On January 1, 2019, a new Advisory Board began its four-year term of office for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLE). National President Dennis R. Pierce convened the Advisory Board on January 1 while retired National Vice President Gil Gore administered the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Oath of Office to all newly elected Officers. The BLE National Division term of office began on January 1, 2019, and runs through December 31, 2022.

“The Oath is an integral part of any new officer assuming his or her new responsibilities,” said President Pierce. “The Oath serves as a reminder to all who hold office in our great union that we are but caretakers when it states that it is ‘the members who put me here and it is the members whom I will serve.’”

Newly installed officers include National Vice President Mark L. Wallace, National Vice President J. Alan Holdcraft and National Division Trustee R.E. Dick Crow.

“These fine Brothers are all part of a strong and united Advisory Board,” Pierce said, “and I am confident that they, along with the full Advisory Board, will represent our membership to the best of their ability.”

The Advisory Board is composed of the 14 highest-ranking elected officers in the Organization, and is the chief policy making body of the BLE between conventions. The Board has the authority to make decisions and perform acts and duties on behalf of the National Division that are not in conflict with or otherwise provided for in the IBT Constitution, the Rail Conference Bylaws, or the BLE Bylaws.

In addition to President Pierce, the BLE Advisory Board members include: First Vice President and Alternate President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno; Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; Vice President Marcus J. Ruef; Vice President Michael D. Twombly; Vice President Michael D. Priester; Vice President Richard C. Gibbons; Vice President James P. Louis; Vice President Wallace; Vice President Holdcraft; National Division Trustee David P. Estes; National Division Trustee William P. Lyons; and Trustee Crow, @.

BLET President’s Message
Moving forward in the new year pg. 2

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Members OK new engineer; trainman deals with W&E pg. 3

RRB Changes
Bragg new RRB Labor Member; Walt Barrows retires pg. 6

Register for News Flash email alerts at: www.ble-t.org/newsflash Follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/BLETNational

Snowy Cleveland

On its way from Chicago to Buffalo, Norfolk Southern train 206 traverses the former Nickel Plate Road main line through Cleveland, Ohio, on December 16, 2017.

Photo: Brother Richard C. Bartela Jr., a member of BLE Division 382 in Buffalo, N.Y.

2019 Scholarship Directory
SEE PAGES 4-5 FOR LIST OF FINANCIAL AID OPPORTUNITIES
As with any New Year, the month of January gives us a chance to assess the year gone by and to recalibrate our priorities for the year ahead. In 2018 we convened our successful Fourth National Convention. Delegates from our nearly 500 Local Divisions reviewed and updated the rules that govern our Union and also set the course for the future of our Brotherhood and its membership. I am proud of how delegates from all parts of the country performed those duties at our 2018 Convention. They were presented with a multitude of proposed changes to our Bylaws, and our delegates made our Brotherhood stronger by their collective actions.

In the year ahead, the National Division will continue to improve upon our Education & Training Department. As this publication goes to print, the Department is preparing an announcement regarding expansion of the training classes we offer. We are proud to continue our long-standing tradition of providing the best education and training opportunities anywhere in organized labor, with the goal of having the best trained and educated union membership in the United States.

The National Division will also continue our preparations for the next round of national contract negotiations in 2019. In the previous round of nation-al bargaining, the BLET served Section 6 notices in November of 2014 and began negotiating in January of 2015. Nearly three years later, an 88 percent majority of voting BLET members ratified a new five-year agreement in December of 2017. Part of our bargaining success can be credited to the solidarity of working together with five other unions as part of the Coordinated Bargaining Group (CBG), how and where BLET bargains in any national negotiations is governed by BLET’s Bylaws, and those internal rules will again determine the process used in the upcoming round of negotiations.

Returning to 2018, it is clear that it was a very political year, culminating in November’s elections. As in any political election, BLET issues endorse-ments to its membership recom-mending support for those politicians who support the is- sues of working class Americans. That includes those poli-ticians who are willing to support and say the word “Union,” as our very way of life is tied to a strong Union move-ment that protects our work-place interests. Our economic issues and safety issues are common issues to all BLET members, regardless of politi-cal affiliation and our fight to protect these interests form the foundation for our Brother-hood. As Union members, we have much more in common than we often realize, and our goal moving forward is to unite our Brotherhood to make for a stronger Union.

We can ill afford not to pay attention to what our elected government officials in Wash-ington, D.C., or in a particular State are doing, because not pro-tecting our interests allows for legislation that can harm us. As proud American trade union-ists, we must not only make sure that politicians who will sup-port the working middle class are elected, but we must also be on constant guard to ensure that those we elect actually are doing the job we that they were elected to do and that the mid-dle class is, indeed, protected.

As railroaders, we are all confronted with balancing the needs of our families with a demanding job, and we all de-serve to be treated with respect in the workplace. The new leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives for the 116th Congress now has the responsi-bility to help us achieve the workplace safety standards and family life BLET members de-serve. In early 2019, Representa-tive Peter DeFazio was elect-ed chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastruc-ture Committee. A good friend to the BLET for decades, Rep. DeFazio has been a commit-tee member since he first came to Congress in 1987. I am con-fident that he will bring sta-bility and leadership to the Committee he now chairs, which has important oversight of BLET members’ jobs and the rail industry.

Working people proved something on Election Day: when they fight, they can win against far wealthier corporate — and anti-worker — power. But reaping the rewards of an electoral win requires fighting the fight every day. As you know, a large portion of the federal government was shut down for most of January and there was no one to oversee aviation or rail safety, and nearly a million federal work-ers either were furloughed or forced to work for no pay. Dur-ing the shutdown, the Nation-al Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) did not dispatch inves-tigators to two fatal rail-road accidents. The NTSB did not gather evidence to deter-mine if an investigation was warranted in a third rail fatal-ity. This is unacceptable.

It is time for all elected offi-cials from all political parties to come together chart a new course for this does not happen again. The gridlock in Washington must end. And then the new Congress and the President must work to-gether chart a new course for this nation, one that prioritizes workers by strengthening their rights to fight for better pay, re spect and safety on the job, and a secure retirement. You will have to move forward together. Thank you very much.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President
Elected lawmakers who oppose minimum wage hikes often belittle their effectiveness. But the more than 5 million workers who saw their pay go up recently due to local and state increases probably see it a lot differently.

The 19 states that raised their wage floors lifted pay for some 5.3 million workers nationally. Some will see their income rise by as much as $2 an hour or $4,160 a year. Eight of the increases reflect automatic adjustments for inflation, while six were due to state laws approved by lawmakers. The final six are the result of ballot measures backed by voters.

Meanwhile, workers in 24 U.S. cities and counties also experienced a wage hike with the dawning of 2019. Taken together, the minimum wage now surpasses the abysmal $7.25 an hour federal standard in 29 states.

The country’s local and state governments are laboratories of democracy and ones where elected officials can fine tune ideas and policies. One of the best that emerged from this experiment, and faced criticism after one report made it seem workers were being hurt by the new policy, is a updated document issued late last year said city residents at the low end of the pay scale were doing better than they were before the minimum wage hike was instituted, even if working fewer hours. And that is not likely to change now that many are making $16 an hour under increases which took effect on Jan. 1.

Of course, Capitol Hill must get involved to fix the wage floor nationally. Although it is likely a difficult lift, House Democrats must lead the push in Congress to raise the federal minimum wage. The spending power of minimum wage earners has fallen 40 percent in the past five decades. As the National Low Income Housing Coalition detailed in a recent report, full-time minimum wage workers would need to work 2.5 full-time jobs in order to afford a one bedroom apartment in most of the U.S.

Meanwhile, corporate America continues to pocket huge profits while hardworking Americans see their paychecks remain flat or worse. While economy boosters like to point to the nation’s low unemployment rate, that doesn’t mean much when workers can’t pay their bills. Cost-of-living projections show that by 2024 workers nationwide will need at least a $15 an hour full-time job to afford life’s basics. It’s time for Congress to take up legislation that would allow more than 40 million workers to have more money to keep food on the table and a roof over their heads.

Fraternally,
James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

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### GENERAL PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

BY JAMES P. HOFFA

### STATE, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS LEAD WAGE HIKE CHARGE

As the National Low Income Housing Coalition detailed in a recent report, full-time minimum wage workers would need to work 2.5 full-time jobs in order to afford a one bedroom apartment in most of the U.S.

BLET members ratify new contracts with W&LE

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) overwhelmingly ratified two new collective bargaining agreements with the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway (W&LE) — one for the craft of locomotive engineer and one for the craft of trainman. Each seven-year agreement governs work rules, rates of pay, and health & welfare issues for approximately 75 locomotive engineers and over 130 trainmen. Ballots were counted on January 18.

A 79 percent majority of voting members ratified the engineer contract, while an 80 percent majority of voting members ratified the trainman contract. The agreements run through 2026 and provide significant signing bonuses based on years of service. The engineer’s agreement provides general wage increases of 6.5 percent over the life of the agreement while the conductor’s agreement provides a 6.29 percent general wage increase.

Most significantly, the agreement contains no harmful work rule changes to either craft. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked recently retired National Vice President Cole W. Davis, NS-W&LE General Chairman Randy Fannon, and their negotiating team for bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

"This is a significant victory for our members and for our Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. "I am proud to thank Brother Davis and Brother Fannon for their leadership and thank our W&LE members for their perseverance and for taking the time to vote during the balloting process."

The negotiating process began over seven years ago when the BLET served Section 6 notices on January 5, 2012. The agreements ran through 2026 and provide significant signing bonuses based on years of service. The engineer’s agreement provides general wage increases of 6.5 percent over the life of the agreement while the conductor’s agreement provides a 6.29 percent general wage increase.

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"This is a significant victory for our members and for our Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. "I am proud to thank Brother Davis and Brother Fannon for their leadership and thank our W&LE members for their perseverance and for taking the time to vote during the balloting process."

The negotiating process began over seven years ago when the BLET served Section 6 notices on January 5, 2012. I want to thank our Brothers for the solidarity they have shown throughout this lengthy process,” General Chairman Fannon said. "They have remained united and steadfast through the mediation, the strike, and the fight."

Headquartered in Brewster, Ohio, the W&LE incorporates approximately 848 miles of trackage in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. The W&LE handles over 140,000 carloads annually and interchanges with three Class I railroads (CSX, Canadian National and Norfolk Southern) and 16 regional, short line and switching railroads.
The 2019 BLET Scholarship Directory is as follows:

The 2019 BLET Scholarship Directory is published here in the 2019 BLET Directory. The scholarship opportunities vary widely. The following comprehensive list provides members and their families with contact information for each scholarship program. The BLET National Division does not maintain its own scholarship program, so interested parties are advised to contact individual scholarship providers listed below for additional information.

Those aware of additional scholarship opportunities not included in this Directory are urged to contact the BLET Public Relations Department at: Blenley@blet.org.

James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund (JRHMSF) is now accepting applications, and the deadline is March 31, 2019.

The application process is complete-ly online again this year. All applications must be completed through the online portal found on the Fund’s website: http://www.jrhmsf.org. This JRHMSF website outlines eligibility requirements and application procedures, and applicants must complete a brief registration process in order to access the registration area. Please use the “Key” JRHMSF to begin the process.

There are two types of scholarship applications available: Academic Scholarships, which range up to $10,000, and Training/Vocational Scholarships, which range up to $2,000. Full details and eligibility requirements for each type of scholarship are available on the JRHMSF website at the link above.

In 2018, 48 BLET families were awarded $850,000 in scholarships. Assisting the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members, the Fund is established solely to provide scholarships to the child or dependent of a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and contributions to the Fund are deductible as charitable contributions to the extent permitted by law.

FOR GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JAMES R. HOFFA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND, PLEASE CALL (855) 670-ISTS (4787) or email: contactus@appleySTS.com.

BLET Auxiliary and LECMPA Scholarship Programs

Established in 1991, the BLET Auxiliary Scholarship Program provides $1,000 scholarships to qualifying students who wish to pursue higher education. The Auxiliary also offers two $2,500 scholarships annually in collaboration with Locomotive Engineers and Conductors Mutual Protective Association (LECMA). The two $2,500 scholarships are fully funded by LECMPA.

The LECMPA-funded scholarships are offered to single-parent BLET members with at least one year of membership as a BLET Auxiliary Associate Member. To qualify for the LECMPA-funded scholarships, the BLET member in the family must also be a member of LECMPA for at least one year. Children of an unmarried BLET member who has been an Associate Member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year are also eligible.

In addition, applicants must be accept-ed for admission by an accredited univer-sity, college, trade school, or institution of higher learning. Recipients are chosen on the basis of academic record, leadership, character, and personal achievement.

Important: For high school seniors en-tering an institute of higher learning for the first time, a copy of ACT or SAT scores and a current copy of cumulative grade point average (GPA) must accompany the application. For graduating students or stu-dents returning to an institute of higher learning, a copy of last term’s (or most current) GPA must accompany the appli-cation. Applications submitted without these documents will not be considered.

The LECMPA-funded scholarships will be awarded to the two applicants who score the highest among those who qualify (by having one parent who is an Auxiliary member for at least one year, and one parent who is a BLET member and LECMPA member for at least one year). If an applicant meets the eligibility requirements for the LECMPA-funded scholarships but is not selected for one of the two $2,500 scholarships, he/she will still be eligi-ble for a $1,000 scholarship.

Completed applications must be re-ceived by BLET Auxiliary Secretary Lawana Poss (lwp2007@bellsouth.net) no later than April 1, 2019. Applications received after that date will not be considered.

APPLICATIONS, INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, AND MAILING ADDRESS FOR SUBMISSION MAY BE FOUND ON THE AUXIL-LIARY WEBSITE AT www.bletauxiliary.net/ scholarships.

BLET UP-Southern Region GCA

The BLET’s Union Pacific-Southern Region General Committee of Adjust-ment (UP-SR GCA) offers annual scholar-ship ranging from $750 to $2,000. Applicants must be the son, daughter, financial dependent or ward of a UP-SR GCA member in good standing per the BLET Bylaws starting with the 2019-2020 school year. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2019.

The rules and application can be found at www.bletsr.org or by contacting UP-SR GCA Secretary-Treasurer Scott Piekariski at ubpsrcai@ymail.com.

California State Legislative Board

The BLET’s CSLB will award a $1,000 scholarship to a graduating high school senior attending a college/trade/voca-tional school in 2019. The applicant’s parent or guardian must be a member in good standing in a BLET division rep-represented by CSLB.

Rules, applications and deadline in-formation are available on the Board’s website, http://www.csblb.ca.gov/2019-schol-arship. The deadline is May 1, 2019.

All applications should be mailed to the CSLB Home Office Address: CALIFORNIA STATE LEGISLATIVE BOARD, BLET/IBT, 140 FRONT ST., SUITE 20, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814.
Illinois State Legislative Board

The BLET’s Illinois State Legislative Board is currently accepting applications for the Don Little Memorial Scholarship Fund, which was established in 2013. One $1,000 and two $500 scholarships will be awarded to applicants whose parent or guardian is a BLET member in good standing with a BLET Local Division represented by the Illinois State Legislative Board. Applicants must be 26 years of age or younger.

Brother Don Little was a locomotive engineer with Metra commuter rail in Chicago and a proud member of BLET Division 294 (Bensenville, Ill.) for 35 years. Brother Little served for more than 10 years on the Executive Committee of the Illinois State Legislative Board and always had a dream of establishing a scholarship program for the family members of fellow Brothers and Sisters who belonged to divisions chartered in Illinois. Unfortunately, Brother Little passed away before his dream was realized.

In 2013, Paul Piekarski (Chairman of the Illinois State Legislative Board), Timothy Dunn (former Secretary-Treasurer of the Board), and several others helped make Brother Little’s dream a reality. Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by May 1, 2019. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms are available for download from the BLET National Division website (PDF), http://www.blet.org/pr/pdf/Illinois_SLB_Scholarship_2019.pdf.

For questions or assistance in completing the application, contact Joyce A. Piekarski, Administrative Secretary, at (630) 963-6099 or Joyce.Piekarski@gmail.com.

Wyoming State Legislative Board

The BLET’s Wyoming State Legislative Board (WYSLB) is again offering a scholarship program for the upcoming school year. First offered for the 2014 academic year, the scholarship deadline for 2019 is June 1, 2019.

Wyoming State Legislative Board Chairman Cory Runion said the Board will award either two $1,000 scholarships, or, in the event of a single applicant, one $1,000 scholarship each year to an immediate family member of a BLET member in good standing and holding membership in a Division chartered in the state of Wyoming. The scholarships will be awarded based on the application, along with the requested documentation, by the WYSLB Scholarship Committee.

Scholarship applications and all accompanying documents must be received by June 1 of each year. Specific eligibility requirements, detailed instructions and application forms (PDF) are available for download from the BLET National Division website, or can be requested from your Division Legislative Representative. Currently, the BLET has nine divisions chartered in Wyoming: Division 31 (Billings); Division 207 (Casper); Divisions 44, 103 and 115 (Cheyenne); Division 94 (Gillette); Division 869 (Greybull); Division 141 (Riverton); and Division 624 (Sheridan).

For questions of assistance in completing the application, please contact your Division Legislative Representative.

BLET Division 269

BLET Division 269 (Jamaica, Long Island, N.Y.) offers two $500 scholarships to the children of BLET members who are already enrolled in college. Participation is limited to members of Division 269 only. Winners are picked at random at the Division’s Christmas party.

For details, watch your Division 269’s mobile app or contact Division Vice President Karl Bischop (516) 449-8667.

BLET Division 622

BLET Division 622 (Alliance, Neb.) will award two $500 scholarships in 2019. Only the children or dependents of Division 622 members are eligible to apply. Scholarship winners will be chosen at random during a Division meeting in August. Applications must be received by July 31, 2019.

For more specific details, please visit the Division 622 website (http://www.blet622.com) and click on “Scholarship” or email neilburri@gmail.com.

BLET Division 269

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For details, watch your Division 269’s mobile app or contact Division Vice President Karl Bischop (516) 449-8667.

Union Plus Scholarships

Union Plus awarded $15,000 in scholarships to 115 students in the 2018 Union Plus Scholarship Program. Individual awards ranged from $500 to $4,000. The deadline is January 31 each year.

Rising education costs are making it difficult for many union families to afford the cost of tuition. That’s one reason Union Plus, which provides important consumer benefits to union members and retirees, offers a unique scholarship program. It has distributed more than $43 million in scholarships to over 2,500 union members and their children since 1993. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor. A GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended.

The students selected for university, college, trade or technical school scholarships represent a wide sampling of backgrounds, union affiliations, goals and accomplishments. The selection process is very competitive since Union Plus receives over 5,000 applications each year. The Union Plus Scholarship Program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation, supported in part by contributions from the provider of the Union Plus Credit Card. You do not need to be a Union Plus Credit Card holder to apply for this scholarship.

For more information, please visit the Union Plus website to learn more: www.unionplus.org

The James R. Hoffa Memorial Scholarship Fund

Deadline: March 31, 2019 • www.jrhmsf.org

For the sons, daughters and financial dependents of Teamster members. Academic scholarship awards ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 for high school seniors planning to attend a four-year college or university and Training/Vocational program awards of up to $2,000 for use at community colleges and trade schools.

Union Plus Education Foundation

The Union Plus Education Foundation supports programs that promote the intersection of education and training. Programs include a wide variety of initiatives and resources that support the diverse needs of the 2 million union members and retirees who are served by the Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund (BR&CF). The Foundation serves the sons and daughters of BR&CF members and supports training programs, including scholarships, grants, internships and job placements.

The Union Plus Education Foundation is the Foundation of the Future.
BLET congratulates new RRB members, salutes outgoing Labor Member Walt Barrows

On January 2, 2019, the U.S. Senate confirmed the nominations of three new members to the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board: Erhard R. Chorle, Chairman; Thomas Jayne, Management Member; and Jonathan Bragg, Labor Member.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce congratulated Chorle, Jayne and Bragg on their confirmations and expressed the Organization’s optimism at continuing good working relationship with the Railroad Retirement Board, especially with Labor Member Bragg.

A native of Hinton, West Virginia, Bragg began his railroad career 18 years ago with CSX Transportation as a freight conductor at Pinoca Yard in Charlotte, North Carolina. He subsequently transferred to the Signal Department and was elected Local Chairman and Northeast General Committee Trustee for the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS). In May 2008, Bragg was appointed as a BRS Grand Lodge Representative.

Immediately prior to his confirmation, Bragg served as Vice President NRAB for the BRS. He was elected to that position in 2011 and was reelected by acclamation in 2014 and 2018. Bragg has held several key positions with the BRS, including Director of Research — a position that works jointly with the Federal Railroad Administration to craft railroad safety regulations. Prior to becoming Vice President NRAB, Bragg served as Local Chairman of BRS Local 89 from 2005 to 2008.

"Brother Bragg is a good friend of the BLET and to all of Rail Labor. He is well qualified and I have every confidence will serve admirably in this important post," President Pierce said. "On behalf of the BLET, I offer congratulations to Brother Bragg on his well-deserved confirmation."

As a career railroadman, Bragg has gained an invaluable level of experience, knowledge, and understanding of the needs of rail workers, retirees, and their families.

Bragg served as the BRS representative before the National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB) in Chicago where he became acquainted with BLET National Vice President Marcus Ruef, who serves as Chairman of the full NRAB.

"Brother John Bragg has spent many years serving as the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen’s Labor Member of the Third Division of the National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB), where he’s spent years advancing Rail Labor’s interests in arbitration," Vice President Ruef said. "While John will be missed at the NRAB, everyone can rest assured that he will work tirelessly to protect railroad employees’ hard earned retirement."

Bragg is replacing outgoing Labor Member Walter A. Barrows who retired in late 2018. "Brother Barrows devoted a lifetime of service to railroad workers and their families," President Pierce said. "He has helped countless railroad professionals during his term as Labor Member. I am proud to offer my best wishes to Brother Walt Barrows for a long, happy, and healthy retirement. You have earned it, Brother!"

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, headquartered in Chicago, Ill., administers a federal retirement benefit program and other benefits for the nation’s railroad workers.

Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund

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The BR&CF is not an insurance company

BR&CF Officers and Directors are Railroaders

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New Members Start with 150 Days of Benefit Eligibility

Maximum of 365 days after 5 years of beneficial membership

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$50,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment Benefit

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Lump Sum “Retirement” Benefit

$500 for the first 10 years of membership and $50 for each year thereafter

Education Scholarships

20 scholarships of $1,000 awarded each year

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Call the BR&CF at (717) 657-1890 if you have any questions!
Railroad Retirement and unemployment insurance taxes in 2019

The amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement tier I and tier II payroll taxes will increase in 2019, while the tax rates on employers and employees will stay the same. In addition, unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by railroad employers will continue to include a surcharge of 1.5 percent.

Tier I and Medicare Tax — The railroad retirement tier I payroll tax rate on covered railroad employers and employees for 2019 remains at 7.65 percent. The railroad retirement tier I tax rate is the same as the social security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes is divided into 6.20 percent for retirement and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. The maximum amount of an employee’s earnings subject to the 6.20 percent rate increases from $128,400 to $132,900 in 2019, while the maximum earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate increases from $50,200 to $51,200 in 2019.

An additional Medicare payroll tax of 0.9 percent applies to an individual’s income exceeding $200,000, or $250,000 for a married couple filing a joint tax return. While employers will begin withholding that extra tax as soon as an individual’s wages exceed the $200,000 threshold, the final amount owed or refunded will be calculated as part of their individual’s Federal income tax return.

Tier II Tax — The railroad retirement tier II tax rates in 2019 will remain at 4.9 percent for employees and 13.1 percent for employers. The maximum amount of earnings subject to railroad retirement tier II tax in 2019 will increase from $95,400 to $96,700. Tier II tax rates are based on an average account balance and the railroad retirement fund’s earnings. Depending on this ratio, the tier II tax rate for employees can be between 0 percent and 4.9 percent, while the tier II rate for employers can range between 8.2 percent and 22.1 percent.

Unemployment Insurance Contributions — Earning the railroad unemployment contributions, which are experience-rated by employer. The Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act also provides for a surcharge in the event the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account balance falls below an indexed threshold amount. The accrual balance of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Account was $118.1 million on June 30, 2018. Since the balance is less than the indexed threshold of $150.1 million, a 1.5 percent surcharge will be added to the basic contribution rates for 2019 but will not increase the maximum 12 percent rate. There was also a surcharge of 1.5 percent the previous four years, with no surcharge in 2015 and 2014.

As a result, the unemployment insurance contribution rates (including the 1.5 percent surcharge) on railroad employers in 2019 will range from the minimum rate of 2.15 percent to the maximum of 12 percent on monthly compensation up to $1,665, to increase from $1,560 to $1,665. In 2019, the minimum rate of 2.15 percent will apply to 81 percent of covered employers, with 7 percent paying the maximum rate of 12 percent. New employers will pay an unemployment insurance contribution rate of 2.75 percent, which represents the average rate paid by all employers in the period 2015-2017.

BLET members ratify new contract with CF&E

On December 27, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Chicago, Fort Wayne & Eastern Railway (CF&E). The agreement governs rates of pay, benefits and work rules for about 10,000 members.

The seven-year deal is retroactive to 2017 and runs through 2023. It provides a 26.6% wage increase over the life of the agreement. Members also receive a $500 bonus upon ratification and are eligible for a $2,000 retention bonus in 2023.

Health and welfare benefits, 401K and retirement tier I tax rate is the same as the social security tax, and for withholding and reporting purposes is divided into 6.20 percent for retirement and 1.45 percent for Medicare hospital insurance. The maximum amount of an employee’s earnings subject to the 6.20 percent rate increases from $128,400 to $132,900 in 2019, while the maximum earnings subject to the 1.45 percent Medicare rate increases from $50,200 to $51,200 in 2019.

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The BLET organized the CF&E property in 2005. The railroad operates over 323 miles of track from Crestline, Ohio to Tullerton, Ind., east of Chicago. It is a Genesee & Wyoming subsidiary.

“Your short line Brothers and Sisters are an important part of our Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “I thank our CF&E members for participating in this all important bargaining process, which is so important to our strength and success as a labor union.”

The BLET organized the CF&E property in 2005. The railroad operates over 323 miles of track from Crestline, Ohio to Tullerton, Ind., east of Chicago. It is a Genesee & Wyoming subsidiary.

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It is a great way to keep informed on the most recent issues impacting your job, your contract and your Brotherhood.

LAVEING new CHAIRMAN
OF PENNSYLVANIA STATE LEGISLATIVE BOARD

Following the meeting in September, Brother Laveing and the members of the Pennsylvania SLB were active in Get Out The Vote efforts all throughout the state.

“We had a great meeting and I feel strongly about our team and I’m proud of how well we have all worked together,” Brother Laveing said. “I look forward to serving the membership.”

The BLET Pennsylvania State Legislative Board represents more than 2,500 active and retired members from seven different railroads belonging to 16 different BLET Divisions. Brother Laveing is the fourth Chairman of the Pennsylvania State Legislative Board, which was founded in 1986.

EIGHTH ANNUAL REPORT ON BLET EDUCATION & TRAINING FUND

When delegates attending the BLET’s Second National Convention in 1992 dedicated a fund for Education and Training in October of 2010, they stipulated that the fund be used to establish a dedicated fund for Education and Training in the future. The fund was established on August 7, 1995. The fund is used to provide educational and training opportunities for BLET members. The fund is used to fund educational and training programs for BLET members.

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SAN FRANCISCO PEAKS: A BNSF vehicle train rounds through Dalung, Ariz., on its way to Kansas City, Kan., from Richmond, Calif. The mountains in the background are the San Francisco Peaks, which are located in the Coconino National Forest. Image by Gregory Warpich, a member of BLET Division 18 in Seattle, Wash.

December 28, 2019

BLET members ratify 2-year pact with CN-WC

n December 28, members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) overwhelmingly ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with Canadian National Wisconsin Central subsidiary (CN-WC). The two-year agreement governs rates of pay, benefits and work rules for over 600 members.

The agreement provides a 2.5% general wage increase effective January 1, 2019, and a 3% general wage increase effective January 1, 2020 (with full retroactive to January 1, 2019).

The settlement is patterned after the recently ratified National Agreement set-teen reached by the Coordinated Bar-

n January 2019

BLET National President Dennis R. Pieczynski has appointed Marcus J. Raef, CN-WC General Chair-

n Vice President G. C. Gore — Assigned to all CSX, Grand Trunk Western, Union Pacific-Southern B&M general electric supervisors. Proposes Resolution Committee (SRC) issues, CXT (General office work, paper-works, correspondence, email, telephone calls, etc.), Holiday. Vacations. BLET Advisory Board, CN W-C, M&PA. SRC issues, CN-DC, CXT 6320, SR-56. BLET travelers to West Coast.

n Vice President Michael D. Priest — Assigned to all BNSF (former AT&SF, former CRIR), Kansas City Southern, Illinois Central (former NS, former CN), Missouri & Southern, Iowa, Missouri & Northern Illinois, Kansas City Southern. National Railway Adjustment Board (NRAB) hearings, Assistant General Counsel (GC) Fannon; Tex Mex issues, assist GC Heise; Huron and Eastern Division meetings, Bay City and Detroit, Huron and Eastern Division meetings, assist GC Fannon; Huron and Eastern Division meetings, assist GC Esch, NC, M&PA issues; General Office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; General Railways, M&PA, BLET, and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

n Vice President R. C. (Rick) Gibbons — Assigned to All Norfolk Southern General Committees (Northern, Eastern and Southern Lines); Chicago, Fort Wayne and Eastern, Indiana & Ohio (BLET); Regional Negotiations, Washington, D.C. Vice President duties; On duty at home office; PLB 7574, PLB 7238, SBA 1063, assisting GC Wallace, Asheville, N.C.; Christmas and New Years holidays. VICE PRESIDENT JAMES F. (Jim) Stromberg — Assigned to Long Island Rail Road, New York &主帅s Transit, Metro-North, New Jersey Transfers, PATH SEPTA, New Jersey Western & Pensylvania Railroad, New York Central, General Organizing, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning, Management, CN-Northern, Eastern and Southern Lines meeting, assist GC Fannon; M&PA issues; General Office duties, telephone, email, correspondence communications, etc.; General Railways, M&PA, BLET, and Democratic parties, Washington, D.C.

n Vice President M. E. (Jim) Augustine — Assigned to CN-WC Districts on Division Districts, Northern Region (former CRW), Western Lines (Pacific Harbor Lines), Western Region (Portland & Western), Central Region (Northern Region, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Colorado & Southern, Southern Region, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Oregon, Stockton & Oakland, DRGW, Stockton & Oaklan

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