BLET members ratify new contract with DM&E

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new hourly-rate collective bargaining agreement with the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern Railway (DM&E) on November 30, 2015. The agreement governs rates of pay and work rules for approximately 300 locomotive engineers, assistant engineers, conductors and brakemen. It runs through December 31, 2019. The contract provides general wage increases between 30 and 50 percent dependent upon craft and assignment, as well as overtime rates and general holiday rates. The contract also provides for a Guaranteed Extra Board weekly rate of pay.

The hourly agreement provides all covered employees, including Guaranteed Extra Boards and Pools, with two consecutive days off in their scheduled work week. The agreement also provides for up to 11 personal leave days and up to five weeks’ vacation.

Under the new agreement, employees will have the ability to participate in the Employee Share Purchase Plan and will receive a company match. For those who maximize their participation in the plan, the company match equates to an approximate additional 2 percent annual value.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked the negotiating team of General Chairman Pete Semenek and Vice President Cole W. Davis for a job well done. He also thanked the DM&E membership for their participation in the voting process.

“I want to congratulate our membership on the 80%+ participation rate in the ratification vote,” President Pierce said. “The overwhelming percentage by which the agreement was ratified shows that the BLET leadership on the property is well in tune with the members’ needs.”

— Dennis Pierce

THE BLET NATIONAL DIVISION ENCOURAGES ALL MEMBERS TO SIGN UP FOR ITS NEW AUTOMATED NEWS FLASH EMAIL ALERT SYSTEM. IN EARLY SEPTEMBER, OUR PREVIOUS SYSTEM WAS REPLACED AND CONTACT INFORMATION FROM THE OLD SYSTEM CANNOT BE IMPORTED INTO THE NEW SYSTEM. AS A RESULT, PREVIOUS SUBSCRIBERS WILL NEED TO SIGN UP AGAIN AND CONFIRM THEIR EMAIL ADDRESS IN ORDER TO RECEIVE OUR EMAILS.

If you have not previously subscribed, then this would be an excellent opportunity to sign up and have our News Flashes delivered automatically to your inbox. An informed membership is a strong membership, and our News Flash email alert system helps you informed regarding the business of the Brotherhood.

To automatically receive BLET News Flashes via email, please visit the following link and provide your email address:

www.ble-t.org/newsflash
I am proud of our Brother- hood’s many accomplish- ments throughout the year 2015 and we have much to be thankful for while many sig- nificant challenges may lie ahead. I have every confidence that our Brotherhood will continue to grow and become stronger in the year 2016 — our 153rd year as an organization.

Like the brave men who founded our Brotherhood in 1863, our goal remains the same: to improve the wages and work- ing conditions of our members. Because of the important part they play in maintaining our na- tion’s economy, locomotive engi- neers and trainmen have a justi- fiable pride in their jobs. BLET members are instrumental in keeping the lifeblood of our econ- omy flowing through the arteries of steel that lace the North Amer- ican continent. BLET members have a right to stand tall and look with pride at their accomplish- ments. Ceaselessly day or night, winter or summer, BLET mem- bers get the job done.

With that pride comes the sat- isfaction that our pay and ben- efits are among the best in the nation. The BLET has worked tirelessly in 2015 to defend these well- earned benefits in the face of hostile adversaries at the ne- gotiating table. This year alone, BLET members have ratified on- property contract agreements with Norfolk Southern, Longis- land Rail Road, Indiana South- ern, CP Rail-U.S. (Soo Line), and the Dakota, Minnesota and East- ern. These contracts maintain and improve the pay, benefits and quality of life our members deserve.

On the national level, we con- tinued to negotiate jointly for a national contract through the Coordinated Bargaining Group (CPG). In addition to the BLET, the CPG consists of the SMART Transportation Divi- sion, the American Train Dis- patchers Association, the Na- tional Conference of Firemen and Oilers/SEU, the Brother- hood of Railroad Signalmen, and the International Brother- hood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers. Jointly, the particip- ating unions represent more than 85,000 railroad workers and comprise over 58 percent of the workforce who will be impact- ed by national negotiations. Al- though a final agreement is not yet in sight, significant progress has been made throughout 2015 identifying the issues of greatest importance to both sides. Seri- ous discussions are ongoing and both parties believe that a volun- tary agreement is the desired out- come. Additional meetings are set for the first quarter of 2016, and updates will be made avail- able when appropriate.

Working together with our fellow Brothers and Sisters in other unions gives us the best chance to come out ahead in ne- gotiations. It makes our position stronger. The same can be said of issues like two-person crews.

For the second year in a row, the BLET worked with our coun- terparts in the SMART Trans- portation Division to advance a two-person crew bill on the national level. Similar legisla- tion was also advanced in at least 14 states during 2015, including Washington, Nebraska, Minne- sota, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho and North Dakota. On September 8, rail labor scored a major victo- ry for rail safety when Califor- nia Governor Edmund G. (Jer- ry) Brown signed a two-person crew bill into law. This repre- sents a major victory for all of organized labor, especially our hard working engine and train crews. While the advancement of technology such as Positive Train Control can make the workplace safer, technology cannot replace the trained eyes and ears of ex- perienced professionals inside the cab of the locomotive.

Speaking of technology, our own Education and Training De- partment achieved a significant milestone this year. On August 31, our Brothers and Sisters in Wisconsin were able to network with our Brothers and Sisters in Cleveland via the Internet using video and audio equipment. Our Wisconsin members were able to participate in real time with the classroom presentation being of- fered to our members in class at the Training Center in Cleveland. This was a small, but an impor- tant step, helping move us closer to realizing the vision established by our 2010 delegates.

In December, our Education and Training Department hosted the final workshop at our Train- ing Center in Cleveland. As you will recall, the BLET purchased a new headquarters building in the Cleveland suburb of Inde- pendence, Ohio, earlier this year. Construction has been moving along quickly as we prepare to relocate to our building in the spring of 2016. Our new head- quarters location will provide ample room for our National Di- vision officers and staff in a more modern work environment and we will also use the opportuni- ty to continue and expand our state-of-the-art Education and Training Center.

The BLET has been head- quartered in Cleveland since the 1870s, and the BLET con- structed its original headquarters building, the Engineers Build- ing, in 1910. The Brotherhood’s sec- ond office building, the Standard Building, was dedicated in 1924. The Brotherhood sold the Engi- neers Building to developers in 1989, and the building was de- molished. We moved into the Standard Building at the time, and have been here ever since.

While the 22-story Standard Building is a significant part of the Brotherhood’s heritage, it had reached a point where consider- able assets are necessary to reup- pose the building. The Advisory Board made the decision to sell the building in order to better focus our efforts on representa- tion of members as opposed to working as commercial proper- ty managers.

But before we turn out the lights on the old headquar- ters and move into our new, more modern facility, it must be said that what matters most is not the building, but the peo- ple. The building may change, but the people haven’t and our mission hasn’t — and won’t. We intend to keep offering the best representation and the best con- tracts to the best railroaders that America has to offer.

As we move into 2016, let us reflect on our achievements in 2015 and let us work together towards a strong and Brotherhood throughout the New Year. Happy Holidays to you and your family!

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President

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BLET National Division Electronic Communications Policy

Official communications between BLET members and the National Division require a hard copy of the correspon- dence, bearing a signature, being received by the National President to be consid- ered an “official communication.” This is to provide that the actual question(s) are addressed, and ensures that when official interpretations are made they are made refer- ence 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 Presi- dent will be reviewed and forwarded to the appropriate officer or staff for a time-ly response; however, an e-mail message is not considered an official communication.

Moreover, anonymous e-mails and e- mail messages that do not provide sufficient in- formation concerning the sender to en- able National Division staff to confirm the sender’s membership status will not receive any reply or acknowledgement. This poli- cy is intended to allow the National Presi- dent to be aware of the opinions and sug- gestions of the membership, while at the same time providing a timely response to the member’s official communication, if a response is necessary, without need- lessly expending limited BLET resources.

ADOPTED AT CLEVELAND, OHIO ON JULY 22, 2010. 88

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Cover photo: courtesy Canadian Pacific Railway
CP Rail makes $28.4 billion offer to take over Norfolk Southern

On November 17, 2015, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CP Rail) made an unsolicited $28.4 billion bid to acquire Norfolk Southern (NS). The takeover bid was met with a chilly response from Norfolk Southern’s management, who called it a “low-premium” offer. NS also rejected a second offer by CP Rail on December 8.

Activist investor William Ackman, head of Pershing Square Capital Management LP, said NS’s continued resistance to the merger efforts could lead to a proxy fight and a hostile takeover. Ackman led a group of activist investors in a hostile takeover of the CP Rail in 2012, which led to the installation of E. Hunter Harrison as CEO at Canada’s second-largest railway.

A merger of the two railroads would create the longest transcontinental railroad in North America. CP Rail characterizes it as an “end-to-end” merger of the two railroads, with CP Rail maintaining control of the merged system. It would form a railroad with 33,000 miles of track and would reach ports in Vancouver, New York, New Jersey, as well as oil fields in the Dakotas and Canada and key refineries in the Eastern United States.

Regardless, NS remained hostile to the takeover bid. NS all but rejected CP Rail’s offer in a press release, calling it November 17 “low-premium” and its December 8 offer “grossly inadequate.” NS also warned that a merger would cause significant regulatory hurdles.

Any such merger or takeover would face the scrutiny of the U.S. Surface Transportation Board and the Canadian Transportation Agency, in addition to foreign investment reviews, and would involve hundreds of thousands of pages of new rules and regulations.

As the Teamsters and others long suspected, the TPP text contains many of the most controversial items included in past lousy trade agreements that will continue to encourage job outsourcing and lower wages for U.S. workers. But it goes even further. Frankly, it makes clear why everyday Americans were kept in the dark about this Pacific Rim deal for so long.

TTP A Punch To The Gut

of U.S. Workers

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Other language in the trade deal would lead to jobs being shipped overseas. For example, because the TPP ends U.S. tariffs with other member nations, competitors there will have open access to the American market while other countries will slowly phase out their own tariffs in place. The result could be devastating for U.S. workers especially when it comes to competition with Vietnam, which would still have tariffs in place and pay their workers much lower wages.

The effects of the tariff provision could also be exacerbated by language included in the TPP rules of origin chapter that would allow a product to be called American-made even if only 45 percent of its content comes from this country. Under NAFTA, 62.5 percent of content must be from the U.S. to be considered “Made in the USA.”

It’s impossible to address all the matters contained in the deal given that it spans more than 6,000 pages. But it’s bad. And it leaves Congress with just one option when it comes to considering TPP — just say no.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President
40 YEARS AGO

“The old year is gone and a brand new one is starting to unfold. None of us knows what 1975 will hold for us, but I am sure there will be new challenges for all of us, and for the railroad. We must continue to stand united in our determination to meet and overcome the challenges with which we will be faced. The same qualities of courage and dedication that have been the hallmark of the BLE ever since the first beginnings in Marshall, Michigan, back in 1863 will be needed as we confront the events that await us, unknown and unpredictable.”

— January 5, 1975
B.N. Whitmire, President
The Locomotive Engineer

50 YEARS AGO

“The holiday season is a family time. The delight on our children’s and grandchildren’s faces is the best present anyone could give us. It is the wonder and excitement in young eyes that makes Christmas even more satisfying for all.”

— December 15, 1965
Perry S. Heath, Grand Chief Engineer
The Locomotive Engineer

60 YEARS AGO

“It was hoped that this first message of the New Year would be devoted to commending a pleasant note. But once again a holocaust has occurred on a railroad crossing leaving the locomotive engineer severely injured and his fireman painfully burned. This needless catastrophe happened near Fond du Lac, Wis., November 16, 1954, and involved a truck hauling inflammables and a Chicago & North Western passenger train. The time was broad daylight, the weather was clear and the visibility was perfect. The truck driver attempted to negotiate the crossing with the oncoming train in plain sight. Why? Perhaps the answer is contained on one word: carelessness.”

— January 1955
Paul M. Smith, Editor
Locomotive Engineers Journal

70 YEARS AGO

“December’s Christmas season in the generator of a new world of atomic. Mankind finds a war weary people, most eager to hear again the blessed words, “Peace on Earth, Good Will toward Men.” Despite the fact that this year is hailed as ‘the Victory Year’ with our armies victorious over stubborn and treacherous enemies in both Europe and the Far Pacific, the final victory of lasting peace, contentment and prosperity for all, is yet to be won. Just as the peace-loving nations of this world demand a wise and sane handling of a new and mighty power force — atomic power — so do the locomotive engineers and all other employees demand foresight and wisdom of their employers and our government on matters pertaining to their daily jobs, wages and working conditions in the new era that has dawned upon us.”

— December 1945
Paul M. Smith, Editor
Locomotive Engineers Journal

90 YEARS AGO

“Believe me, the issue of the Journal appears, Christmas will have come and gone. I want to take advantage of this opportunity to tender my sincerest thanks to the officers and members of all our divisions for their most profound cooperation and your unfailing generosity in the past year. In conclusion, I wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.”

— January 1915
H.M. Arthur
Chief Engineer
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

100 YEARS AGO

“The year just passed (1914) has not been as fruitful as usual, and many of our members have suffered financially through lack of opportunity to work, but the inducations for 1915 are much brighter. The Interstate Commerce Commission has conceded an advance in rates to the railroads, and small though it is, it will add much to the gross income of these great properties which, commercially speaking, are the greatest distributers of money, and terminal city will feel its influence. Confidence, we believe, will gradually take the place of doubt, and business will move on to a normal condition when our members will again find opportunity to work and earn as in the past. This seems to us the outlook for 1915.”

— January 1915
C.H. Salmon, Editor
Locomotive Engineers Journal

110 YEARS AGO

“To our fifty-two thousand, five hundred members the Journal extends hearty greetings, wishing one and all a most Happy New Year and all the year 1905. Thanksgiving for all the bountiful blessings that came to most of our readers during 1904, and Christmas with its tokens of love, ought to gladden the old gray hair and put all in a mood to give a most hearty welcome to the new. And if each one is inscribed with faith, hope, charity, and love, with these essentials of the Gospel Rule, forming the basis of our pledge ‘to do those things which we ought to do,’ we may consistently look into the future with pleasant anticipations, and if we practice these principles, little assurance is needed that 1905 will be all that we could wish, in material benefits, in multiplied fellowship and broadened sympathies, essentials of peace and happiness.”

— January 1905
C.H. Salmons, Editor
Locomotive Engineers Journal

120 YEARS AGO

“To the Freethinker, and all readers of this Journal, we extend hearty greetings as we enter the portals of the New Year, wishing one and all prosperity and happiness. We trust that Christmas has been fruitful of tokens of love and esteem, that the unstrengthened hand and grasp of good fellowship has been the rule, and where needed a word of sympathy and encouragement has been spoken that so often turns despair into hope, and exalts a desire for better life and better conditions, so that the New Year may bring with it the highest attainments of ‘good will to all mankind.’

“As the prosperity of our organization, like that of any well-regulated community, depends upon the enlightenment, character and energy of those who compose it, we hope that every one will remember his obligation to himself and to his associates and at the opportune time, as the bells ring the New Year in, resolve, that though we have done much, we shall put forth renewed efforts to do more and better things in 1905 than in 1894.”

— January 1905
C.H. Salmon, Editor
Locomotive Engineers Journal

130 YEARS AGO

“We hope much for the year that is before us. The past year has been a disastrous one to business interests and everyone has felt the effects of the depression. Those who prophesy better times with a change of party. We shall see. But this do we know, be the times what they may and the party do the best it can, prosperity and beneficence will never come to the idle. So be up and doing, remembering that if you act the part you ought you will have but little time to spare. Wiserly improve the present, that when old age creeps on it may bring with its silvery locks the satisfaction of a life well spent. Each may this to each a Happy New Year.”

— January 1885
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

140 YEARS AGO

“The record of the year 1874 has closed, no more to be opened on this side of eternity. Not all its joys, its tears or its fears have been realized, and yet, in presenting you this, our annual greeting, we congratulate you that so much has been accomplished, that so much progress has been made in the great work that is before us. Not all that we hoped for, nor yet so little as we feared, has come to pass. It is a world of change and progress.”

— January 1875
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

Hoping that “1875 holds in store for us more of joy than sorrow — more of real happiness and less of care and mockery: that some of the ships we have sent to sea, laden with brightest hopes and pleasant anticipations, may return safely to us, and that the engineers God speed in their undertakings. May the good angels watch over the knights of the foot-board, protect them from danger and help them to lead sober, true and moral lives! We close, wishing for each and every engineer a right Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!”

— December 1874
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

145 YEARS AGO

“Another year of our existence as an organization has passed away, and God in His infinite goodness and mercy renewed our midst many of our number since we last met in convention. Yet, we should not forget to praise God of His goodness and mercy in our sparing our lives and permitting us again to assemble in convention, and while we are thus permitted once again to act in actions have an eye sin- gle to the honor and glory of God.”

— December 1870
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

“Second Grand Chief Engineer
Second Grand Chief Engineer
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal

146 YEARS AGO

“In presenting you with this our first number of the Monthly Journal for the year 1869, we most respectfully wish you, one and all, a Happy New Year!”

— January 1869
Locomotive Engineers Monthly Journal
The annual CSX Santa Train completed its 73rd running the Saturday before Thanksgiving, safely and on time. The 110-mile route, beginning at Shelby Yard in Pikeville, Ky. and running south to Kingsport, Tenn., made 14 stops in rural communities in eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia, and eastern Tennessee.

BLET Division 781 Brother Robert A. (Bobby) Davis, a 34-year member of the BLET with more than 41 years of railroading, was the engineer on the 2015 Santa Train. This was his third time running the annual holiday train and his second consecutive year. In 2014, as a senior member of the Division, Davis bid on the Santa Train job. He had also run the train once in the late 1990s.

The 2015 Santa Train was bittersweet for Davis, though. While the trip went well and his family enjoyed the experience, the shutdown of Erwin, Tenn. terminal and the loss of 300 jobs announced by CSX in October changed the work atmosphere of what is typically a cheerful tradition. Davis said others were expected to run the train, but workforce cutbacks made him eligible to be the engineer once again.

"The biggest reason I went was for my family and the kids. My family was able to throw gifts out and meet people on the train," Davis said. "We got Santa Claus to Kingsport right on time."

"We really enjoyed it," said Davis’ wife Tressa. "Throwing out gifts with Santa and seeing how appreciative all of the people were. Seeing all of the little kids and all of their faces light up. It’s wonderful," she added.

Davis used to work at the recently closed Erwin, Tenn. terminal, but is now working between Kingsport, Tenn. and Bostic, N.C. on a long distance crew run. He intends to retire in May or June of 2016 with 42 years of railroading under his belt.

"The railroad has provided me any my family a good living," Davis said. "I’ve never regretted it."

Brother Davis began his railroad career on the Clinchfield Railroad in 1974 and became a locomotive engineer in 1980. He stayed with the railroad through various mergers and acquisitions over the years, which included the Seaboard, L&N, Family Lines, Chessie System, and eventually CSX. CSX Transportation, Food City, Dignity-U-Wear, and the Kingsport, Tenn. Chamber of Commerce sponsor the annual train. Together, volunteers distribute more than 15 tons of plush toys, clothing, fresh foods, backpacks, and other amenities to thousands of anxious children excited to catch a glimpse of Santa and his helpers.

In addition to volunteers, celebrity guest Meghan Linsey, a rising pop star and “The Voice” season 8 runner-up helped distribute gifts. In previous years, celebrity guests have included Amy Grant, Patty Loveless, Travis Tritt, the Judds, and several other notable governors and U.S. senators.

Annual Santa Train makes 73rd running

The 73rd annual CSX Santa Train at the Copper Creek Viaduct in Clinchport, Va. on Nov. 21, 2015. Photo: Doyle Massey

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Crowds surround the rear platform of the Santa Train in Fort Blackmore, Va.

Santa Claus on the rear platform of CSX business car “West Virginia.”

Plush toys and clothing stacked in crates from floor to ceiling in one of CSX’s business cars.
AMTRAK FUNDED AT $10 BILLION OVER 5 YEARS IN NEW TRANSPORTATION BILL

PTC funding, locomotive cameras also a part of new legislation

On December 4, President Obama signed a 5-year, $305 billion transportation bill that contains provisions of specific interest to BLE members. Congress overwhelmingly approved the bill on December 3. Unveiled on December 1, the bill is primarily written to increase spending to address the nation’s aging and congested highways and transit systems.

The bill boosts highway spending by 15 percent and transit spending by 18 percent over its duration. Of note to BLE members is that it also authorizes $10 billion over five years for Amtrak and $12 billion for mass transit. Also, the bill earmarks $200 million to help commuter railroads install Positive Train Control technology by the new deadline of December 31, 2018.

Additionally, the liability cap on passenger rail accidents is raised from $200 million to $295 million. Damage awards from the derailment of Amtrak train 188 earlier this year, which killed eight people and injured about 200, are expected to exceed the current cap. The bill contains a provision mandating that all controlling passenger locomotives shall have working alerters.

Of significant note is that the bill mandates that all passenger locomotives shall be fitted with inward- and outward-facing video and audio recording devices, to be installed not later than two years after passage of the bill.

The cameras will have a 12-hour continuous recording capability, be crash and fire proof, and will be accessible post-accident. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation is prohibited from disclosing any image or recording or oral transcript of employees related to an accident or an incident. Rail carriers may not use audio or video images to retaliate against employees.

FRA report a guide to the future of the Northeast Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in November released a Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for NEC FUTURE, FRA’s long-term investment framework for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) between Washington, DC and Boston, Mass.

Over the next 30 years, it is expected that an additional six million people will live along the NEC. The report represents different plans and investment strategies to keep passengers moving safely, quickly and efficiently as ridership expands. The goal is to develop a long-term vision that will prioritize rail investments to ensure the future viability of the northeast region and the nation.

The Tier 1 Draft EIS includes alternative visions for investment in the NEC. The visions range from maintaining the current level of investment and service to significant additional investment, which would dramatically increase rail’s role in transportation for the Northeast. FRA will hold 11 public hearings to gather input and feedback from stakeholders that will inform FRA’s decision on a preferred investment program.

The NEC is the nation’s busiest rail corridor with more than 700,000 passengers traveling each weekday through eight states and the District of Columbia. The NEC contributes more than $100 million every day to the Northeast’s economy, but it currently operates on outdated infrastructure, much of it built more than 100 years ago, with capacity constraints that cannot accommodate future growth. Choke points and aging infrastructure often disrupt the system’s reliability and performance. Some NEC trains traverse bridges built before 1910 and travel through tunnels built just after the Civil War.

The Tier 1 Draft EIS, which outlines the various visions, is now available for download and review by the public at www.necfuture.com

FRA considered a broad range of alternatives for the NEC, beginning in 2012 with a public scoping process and analysis of travel markets. In 2013, the FRA consolidated nearly 100 initial concepts into 15 visions (Preliminary Alternatives) that varied by level of investment, service, and route. In 2014, the FRA evaluated the Preliminary Alternatives and identified three distinct Action Alternatives; these have been refined and analyzed in the Tier 1 Draft EIS, Each Action Alternative represents a different long-term vision for improving passenger rail service that will enhance mobility options, improve performance, and better serve existing and future passengers in the study area.

SMART - UTU monthly assessment

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www.necfuture.com

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Greetings to all our BLET and Auxiliary Sisters and Brothers! As 2015 draws to a close, I find myself reflecting back to the beginning of the year when the newly elected national officers of the BLET Auxiliary adopted the slogan “on the verge of a surge” for the launch of our new administration. I am happy to report that the optimism behind that slogan has helped us to evolve our prime objective for the organization — to grow the membership. We recruited over 150 new members and organized nine new auxiliaries this year. I have long been a believer in the power of positive thinking and the use of visualization for turning dreams into reality: dream it and it will happen! Of course nothing happens without putting forth some effort and moving one’s feet, and we certainly did a lot of that throughout this year! We realized that we needed “all hands on deck” by all of our national officers, even our alternates, and every one of them, including our past president, rose to the occasion to keep us moving forward. We have every intention of keeping up the momentum in 2016.

In the spirit of maintaining an “attitude of gratitude,” I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all who helped us in so many ways during the year — the Legislative Department of the BLET National for helping with travel expenses to attend meetings and organize new auxiliaries; the State Legislative Board Chairmen and Local Chairmen who worked with us to start up new Auxiliaries in their areas; the spouses who stepped up to take positions as officers of newly formed Auxiliaries; the Chairmen of the four regional conventions who welcomed us and helped us coordinate our meetings and fundraisers at their conventions; all who supported our fundraisers; and all the new members and associate members who joined the Auxiliary this year, as well as our long-time members who remained loyal to the organization in 2015.

I am especially grateful to all of our national officers, particularly those who are members of the Executive Council — Susie Burrola, Kathleen Bisbikis, Lawana Poss, and Terri Fleming. Thank you sisters for your dedication and hard work over this past year to help the Auxiliary rise to new heights... and of course many thanks to each of our husbands who encourage and endorse the work that we do and for their belief in, and support of, the Auxiliary. And finally, I am grateful for all that the union has provided for us as BLET families. Thank you President Pierce and all of the union officers from the national level to the local level for the work that you do every day on behalf of the members, and in turn, their families. We are fortunate indeed to belong to such a great organization!

From all of our BLET Auxiliary National Officers to all of our BLET and Auxiliary Brothers and Sisters across the nation, we wish you a safe and joyful holiday season with family and friends and all the best in the coming year. We look forward to seeing many of you at the two regional meetings next summer in Chicago, Illinois, and Long Beach, California. Happy New Year!!!

Optimism is the most important human trait, because it allows us to evolve our ideas, to improve our situation, and to hope for a better tomorrow.” — Seth Godin
The Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program is hosting three training sessions in early 2016. The rail training will be available in three locations:

- **Memphis, Tennessee:** 1101 Underwood, Memphis, TN 38105
- **Chicago, Illinois:** 2500 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60607
- **California, Los Angeles:** 21300 E. El Camino Real, Norwalk, CA 90650

For more information or to register, please visit the RWWMTP website at www.rwwmtp.com or contact the Rail Workers Hazardous Materials Training Program at 216-241-2630.

### Additional Resources

- **Council on Labor-Management Cooperation (CLMCO):** Provides resources and training on labor-management relations, including contract negotiations and grievance procedures.
- **National Rail(thread) Labor Network (NRLN):** Offers resources and support for railroad workers and their unions, including legal services and advocacy.
- **American Arbitration Association (AAA):** Provides arbitration services for resolving labor disputes and grievances.
- **International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT):** Represents workers in the transportation industry, including rail workers, and offers legal services, education, and advocacy.

This comprehensive training program is designed to equip railroad workers with the skills and knowledge necessary to protect themselves, their co-workers and the public from hazardous materials. The funding announced to BLET Washington, DC office will be used to support this training and other initiatives by the Union. For more information, please visit the BLET website at www.blet.org.