BLET members ratify New Jersey Transit contract

In late July, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new 8 1/2 year contract with New Jersey Transit. The agreement governs rates of pay, and health and welfare benefits for more than 400 locomotive engineers, assistant locomotive engineers and locomotive engineer trainees.

Prior to the ratification, members had been without a new contract for more than five years. The new agreement runs from July 1, 2011 through December 31, 2019. It provides compounded general wage increases of 23.3 percent over the life of the contract. Members will receive full retroactive pay, which will be paid in two installments — one in 2016 and one in 2017.

Out of pocket costs for health and welfare will increase. No work rule changes were included in the agreement.

Two Presidential Emergency Boards (PEBs) were called to help resolve the dispute, and the neutral parties sided with the labor coalition’s demands each time. Labor sought wage increases of 2.5 percent per year while NJ Transit offered 0.6 percent.

The BLET was one of 11 unions negotiating as part of the New Jersey Transit Rail Labor Coalition. Nine of the 11 unions ratified an initial agreement earlier in 2016, but the BLET and SMART-Transportation Division rejected it. After returning to the bargaining table, the BLET members ratify New Jersey Transit contract...
When Voting for President, Go Wisely on November 8

President Pierce addresses members during the closing meeting of the Long Beach regional meeting on August 23, 2016.

I have said since the election process started that we should make our decisions based upon facts and with a full understanding of what each politician has done for or to workers up to now. Facts about what Donald Trump has done to hurt working class Americans contributed to the International Union’s endorsement of Hillary Clinton.

BLET National Division 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 officer 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, 86.

By Dennis R. Pierce

BLET National President
Workers Have Opportunity to Vote for a Stronger America

With the 2016 election for president, senators and representatives growing closer, working families must focus on finding a viable path forward that empowers them to have a voice in government. By doing so, they can help shape pro-worker and pro-family policies that reward their hard work with fair wages and benefits.

The November election will determine the future for these candidates for office. But more importantly, it will determine the policy direction of this country on issues that affect not only today’s workers, but also generations to come.

No two issues are more important to Teamsters today than pension security and fair trade.

BLET members ratify new SEPTA contract

By a 91 percent majority, approximately 200 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen ratified a new two-year contract agreement with SEPTA in late May.

The two-year agreement runs through March 2, 2018. It governs rates of pay, work rules and health care, and provides important quality of life improvements for BLET members.

Members will see general wage increases of 2 percent in 2016 and 3 percent in 2017, while also receiving increased pay for single day vacations. Health care, pension, FMLA and other employee benefits were extended to same sex spouses under the new agreement.

Employees who did not increase pay for single day vacations.

The new agreement provides safeguards for instructor engineers’ FRA certification while instructing trainees. It represents an increase of 850 trainees. It is hoped that the improved Locomotive Engineer instructor program will help reduce SEPTA’s manpower shortage.

“This agreement is a great accomplishment in addressing the quality of life and scheduling issues that many of our SEPTA members experience,” BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce said. “This, along with changes in the Locomotive Engineer instructor program that provides the SEPTA GCA contractual rights in the program, will allow BLET members to reap benefits for years to come.”

President Pierce thanked all SEPTA members for their solidarity throughout negotiations and their active involvement in the ratification process. He also thanked the negotiating team of National Vice President Jim Louis; General Chairman Rich Dixon; Vice General Chairman Don Hill; and Vice General Chairman Paul Osciak.

“It was an honor to work alongside such a great team of union brothers,” Vice President Louis said.

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) is the regional public transportation system for the Philadelphia area, serving approximately 3.9 million people. ...
BLET Congressional Endorsements 2016

EDITOR’S NOTE: These endorsements are based on recommendations from the various BLET State Legislative Board Chairmen and/or the BLET National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C. They represent the candidates who your elected BLET officers believe will best represent the interests of railroad workers and middle class Americans.

DUE TO FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION (FEC) REGULATIONS, OUR 2016 ENDORSEMENTS ARE VIEWABLE IN THE MEMBERS-ONLY AREA OF THE BLET WEBSITE: WWW.BLE-T.ORG/MEMBERS.
1. EMPLOYEES’ RIGHTS

A. Any employee covered by a union contract in the United States has the legal right to be a member of the union. Nonmembers have the legal right to object to paying union fees and dues for collective bargaining, contract administration and grievance arbitration and to obtain a refund in full for the portion of the fee shown to be excessive.

B. To the extent permitted by law, nonmembers may not participate in management expenses; or bargaining unit) or employer representatives; or employees in the craft or class related to arbitration, and discussion of grievance handling, all activities related to collective bargaining and administration of agreements, practices and activities.

C. The extent to which the charge shall be made and to the extent coverage relates to chargeable activities.

D. Expenses of litigation related to collective bargaining, contract administration, and internal governance of the union.

E. Expenses for legislative and administrative activities necessary to effectuate collective bargaining agreements.

F. All expenses for the education and training of members and nonmembers tended to prepare the participants to perform the more chargeable activities.

G. All costs of strikes and other similar activities.

2. PUBLICATION OF POLICY

The fees objector policy shall be published in the BLET newsletter in the month preceding the mailing of the annual audit, and annually thereafter. It shall also be provided to each nonmember whenever he/she first becomes subject to a union agreement.

3. MAJOR CATEGORIES OF CHARGEABLE ACTIVITIES

A. Union activities not related to collective bargaining and contract administration.

B. All other union objects shall be paid by the nonmember, and working conditions; and training of officers and staff in -

C. Effectuate collective bargaining agreements.

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BLET concludes Long Beach regional meeting

Approximately 300 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen and their families convened in Long Beach, Calif., on the morning of August 23 for the opening ceremonies of the BLET’s second and final regional meeting of 2016.

This was the first year the BLET National Division hosted a regional meeting. Delegates to the Third National Convention in 2014 changed the BLET’s regional meeting structure so that there are two annual regional meetings each year sponsored by the National Division.

After presentation of flags by the U.S. Navy Honor Color Guard and the playing of the National Anthem, Brother Brian Farkas, Chairman of the BLET’s Indiana State Legislative Board, delivered the invocation.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce then welcomed all members, families and guests to Long Beach. President Pierce introduced members of the BLET Advisory Board who were in attendance. He thanked National Vice President Jim Louis and Special Representative Matt Kronyak for their work in managing and organizing the regional meeting, and thanked the regional meeting arrangements committee members who provided local support: Jose L. Covarrubias, Local Chairman of Division 214 (Long Beach); Paolo Tortorice, Local Chairman of Division 5 (Los Angeles); Kent A. Richards, Local Chairman of Division 56 (West Colton, Calif.); Don W. Carroll, Local Chairman of Division 660 (Los Angeles); and Kathy and Dino Ruotola, a retired member of Division 12 (Fort Wayne, Ind.).

Numerous distinguished guest speakers addressed the body, including: U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal of California’s 47th District; Ron Herrera, Teamsters Joint Council 7 Political Director; and Walt Barrows, Railroad Retirement Board Labor Member.

In his address, President Pierce spoke about the pride, skill and professionalism of BLET members and the important role they play in the success of the nation’s freight and passenger rail industry. Also, he said BLET members must work together to meet the difficult challenges facing the union and America’s entire middle class.

Your union has fought in the halls of Congress for things such as the Railroad Labor Act, the Railroad Retirement Act, the Railway Labor Act, the Hours of Service Act, the Boiler Inspection Act, the Power Brake Law, the Safety Appliance Act, the Federal Employers’ Liability Act, all to protect our employees,” President Pierce said. “I don’t share this to toot the BLET’s horn; in fact, it’s obvious from the description of today’s workplace that there remains much more work to do on behalf of our members. But I do share this to impress upon you the importance of supporting your union’s efforts. The very strength of our union is based upon our collective and coordinated efforts, and not upon the efforts of any one individual. As General President Jim Hoffa says, the corporations may have the money, but we have the boots on the ground. The challenge is harnessing that strength when important issues confront us, and that time is on us now.

“Now, there are things that we can do to try and stem this tide, and to try and turn this country back into a country where the working class is recognized and respected, both in the workplace and on payday. The biggest step in that change is to go back to electing politicians who will work for the working class instead of the corporations. We will all have such an opportunity this fall, and BLET will be working now — and will continue to work — to educate our members on exactly what the risks are to railroad workers when it comes to electing politicians owned by corporations.”

The opening ceremony also included a memorial ceremony in which the names of all BLET members killed in the line of duty since 1989 were shown in a solemn video presentation. They were honored with a moment of silence.

Members took advantage of educational opportunities throughout the remainder of the week. Workshops featured specialized training for BLET Legislative Representatives, Secretary-Treasurers and Local Chairmen. These workshops also included an overview of the BLET’s Mobilization network.

The 2016 Long Beach regional meeting concluded with a banquet on the evening of August 25. The BLET’s 2017 regional meetings will be held in Myrtle Beach, S.C., and San Antonio, Texas. More specific information will be made available soon.
Here are a few things you need to know to make an informed decision.

The BR&CF offers huge savings with the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences and suspended or dismissed. Daily benefit levels are available at $80, $100, $120, $150, $180, $200, $220, and $250. Dues are as little as $30.40 per month or a maximum of $95 per month at the highest level.

New members start with 150 days of protection. You are protected when you return to work from a suspension or dismissal because your days of protection are reset. You are rewarded with increased days of protection the longer you are a member and there is no change in monthly dues.

Your membership is portable between railroad crafts... what is important is that you are a member of a railroad union or brotherhood. The officers and directors of this Brotherhood are all railroad union members who are elected by the members to oversee this Fund on your behalf.

The on-duty accidental death and dismemberment benefit is free. Even more reasons for belonging, such as the retirement benefit, scholarships and member referral program are described at our web site.

Taking time to learn about the BR&CF will pay dividends in monthly savings.

A BR&CF membership is a wise investment. Apply today at www.brcf.org

Do your homework to get the most out of your job income protection dollar. Get educated.
In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly.

Advisory Board June 2016 Activity

NATIONAL PRESIDENT DENNIS R. PIERCE: National Division office duties, Correspondence and telecommunications, VP of Office Administration, National Office, BLET; BLET Finance, BLET Representative; President, Transactions Rail Conference, Policy Committee, Transmontane Rail Conference; National, National By-laws Committee, Las Vegas, National Chairman, Independence, Ohio, Kansas City Southern GCA mtg., Kansas City; BLET/SMART-Rails Section meetings, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. and Las Vegas; BLET/IACG Round GCA mtg., Bossier City, LA; BLET convention, Las Vegas.

VICE PRESIDENT GIL GORE: Assigned to all CSX; Grand Trunk Western, Union Pacific South-Western Region GCA (CSX) assignment; BLET’s Business Relations Committee (BRC) meeting, CSX; General office duties, correspondence, emails, telephone calls, etc.; Holiday; Vacation; CAPS conference call; Board of Directors meeting; all CSX GCA’s; Mail, and W&LE contact; St. Louis, IL; Chicago; Indianapolis; BLET/IACG Round GCA mtg., Bossier City, LA; BLET convention, Las Vegas.

VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. PRIESTER: Assigned to all B&M (former AT&F, former CRIP); C&NE; CSX; CRIP; Penn Central; Lackawanna Northern; Missouri & North Arkansas; Monticello Railway; Kansas City Southern Rail, Great Western; Chicago, Denver 74 mtg. in Ogden, UT; BLET/IACG Round GCA mtg., Bossier City, LA; BLET convention, Las Vegas.

VICE PRESIDENT COLE W. DAVIS: Assigned to: Kansas City Southern Mid-South Rail, South Central Region; Union Rail; Denver, CO; Chicago, Denver 74 mtg. in Ogden, UT; BLET/IACG Round GCA mtg., Bossier City, LA; BLET convention, Las Vegas.

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT L. J. (JILL) PRUITT: National President Dennis R. Pierce, First Vice President & Alternate President Stephen J. Bruce, National Secretary-Treasurer John P. Toleman, Vice President & National Legislative Rep. John V. Bentley Jr., Director of Public Relations & Editor Bill Joyce, Art Director & Associate Editor www.bletnet.org - (716) 241-2630

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VOLUME 53 NUMBER 8 — August 2016

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & TRAINMEN NEWS ISSN 0998-8852 is published monthly by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, 7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, OH.

ISSN: 0898-8625

Password: Send address change to Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen News — BLET Record Department, 7061 East Pleasant Valley Road, Independence, Ohio 44131.