress here: sleep.med.harvard.edu/ext/railroaders/

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I n the days before this issue of the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News went to press BLET members throughout the United States and Canada heard that the members of this great Union had never done in our 147 year history — they elected their national leadership! It has always been an honor for me to win the support of the members in an election. This time, the honor is special and humbling, because this election was the first membership election of National Divi- sion Officers.

First and foremost, I want to thank the nearly 40% of BLET Brothers and Sisters who participated in this historic event. I appreciate your support for our Brother and Sister candidates and encourage our participatory process, no matter which candidate received your vote. I will work with all my energy to validate the trust that has been bestowed upon me and to honor the pride you have placed in your Union by your participation. Casting your vote in this election has also added your name to historic chain of thousands of Brothers and Sisters who preceded us in shaping our Organization.

And I want to add a special word of thanks to several thousand members who took the time and made the sacrifice to work our national mobiliza- tion efforts, getting out the vote campaign "Get Out The Vote" campaign. The national membership vote we conducted last summer had only a 25% rate of return, and partic- ular leadership!

Brothers and Sisters who participated in this organization's first online report — an exercise that is conducted once every four years. Once leaders have been elected, the next step in the process is for the group to unite in support of the democratically expressed will of the majority and to move forward in pursuit of our shared goals.

Press the views of BLET membership to in the Congress that we read about every day, where the rule is "All politics all the time, and the peo- ple be damned."

If we fail to do that, then our Brotherhood will come to re- semble the sorry spectacle in the Congress that we read about every day, where the rule is "All politics all the time, and the peo- ple be damned."

We have some very serious challenges in the months and years ahead. Even though it is enjoying record profits, the rail- road industry is attempting to capitalize on the general eco- nomic turmoil to attack our wages and our working condi- tions. The carriers also are looking for every possible way to de-skill or eliminate jobs through technology. Collective bargaining is un- der siege on every front, and it seems that no one in a posi- tion of true power is willing to confront the excessive and ex- panding powers wielded by business and wealth. If ever there was a need for a strong, tough union ready and willing to fight, it is today.

Our Brotherhood has faced similar challenges throughout its nearly one hundred years of existence. And what our history teaches us is that the only way we can fight the railroads to a standstill and turn the tide in our favor is by being everyone uniting and helping in the fight.

So it should come as no sur- prise that the core tenet of union- ism — "An injury to one is an injury to all" — was coined by a Rail Labor leader. Gene Debs was right when he first uttered those words in the late 19th Century, and he’s right today.

The way to preserve and improve our wages, to preserve and improve our health care and pension and improve workplace safety, is when we all respond to that injury to one. It means becoming involved when called upon, and understanding that our joint struggle will pro- duce rewards for each of us. Many times what is asked of the membership is small: attend a meeting; write a letter; call a Member of Congress; vote in an election. But if you multiply these individually small acts by 30,000 or more members, and focus that effort on a common goal, the effect on the process becomes huge.

If you let someone else fight your battles for you and don’t like the outcome, the first place you should look is in the mirror. And if too many people succumb to the lure of apathy, then noth- ing is accomplished and no one is happy, except for those who have capitalized on that apathy for their own personal benefit.

If, on the other hand, we struggle together — shoulder to shoulder — to achieve our common goals, the power of the whole BLET will be far greater than the sum of its parts. That is how our forefa- others faced down the violent anti-unionism of the past and created the foundation for what we have today.

I believe this election will prove to be a catalyst for the BLET, and that the leaders you have chosen will organize and unite the BLET membership to move forward together. I need your help to make this vision a reality, and ask that you be ready to answer the call to action when it comes.

Fraternally,

DENNIS R. PIERCE

BLET President's Message

THANKS FOR HELPING TO MAKE HISTORY

President Pierce at a recent meeting of the Teamsters Rail Conference and Transition was up by nearly 60% for the election, in no small mea- sure because of the dedication of our mobilization volunteers.

For the Brothers and Sisters who did not cast a ballot in the election, I have to stress that membership in the BLET cannot be a spectator sport if we are to maintain and improve the wages, working conditions and safety of locomotive engineers and trainmen. One goal of my Administration is to strengthen the Union so that every mem- ber will want to participate in the participation sport called trade unionism.

It’s important to remember that putting the election behind us does not mean that we’ve reached the end of the story. Rather, we now move from one chapter to the next.

As we move forward, we must be mindful of the fact genuine democracy is far more than an exercise that is conducted once every four years. Once leaders have been elected, the next step in the process is for the group to unite in support of the demo- cratically expressed will of the majority and to move forward in pursuit of our shared goals.

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Coming to the Rescue

I

in recent weeks we’ve learned the right way and the wrong way to bail out struggling industries. The government’s rescue of the auto industry looks like a success. Though only GM and Chrysler got government help, Ford benefited because it relies on the same network of suppliers. Now the focus is on whether the electric car future and putting Americans back to work. Taxpayers are being repaid and there are 50,000 more auto-motive jobs here now than there were a year ago.

On the other hand, the Fed’s bailout of the world’s financial services industry — including the Republic of Korea and the Arab Banking Corp. of Bahrain — is outrageous. The Fed kept the world economy going, but it didn’t solve the structural problems that nearly collapsed the economy.

But it would be wrong to oppose all government intervention because of the Federal Reserve’s poor judgment. In the case of the auto industry, the government’s role was to ensure that all parties were on the same page, so they could create jobs for the future economy. Capital was redirected and management was held responsible for meeting specific goals.

That’s exactly what the Federal Reserve did not do when it loaned trillions of dollars to failing banks. Recently, the Fed had to reveal the ugly details of the secret emergency loans it made from 2007-10. Central bankers made no-strings-attached loans to investment firms, corporations and 35 foreign banks — but got nothing in return. The banks are still profiting from speculative trading, not investments in growing businesses.

Independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders was the responsible forcing the Federal Reserve to disclose who it loaned money to. Sanders said taxpayers who loaned banks billions of dollars at a half-percent interest were repaid with credit cards that carry 25 percent interest rates.

The rescue wasn’t perfect. The UAW workers sacrificed too many jobs and Midwest communities suffered from too many plant closings. The automakers should have been forced to reach explicit goals for keeping and creating jobs in America.

Still, GM has emerged from bankruptcy to a stock offering that earned the Treasury $10 billion. The Economic Policy Institute estimates the auto rescue saved up to 3.3 million jobs and will save taxpayers up to $51 billion over the long run.

That’s a rescue the Teamsters can get behind.

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

brother M.J. “Mikey” Stirling, a BLET Division 781 (Erwin, Tenn.), helped to spread joy and Christmas cheer to thousands of children and families when he completed his Last Run as Locomotive Engineer of the 68th annual CSX Santa Train.

Brother Stirling’s 37-year accident-free railroad career came to an end on November 20, 2010, as he expertly and safely piloted the historic train over the 110-mile route from Shelby, Ky. to Kingsport, Tenn.

Special guests included Naomi and Wynonna Judd, the mother/daughter singing duo, but the guest of honor was none other than Santa Claus himself.

The annual train follows a 110-mile stretch in the rural mountain communities of eastern Kentucky, western Virginia and northeast Tennessee, and is the territory of what is now CSX.

Brother Stirling first joined the Brotherhood on July 1, 1973. He hopped out with the Seaboard Coastline in Atlanta in 1973, and earned promotion to engineer in March of 1975. In 1984, he transferred to Division 781 and the Clinchfield district of what is now CSX.

He has worked the Santa Train for about 15 years, and was an over-the-road Lifesaver, mostly on the ground in a crowd control capacity. This is the first time he worked it as an engineer.

He said the ground control and nice weather combined to make his last runs “one of the nicest trips I’ve ever had.”

“It was lots of fun and no stress,” he said.

He said the volunteers took extra time to visit a school for mentally challenged children along the route, making sure that each student was able to personally visit with Santa.

He also said the local radio station in Kingsport, Tenn., gave frequent updates regarding the progress of the Santa Train, and even alerted members of the public regarding the progress of the Santa Train.

Brother Stirling behind the throttle.

He said he didn’t get to meet the favorite model of the crew who worked the Santa Train. And while he did not meet the famous singers, he was presented with an autographed copy of Naomi and Wynonna Judd’s latest CD.

He also donated a toy train to the United Kingdom, Scotland and Ireland in the past year, traveling aboard the Queen Mary II.

“I’ve always enjoyed running trains, just sitting behind the throttling and pulling trains,” he said. 

He said his retirement gift was a copy of an autographed copy of the Booklette. See additional photo on pg. 8.

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A festive Last Run for Div. 481’s Stirling

A message from Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa

September 18-22, 2011
76th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting
El Paso, Texas
Contact host chairman Jim Brown by phone or email: (915) 581-1373 or lchudsie@earthlink.net

Electronic Communications Policy

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspondence, bearing 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.

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 President will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate office or staff for a timely response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e-mails that do not provide sufficient information concerning the sender to enable 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 President to be aware of the opinions and suggestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member’s unofficial communication, if a response is necessary, without needlessly expending limited BLET resources.

Adopted at Cleveland, Ohio on July 22, 2010.
BLET Pennsylvania State Legislative Board holds quadrennial meeting

Chairman Ken Kertesz was reelected by acclamation to his third term at the Pennsylvania State Legislative Board’s quadrennial meeting in Hershey, Pa., from October 25-27, 2010. Brother Kertesz is a member of BLET Division 263 in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. He first joined the Brotherhood on January 1, 1974.

“I am humbled by the board’s decision to re-elect me,” Kertesz said. “And the fact that they returned me to this job by acclamation shows that I, and the rest of the board, are doing right by the membership, which is of the utmost importance.”

Also elected by acclamation were First Vice Chairman Gene Inmiller of Division 74 (Harrisburg) and Secretary-Treasurer Dave Caniff of Division 370 (Pittsburgh).

Jim O’Neill of Division 483 (Philadelphia) was elected to his third term as Second Vice Chairman. Tim Lavington of Division 325 (Wilkinsburg) was elected to his first term as Alternate Secretary-Treasurer. Jeff Johnson of Division 71 (Philadelphia) and Pete Fernandez of Division 757 (New Castle) were elected to the Executive Committee.

National President Dennis R. Pierce addressed the delegates and gave a presentation regarding the state of the BLET. He also praised the work of the Board and Chairman Kertesz.

“I would like to thank Chairman Kertesz and all of the members of the Pennsylvania State Legislative Board for the work they have done on the behalf of the members in Pennsylvania,” President Pierce said.

First Vice President E.L. “Lee” Pruitt and National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert also attended the meeting. National Secretary-Treasurer Walpert gave a presentation regarding the BLET’s finances. Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman gave the attendees a legislative and political update, with a special mention of the 2010 mid-term elections, which will be held on November 2.

Also attending the meeting were BLET Coordinator of Education & Training and Special Representative Ken Kroeger; Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman and National Association of State Legislative Board Chairman Eastern Regional Chairman Tim Hanely; New Jersey State Legislative Board Chairman Matt Kromyak and New York State Legislative Board Chairman David Kearns.

New BLET Auxiliary President Anita Caruso and Auxiliary Vice President & National Legislative Representative Serena Hogan were also in attendance.

The Pennsylvania State Legislative Board represents 1,250 members in 19 Divisions.

Ballots mailed in CSX ratification votes

Ratification ballots were mailed on December 9 to over 2,400 active BLET members working for CSX Transportation to decide the fate of two proposed agreements.

One pact includes members working under the jurisdiction of the Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment (General Chairman R.A. Finamore) and the Northern District General Committee of Adjustment (General Chairman J.P. Louis). It would set the terms and conditions for an operational consolidation involving the Consolidated B&O Eastern and Western District Rosters, and Conrail Northern District Roster, which has been sought by CSX for over a year.

The consolidated territory would be known as the North Mid-Atlantic Seniority District. The tentative agreement preserves existing prior rights-seniority for all locomotive engineers, affords expanded work opportunities and retains seniority zones limiting the force assignment of engineers. It also broadens movement between seniority districts and provides New York Dock protection for engineers displaced in connection with the consolidation.

The other tentative agreement, which is being voted on only by members working under the jurisdiction of the Northern District GCA, would resolve all wage and rule Section 6 notices for the current round. It provides for a transition, between now and 2014, from the current collective bargaining agreement to the Single System Agreement in effect on the remainder of the CSX property.

National President Dennis Pierce praised the efforts of those who worked to complete the tentative agreements. “I want to express my appreciation to General Chairman Finamore and Louis and their teams for bringing a final product to the membership after more than a year of struggle, and I want to thank Vice President Gil Gore for being there to assist at crunch time,” Pierce said.

Federal law tilts the playing field heavily in the carrier’s favor by permitting large consolidations like these, and in mandating that one collective bargaining agreement govern the consolidated territory,” Pierce added. “This was one very tough fight, and I’m proud that our team brought home tentative agreements that deserve everyone’s most serious consideration.”

Pierce also announced that the National Division’s Department of Internal Organizing, Mobilizing and Strategic Planning will be assisting the two General Committees in maximizing membership participation in the ratification process through a “Get Out The Vote” mobilization.

Ballots must be received by 10:00 a.m. on Monday, January 10, 2011, at which time tabulation will begin. Pursuant to federal law, failure of either tentative agreement automatically results in binding arbitration of the dispute.
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The amount of the lifetime maximum ben-

agement agreed on various procedures in-

tcrease from $118,900 to $126,200.

known as ERMA or GA-46000) Plan will

Secretary-Treasurer's

Workshop

December 12-15, 2010

Cleveland, Ohio

Front row, from left: Roger Adams, W. Va. SB, Secretary-Treasurer; Div. 124; Richard Ferguson, Local Chairman (Alt. S-T, Div. 457; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education & Training & Special Representative; William Walpert, NST & Director of Education & Training; Tim Done, Illinois SB, Secretary-Treasurer. Second row: Michael Abel, UP/NH GCA S-T; David Sattig Jr., 1st V/C/R Div. 457; and Aaron McKee, S-T, Div. 306. Third row: David Gore, S-T, Div. 607; Scott Carpenter, S-T, Div. 360; Christopher Eleczko, S-T, Div. 421; John Bove, S-T, Div. 269; and Kevin Seaton, Alt. S-T, Div. 269. Fourth row: Patrick Redmond, Vice Local Chairman, Div. 607; Ryan Beseecker, S-T, Div. 259; Richard Bartolo Jr., S-T, Div. 382; and Jeremy Haner, S-T, Div. 178. Fifth row: Laurence Mical, S-T, Div. 439; Dallas Dooley, S-T, Div. 214; Louise Reich, BLET Directory of Records; and Dr. Elaine Reese, BLET Office of Tax Compliance, Director. Back row: Greg Welp, S-T, Div. 656; Mike Quintana, S-T/VLC, Div. 385; Gregory Camby, S-T, Div. 831; Scott Helms, S-T, Div. 116; and Walt Schmidt, Director of Online Services, BLET National Division.

Advanced Local Chairmen’s Workshop

August 15-21, 2010

National Labor College, Silver Spring, Md.

Front row, from left: Jason Wright, Div. 502; Harvey Benn, Div. 169; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education & Training & Special Representative; and William Walpert, NST & Director of Education & Training. Second row: Kenneth White, Div. 622; and Don Lucansky, Div. 96. Third row: Paul Forman, Div. 548; William Wallace, Div. 362; Jeffrey Ruie Sr, Div. 482; and Randy Fannou Jr, Div. 37. Back row: Marcus J. Rufo, BLET Vice President & Director of Arbitration; Carl Fields, BLET Coordinator Safety Task Force; and Doug Davidson, Assistant Director of Arbitration / Labor Member-NRAB. (Present but not pictured: Serena Hagan, BLET Auxiliary National Vice President and National Legislative Representative.)

Local Chairmen’s Workshop

October 31-November 4, 2010 National Labor College, Silver Spring, Md.

Front row, from left: Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education & Training & Special Representative; Charles Ellison, Vice Local Chairman Div. 523; Lance Thomas, Vice Local Chairman Div. 622; Donald Hill, Local Chairman Div. 71; David Grimes, Vice Local Chairman Div. 6; and William Walpert, NST & Director of Education & Training. Second row: Paul Ansberry, Vice Local Chairman Div. 158; Daniel Dean, Vice Local Chairman Div. 502; Trevor Opheim, Local Chairman Div. 671; and Rick Davody, Vice Local Chairman Div. 562. Back row: Samuel Barriger, Vice Local Chairman Div. 327; Randall Zeppenfeld, Local Chairman Div. 312; Rick Hellwig, Vice Local Chairman Div. 622; Brian Farkas, Vice Local Chairman Div. 121; Mickey Wentzel, Local Chairman Div. 301; Patrick Redmond, Vice Local Chairman Div. 607; Marcus Rufo, Vice President & Arbitration Director; Brian Young, Vice Local Chairman Div. 48; Ronnie Swigart, Vice Local Chairman Div. 292; Ron Sprague, Vice Local Chairman Div. 28; Dave Sattig Jr., 1st Vice Local Chairman Div. 457; Daniel Couture, local Chairman Div. 274; Carl Fields, Coordinator, BLET Safety Task Force; Paul Smith, Vice Local Chairman Div. 757; Doug Davidson, BLET Assistant Director of Arbitration / Labor Member-NRAB; and Michael Miranda, Local Chairman Div. 383.

Secretary-Treasurer’s Workshop

December 12-15, 2010

Cleveland, Ohio

Front row, from left: Roger Adams, W. Va. SB, Secretary-Treasurer; Div. 124; Richard Ferguson, Local Chairman (Alt. S-T, Div. 457; Ken Kroeger, Coordinator of Education & Training & Special Representative; William Walpert, NST & Director of Education & Training; and Tim Done, Illinois SB, Secretary-Treasurer. Second row: Michael Abel, UP/NH GCA S-T; David Sattig Jr., 1st V/C/R Div. 457; and Aaron McKee, S-T, Div. 306. Third row: David Gore, S-T, Div. 607; Scott Carpenter, S-T, Div. 360; Christopher Eleczko, S-T, Div. 421; John Bove, S-T, Div. 269; and Kevin Seaton, Alt. S-T, Div. 269. Fourth row: Patrick Redmond, Vice Local Chairman, Div. 607; Ryan Beseecker, S-T, Div. 259; Richard Bartolo Jr., S-T, Div. 382; and Jeremy Haner, S-T, Div. 178. Fifth row: Laurence Mical, S-T, Div. 439; Dallas Dooley, S-T, Div. 214; Louise Reich, BLET Directory of Records; and Dr. Elaine Reese, BLET Office of Tax Compliance, Director. Back row: Greg Welp, S-T, Div. 656; Mike Quintana, S-T/VLC, Div. 385; Gregory Camby, S-T, Div. 831; Scott Helms, S-T, Div. 116; and Walt Schmidt, Director of Online Services, BLET National Division.

GA-46000 lifetime maximum adjusted for 2011

Effective January 1, 2011, the lifetime maximum benefit for the Railroad Employees National Early Retirement Major Medical Benefit (also known as ERMA or GA-46000) Plan will increase from $118,900 to $126,200. At the end of 2001, Labor and Management agreed on various procedures to administer the annual changes in the amount of the lifetime maximum benefit under the ERMA plan. In conjunction with the formula established in 2001, a new lifetime maximum was calculated for 2011 by utilizing the October 2010 consumer price index (CPI) data for Hospital and Related Services and Physician Services.

Additionally, for individuals who have reached the lifetime maximum, the incremental maximum available is applied to eligible expenses submitted for dates of service on or after the effective date of the new maximum. For 2011, this amount will be $7,300. This change will apply to all railroads and crafts participating in ERMA.

Under ERMA, covered expenses are reimbursed at 80% after a $100 Calendar Year deductible. Eligible employees can also elect to enroll in GA-23111 Plan E which pays 70% of the 20% not covered under ERMA after a $100 Calendar Year deductible is satisfied (50% for non-confining mental & nervous expenses). The reimbursement coincidence between the two plans is 94% of covered expenses.

If you are unsure of your eligibility for ERMA, you should contact UnitedHealthcare at 1-800-842-5212. You can also visit: www.myuhc.com/groups/railroadinfo.
The Voices of Holidays Past
A Look Back at Holiday Messages from the Brotherhood’s 147-Year History

Brotherhood leaders have traditionally shared holiday messages with the membership throughout the long and distinguished history of our great organization. These messages of peace and good will date to 1869 — two years after the Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal was first published.

Today, members of the BLE Executive Committee continue this tradition in several ways, including the mailing of holiday cards, web postings, and holiday greetings in the various Brotherhood publications.

35 YEARS AGO

“It’s hard to believe, but another year has run out, and this is the last issue of your official newspaper to be published in 1975. We wish each and every one of you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year. Boy, couldn’t we use one?” — December 1975

The Locomotive Engineer

50 YEARS AGO

“Christmas is our most profound religious holiday and one we all reverently share. It signifies to all a new birth of idealism and hope. Human failings being what they are, the observations must be repeated every year. The old traditions serve to remind us that faith and truth are constant, even if we are not.”

“Once again we are entering upon a New Year. Boy, couldn’t we use one?”

— December 1925

Locomotive Engineers Journal

60 YEARS AGO

“Once again we are entering upon a time of the year that is predominantly filled with great joy and happiness.

“A member of the BLE often fails to realize what a marvelous gift his Brotherhood is until he is unfortunate enough to find himself in trouble. It is then he sees the BLE in action as it goes to bat for him. This job protection is a blessing that cannot be forgotten.

“As holiday bells peal out their joyous tidings, and happy families gather for Yuletide with abundance of good cheer, affection and gifts, the member of the BLE may gaze proudly at his membership card and see in it a modern miracle — a gift of many lifetimes — of tremendous value to his craft and himself.”

— December 1950

Locomotive Engineers Journal

70 YEARS AGO

“Like a starlight that has traveled long and far to illuminate a darkened world and guide the traveler safely on his way, the helpful rays of the Brotherhood, too, have traveled a long and arduous route to illuminate the hearts and homes of B. of L. E. members.

“Years of united effort are behind the Brotherhood’s beneficial guidance which has led its members to higher wages, shorter working hours, safer working conditions and to the establishment of the seniority system.

“As the light of our Brotherhood grows brighter each year, new roads for still greater accomplishment stand revealed.”

— December 1940

Locomotive Engineers Journal

85 YEARS AGO

“Perhaps old Ben Franklin was right when he said, ‘A good conscience is a continual Christmas.’ Such a conscience will come to the man who rejoices in Christmas as a time for giving rather than getting, for sharing rather than hoarding — for showing good will to all his fellow men.

“After all, isn’t the spirit of Brotherhood the secret of a Merry Christmas.”

— December 1935

Locomotive Engineers Journal

100 YEARS AGO

“There is strength in harmony and, in the interest of our common good, let us all join in a resolve to work for good fellowship.

“If we could have our way we would broaden the Christmas greetings, not with gifts but until every member of the B. of L.E. had said a kindly greeting and good wishes to every other Brother, and so cement that fellowship of our great family.”

— December 1910

Locomotive Engineers Journal

110 YEARS AGO

“Within the period of Christmas will come the New Year, with kindly greetings of the day and new resolves for the year. May the benign influence of Christmas day prepare our minds for resolves leading to higher moral attainments, and to that peace and fellowship, the foundation of social order, and the spirit which gives life and strength to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers as an organization.

“Our duty well and faithfully done as individuals, the future of the B. of L.E. with its beneficence and benefits will be assured of advancement and perpetuation.”

— December 1900

Locomotive Engineers Journal

125 YEARS AGO

“As we offer the right hand of fellowship through the medium of our Journal, and feel it warmly clasped by each of our Brothers in turn, we are reminded of much for which we should be thankful.”

“Grady, joyfully, then, let us as the New Year opens bend to our labor as we have never done before. There is much still to be done for our Brotherhood, collectively and individually. Let each member consider it his duty to look into the well-being of his fellowmen, giving encouragement, sympathy and admonition when it is needed.”

— January 1885

Locomotive Engineers Journal

139 YEARS AGO

“Another year, with its varied changes, has passed away and left in its train the usual measure of joy and sorrow. Another year of growth to our Order has passed away, and we would review the situation and discover wherein it has been a profit, and also point out the way to renewed prosperity.

“A small band of half a dozen men who first started the fraternity, thousands now fill the ranks.

“A small assembly of 37 delegates assembled in Indiana in 1864, the session just held in Nashville, Tenn., in 1870, numbered 120 delegates. While in 1864, the Division number but about 60, now we have 123. The steady rise and growth of the Order under great difficulties is a marvel to many, but when the benefits to be derived are taken into consideration, it will be seen that time only was required to effect its success.”

— January 1871

Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

141 YEARS AGO

“Ladies and Gentlemen: In presenting you with this our first number of the Monthly Journal for the year 1868, we most respectfully wish you, one and all, a Happy New Year.”

— January 1869

Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

Santa Claus behind the throttle of a Canadian Pacific Railway car (c. 1930s).
Happy Holidays from BLET Executive Committee

As the year 2010 comes to an end, the Executive Committee of the BLET extends to all BLET members and their families our sincere best wishes for a Happy Holiday season and a prosperous, safe and Happy New Year. Railroading is without question a demanding and hazardous occupation. The BLET is making every effort to secure an increase in wages for all engineers, with improved health care benefits and an improved quality of life.

With the cost of living on the rise, and with health care premiums skyrocketing, locomotive engineers and trainmen deserve an equitable increase for the highly skilled, responsible and hazardous work they perform. As in the past, many obstacles have been thrown in the way of the Brotherhood’s goals, and it will take the powerful, united efforts of all BLET members to attain a fair settlement.

To that end, our Mobilization network was reinvigorated in 2010. It has been tremendously helpful in boosting membership involvement on key issues throughout the year. As a loyal and devoted member, you may be called upon in the coming months to participate in a Mobilization action to assist with our efforts at the bargaining table.

As we look forward to 2011, it is our hope that with the New Year our members will continue to take a personal and active interest in the organization, so that they may continue to enjoy the many benefits provided by our Union. Fraternally,

Dennis R. Pierce
National President

William C. Walpert
National Secretary-Treasurer

Division 267 marks 125th anniversary

Asheville, N.C., met at the Biltmore Hotel in Asheville, NC from June 12-16, 2010 to celebrate the BLET’s 147 anniversary and Division 632 (Minden, La.). Division 326 (Bossier City, La.) and Division 599 hosts 3rd annual Crawfish Boil

Division 267 has always been a part of our lives, and it’s time for reflection during this special time of year, to thank those who have made our lives more enjoyable. We should put aside time to praise those who volunteer in our communities and thank the men and women in the armed forces who give up their freedom for the safety of ours.

Please accept the blessings of this season from the National BLET Auxiliary. Remember our relatives who have passed, the soldiers who have given their lives for us and for those railroad workers who continue to keep the rails moving during the holiday season.

We wish everyone a happy, healthy and joyful holiday season. Happy New Year! **

Seasons Greetings from the BLET Auxiliary!

Happy Holiday season and a prosperous, safe and Happy New Year.

Happy Holidays from BLET Executive Committee

William C. Walpert
National Secretary-Treasurer
68th ANNUAL CSX SANTA TRAIN

A BLEET MEMBER RETIRES: The 2010 edition of the famed “Clifchandise” Santa Claus Special hustles through the north Twin Tunnel at Hill Station, Va., en route to Kingsport, Tenn. BLEET member M J. “Milt” Strifling, Division 481 (Erwin, Tenn.), compiled his last Run as a locomotive Engineer of the Santa Train this year. For details, see Page 3 of this issue. Photo: copyright Ron Flannery, November 20, 2010

SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT FOR BLEET DISABILITY AND WELFARE BENEFIT TRUST FUND

T his is a summary of the annu- al report for the Breth- lope’s plan, assets, and 3. Assets held for investment; 4. Transactions in excess of 5% of 5. Insurance information includ- ing sales commissions paid by insurance carriers.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call: The office of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, who is Plan Administrator, at 1370 Ontario Street, Standard Building Mereanze, Cleveland, OH, 44113-1702, (216) 241-2467. The charge to cover copying costs will be $3.50 for the full annual report, or $0.25 per page for any part thereof.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, on request, a copy of the plan, or the plan and accompanying notes, at no charge because these portions are furnished under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

The plan has a contract with Metropolitan Life Insurance Company to pay certain claims incurred under the terms of the plan. The total premiums paid for the plan year ending 12/31/2009 were $83,383,109.

Financial Statement

The value of plan assets, after sub- tracting liabilities of the plan, was $48,208,795 as of 12/31/2009, compared to $39,998,849 as of 12/31/2008. During the plan year the plan experienced an increase in its net assets of $612,144. This increase includes unrealized gains or deprec- nation or valuation in the difference between the value of the plan’s assets at the end of the year and the value of the assets at the beginning of the year or the cost of assets acquired during the year. The plan had total income of $9,335,774, including employer contributions of $6,511,273, employee contributions of $2,400,639, losses of $279,754 from the sale of assets and earnings from investments of $703,169. Plan expenses were $7,225,678. These expenses included $1,744,710 in admin- istrative expenses, and $8,578,203 in benefits paid to participants.

Your Rights to Additional Information

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed below are included in that to follow that:

1. An accountant’s report;
2. Financial information and infor- mation on payments to service providers;