CONVENTION CALL:
BLET’s Fourth National Convention

Nearly 500 delegates will convene in Las Vegas, Nevada, from October 1-4, 2018, for the BLET’s Fourth National Convention.

The BLET’s national conventions are held quadrennially, or once every four years. The assembled delegates will represent more than 36,500 active locomotive engineers and trainmen throughout the United States. They will be charged with analyzing and voting on changes to the Brotherhood’s Bylaws. Several invited dignitaries will address the delegates in session as part of the convention proceedings. Delegates will also hear reports from various BLET officers.

Pursuant to National Division Rules Section 20, Paragraph (g) of the BLET Bylaws, the list of delegates to the upcoming National Convention is published on Page 6 of this issue.

The convention will also be a nominating convention. Pursuant to the BLET Bylaws, the Rules for the 2018 BLET National Division Officers Election were published in the July 2017 issue of the BLET Newsletter. The Election Rules and other pertinent information can be found on the BLET National Division website: www.ble-t.org/2018election.

Delegate registration for the BLET’s Fourth National Convention is slated to take place on Sunday, September 30, 2018. The Convention will begin on Monday, October 1 and will be held at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino, 3700 West Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89103.

A group photo of all officers and delegates attending the BLET’s Third National Convention in 2014.

Photo: by Eric Williams, www.ericwilliams.photography
BLET PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

It is almost 10 full years since our W&LE members have had a new contract, a period in which the Carrier has waged an unrelenting attack on their wages, working conditions and current Agreements.

As I said in my last article, elections have consequences. Our bargaining efforts under the RLA are managed by the NMB, and through the President’s power of appointment, the NMB is controlled by the White House, those who are elected to high office in the Federal Government must be judged more by what they do in office as compared to what they say as candidates. In other words, who among our elected government officials work for working class Americans and who work for corporate America?

It is time for the White House, through the NMB, to acknowledge that the RLA process has been exhausted on the W&LE. It is time for the federal government to allow this dispute to be resolved without the constraints the RLA imposes, which have failed to produce a fair resolution on this property for far too many years. The continued attempts to force the final steps of the bargaining process of the RLA to be implementable only serves to frustrate the intent behind the drawn-out process itself. It is truly unfortunate that the threat of a legal strike may be the only thing that will convince W&LE to negotiate an acceptable agreement.

You have my word and my assurance that the National Division will continue to provide our W&LE members with all the assistance at our disposal. I am equally confident that our Convention in October will again rise up in support of our Brothers and Sisters.

The true test is this. What will the White House do in response to our requests? Many BLET members voted for President Trump because of his campaign commitments to improve the lives of working class Americans. He now has an opportunity to take action on those commitments by releasing us from further mediaization and allowing us to take the legal actions necessary to reach an agreement acceptable to the membership. I urge him to seize that opportunity.

DENNIS R. PIERCE

BLET NATIONAL PRESIDENT
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ear may still seem that it is just the
beginning of 2018, but the Team-

sters are already on the ground
getting involved in important elec-
tions across the country to help elect
candidates that will stick up for the
rights of workers and ensure that hardworking
Americans can support their families.

In March, for example, the work of
union members ensured the election of
candidates in Illinois and Pennsylvania
time that will put the people before the
powerful. Joint Council 25-endorsed
candidates in Illinois emerged as win-
ners in 12 congressional primaries and
the gubernatorial primary, ensuring
that the concerns of workers will be
heard as focus shifts to the general elec-
tion this November.

At the top of the Illinois ballot was J.B.
Prizker, who defeated two other Demo-
crats to become the party's gubernatori-
al nominee this fall. The candidate has
vowed to stand up for unions and work-
ers in 12 congressional primaries and
states. He spoke about issues that mattered to
them — pensions, fair trade and health
care. Given the significant population
of blue-collar workers in the district,
they understood that their livelihoods
— both on and off the job — were at risk.

Workers deserve a better life that al-

ows them to earn a fair living. But it won't
happen without electing lawmakers who
put working families first.

Fraternally,

JAMES P. HOFFA

Teamsters General President

BLET General Committees sue
to halt BNSF abrogation of contracts

Three BLET General Commit-
tees of Adjustment (GCAs) on
BNSF Railway filed suit on
March 19, 2018, in the United
States District Court for the
District of Colorado to stop BNSF's uni-
lateral consolidation of road freight ser-
vice between Denver and Cheyenne, La
Junta, Pueblo, Sterling, and Trinidad; and
between Trinidad and Denver/Texline.

As part of this consolidation, BNSF
has placed all locomotive engineers un-
der a single collective bargaining agree-
ment of the railroad's choosing, which it
had no legal or contractual authority to
do. This has resulted in significant chang-
es to wages and working conditions for
many of the engineers working in the ter-
ritory. The GCAs' lawsuit seeks restora-
tion of the status quo until statutorily-
manded bargaining is completed.

The legal action comes as serious saf-
ty concerns have arisen regarding BNSF's actions.
The railroad's local managers are
harassing and intimidating locomotive
engineers to force them into making runs
over territories they are not familiar with,
a dangerous practice that puts lives at risk.

Training trips are necessary for loco-
motive engineers who have relocated
from other areas and are not familiar
with the territory. With the Denver area
consolidations, many BLET engineers
and trainmen are being required to qual-
ify and/or familiarize on new runs and
new routes. In fact, many of these engi-
near and trainmen have never been over
portions of the new territory. In many
cases, however, they are being told
that a single trip will adequately qualify/fa-
miliarize them. A similar problem is be-

The BNSF trains affected by these con-
solidations carry millions of tons of freight
and deadly cargo such as chlorine, poi-
itic-by-inhalation chemicals. Forcing en-
gineers and trainmen onto unfamiliar
territory is risky and potentially deadly.

Denying locomotive engineers and
trainmen sufficient training trips over
rail lines on which they have little or no
operating experience has the potential to
cause a major accident and/or fatality.

"Some folks learn faster than others," BLET General Chairmen Jerry LaPrath, Jeff Thurman and Bobby Brown. "While
one engineer may need 2 or 3 trips to be-
come familiar enough with the run to op-
erate without a pilot, others may need sig-
ificantly more training to reach the same
level of proficiency."

As of mid-March, BNSF still had not
responded to the letter. This type of man-
agement indifference to safety helped trig-
er the BLET lawsuit.

At the same time, local BNSF manag-
ers have repeatedly threatened engineers
and trainmen who have requested addi-
tional familiarization trips. "We have writ-
ten reports of employees being called in
'on the carpet' and being told that they
don't want to be one of those folks who
requests more training," Holdcraft wrote
in the January 30 letter. "We will not, and
we cannot, tolerate threats made against
our members."
The BLET’s National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen (NASLBC) kicked off its 43rd annual meeting in New Orleans on March 12, 2018. Ron Batory, the newly-confirmed Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), delivered remarks to the group and separately addressed the BLET’s Advisory Board.

NASLBC Chairman Paul Piekarski called the meeting to order and introduced members of the BLET Executive Committee, who then addressed the body. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce laid out the challenges the BLET faces in the legislative and collective bargaining arenas and took questions from the audience. Next, First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt spoke about several issues, including inward facing cameras. National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno then provided an update on the union’s finances and the new membership database software system.

Administrator Batory said he wanted to personally present his background and credentials to the BLET and promised a new day of being safety aware for both the railroads and BLET members. Batory brings more than 50 years of railroad industry experience to the FRA Administrator’s position. He discussed his views on the myriad of issues faced by those behind the throttle and engaged in an extensive question and answer session that touched upon train length and rail management’s indifference to calls from BLET leaders regarding railroad safety.

Following Batory’s remarks, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman said: “We look forward to working with him on critical issues facing our nation’s freight and commuter rail systems, and wish him much success at FRA.”

Also during the meeting, the NASLBC took time to recognize three outstanding Brothers. Former State Legislative Board Chairmen Terry Todd (Arkansas) and Jeff Worthington (Utah) were recognized for their recent retirements and for their many years of dedicated service to the Brotherhood. Also, current Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Brian Kelley, who plans to retire later this year, was honored for his leadership, service and commitment to the BLET. BLET National President Pierce congratulated the three Brothers and wished them long and happy retirements. “I’m told retirement is the best job you can bid on,” President Pierce said.

NASLBC Chairman Piekarski recognized and seated three new State Legislative Board Chairmen: Wayne Denson (Arkansas), Bill Fleshman (New York), and Scott Weeks (Utah).

Also of note were comments by BNSF (former ATSF) General Chairman J. Alan Holdcraft, who spoke to the group about the importance of solidarity within our Brotherhood. He stressed how important it is for General Chairmen to work together with the State Legislative Board Chairmen.

Members of the BLET National Division staff as well as staff from the BLET National Legislative Office in Washington D.C. were also in attendance.

The NASLBC has met annually since 1975 to hear from each State Chairman about railroad-related safety and health issues as well as their state’s political climate.
Alan Holdcraft reelected BNSF (former ATSF) General Chairman

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alan Holdcraft was reelected by acclamation to his third term as General Chairman of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)/National Railroad Freight Association (NRRFA) General Committee of Adjustment at the GCA’s triennial meeting in San Diego, Calif. A member of BLET Division 776 (Galt, Kansas, Texas), Brother Holdcraft is a BNSF locomotive engineer. He has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood for nearly 38 years. He joined Division 776 on February 1, 1980. Brother Holdcraft was first elected General Chairman at the GCA’s triennial convention in 2011, and then reelected by acclamation in 2014. Also elected by acclamation were 1st Vice Chairman M. Robby Cunningham, Division 134 (Window, Ariz.) and Secretary-Treasurer Chris A. Mosser, Division 871 (Slaton, Texas). The following Brothers were also elected during the triennial session: 2nd Vice Chairman Jeremy T. McFarther, Division 446 (Belleville, Ill.), 3rd Vice Chairman Jorge R. Gomez, Division 264 (El Paso, Texas); 4th Vice Chairman Oscar A. Burrola, Division 839 (Richmond, Calif.); and 5th Vice Chairman Ken R. Mueller, Division 64 (Newton, Kan.).

Elected to serve as Trustees were: Bart S. Jones, Division 871 (Slaton, Texas); Danny P. Smith, Division 344 (Welling

portant is the role of high-speed rail in addressing congestion on our freeways and airports. High-speed rail is a transportation system that has proven effective worldwide.

“High-speed rail is a transportation system that has proven effective worldwide.”

The California High-Speed Rail Authority's 2018 business plan is a solid, realistic blueprint for the state to follow to continue forward. Already, the ongoing construction of the system in the Central Valley is transforming the economy in what has been a historically neglected part of the state that has suffered the state's highest unemployment rates. To those who complain the project costs too much, that the challenges of building it too great, the question must be asked, what is the alternative to addressing the state’s growing population and our transportation needs?“ The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail workers employed as locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way workers across the United States as members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BME). Their work for the BNSF Railway, Great Western Corridor, and Panhandle Northern, among other railroads, demonstrates the importance of their role in ensuring the safe and efficient operation of our nation’s rail system.

California high-speed rail: Successful economies demand effective transportation systems

The following is a statement by Dennis Pierce, President of the Teamsters Rail Conference, regarding the California High-Speed Rail Authority’s 2018 Business Plan. “Given that California’s high-speed rail project is arguably the single largest and most complex infrastructure project in the history of the nation, delays and cost increases are frustrating but inevitable. Nonetheless, successful economies demand an efficient and effective transportation system. California’s airports are at capacity. Building more airports and expanding highways to meet our growing population will cost multiple times what high-speed rail will cost. Expanding freeways will gobble up more of our precious farmland. We need to address the challenge of our increasing population and the growing congestion on our freeways and airports. High-speed rail is a transportation system that has proven effective worldwide.”

“The California High-Speed Rail Authority’s 2018 business plan is a solid, realistic blueprint for the state to follow to continue forward. Already, the ongoing construction of the system in the Central Valley is transforming the economy in what has been a historically neglected part of the state that has suffered the state’s highest unemployment rates. To those who complain the project costs too much, that the challenges of building it too great, the question must be asked, what is the alternative to addressing the state’s growing population and our transportation needs?”

The Teamsters Rail Conference represents more than 70,000 rail workers employed as locomotive engineers, trainmen and maintenance of way workers across the United States as members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BME). International Brotherhood of Teamsters Vice President John Murphy serves as Director of the Rail Conference. BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce serves as National President of the BMED.
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ur the BLET Bylaws, below is the list of BLET delegates to the Fourth National Convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, as reported by BLET divisions at press time. The convention is scheduled for October 1-4, 2018 at the Rio Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, but delegates should plan to arrive in time to register on Sunday, September 30. Refreshments and travel information will be mailed to delegates in the coming weeks.

The list is published in the Locomotive Engineer & Trainman News as required by National Division Rules Section 20, Paragraph (g) of the BLET Bylaws. All BLET divisions are listed below in numerical order, followed by the delegate’s name. 

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LIST OF 2018 NATIONAL DIVISION CONVENTION DELEGATES

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POTENTIAL FRAUD ALERT: UNITED HEALTHCARE MEMBERS RECEIVING SCAM CALLS

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Customer Service Representative.

Do not provide any information to these callers. It is important to be tolerant about any phone call that seems suspicious:

- If you receive an unexpected call or test from someone who cannot give you a reason for it, it’s uncommon for United Healthcare to initiate contact. They will call back or leave a message. If you do answer and if you believe the caller is suspicious, call the Member Service number on the back of your medical ID card to speak with a

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(From a United Healthcare press release.)

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has received reports of telephone calls to United HealthCare members, including individuals asking for personal information, such as the member’s social security number.

- Never give personal information over the phone to someone asking for them.
- If someone who looks suspicious, call the Member Service number on the back of your medical ID card to speak with a
Registration open for BLET’s Washington D.C. regional meeting; Monterey registration continues
BLET: UP drone surveillance creates unsafe workplace

according to a recent report from Trains magazine, the Union Pacific Railroad has grounded drones it was using to watch employees, a new practice that has angered union employees and officials with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. Trains reported that UP began using drones at 14 different rail yards in December 2017 to monitor employees and ensure they’re not violating work rules, like getting off and on moving equipment.

‘’We are finding drones are valuable tools that can help us reach our ultimate goal of operating in an incident-free environment and ensure employees go home safely,’’ UP representative Raquel Espinoza told the Wall Street Journal.

But railroaders on the ground say the unidentified drones are a distraction and UP officials are concerned the drones will be used as a way to penalize and punish employees for breaking the rules. Up grounded the surveillance drones earlier this year in March and has agreed to sit down with BLET union officials to discuss the new program.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce told Trains that the BLET is bringing its concerns to UP officials.

‘’Representatives from the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen will soon be meeting with Union Pacific Railroad to discuss the drone program but we are very concerned about any form of employee surveillance,’’ President Pierce said. "This is especially true when it would be performed by an unidentified drone. We believe such surveillance actually will reduce safety because the drones will distract crews from maintaining strict vigilance on their work tasks. Introducing an unidentified drone to the airspace over rail yards also raises serious security concerns that must be addressed."

According to Trains, UP has more than 125 employees qualified to fly drones. In the last few years, drones have become a popular way for Class I railroads to inspect track and bridges, but this is believed to be the first time that any railroad has used the technology to watch employees.