The Teamsters Rail Conference is urging the White House to re-nominate Walter A. Barrows to a third term as Labor Member of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board.

“Mr. Barrows has served railroad workers and the general public with distinction since being sworn into office on October 7, 2011,” Teamsters Rail Conference President Dennis R. Pierce wrote in a recent letter to President Donald J. Trump. “His prior qualifications — including service as the Chief Financial Officer of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen for more than a decade and multiple terms as one of Rail Labor’s Trustees on the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust — have come to the forefront during his tenure on the Board, and Mr. Barrows has proven to be an excellent steward of the interests of active and retired workers alike. We, therefore, believe he has earned another term of office.”

Brother Barrows began his railroad career in 1974 with the Norfolk & Western Railroad and held numerous positions in the railroad’s signal department. Within his union, in Locals 199 and 228, he served as Local Chairman, Local President, and Recording-Financial Secretary. Brother Barrows also served the BRS as the General Chairman and General Secretary-Treasurer for the Norfolk Southern General Committee. Prior to being elected Secretary-Treasurer, he served as a Trustee on BRS’ Grand Board of Trustees.

From 1999-2009, Brother Barrows has served as a labor member on the joint health care subcommittee to oversee the Railroad Employees’ National Health and Welfare Plan. In 2004, 2007, and 2010 he was elected as a labor trustee to oversee the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust Fund.

Walt Barrows was a guest speaker at the BLET’s 150th anniversary celebration in Detroit, Michigan, on May 8, 2013.

Continued on page 3

Walt Barrows re-nomination to RRB
...H.R. 785 is an attack on the labor movement unlike any seen in this country since Ronald Reagan wiped out the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization in 1981.

The railroad is nearly fully organized. One is that about a hundred years ago the federal government adopted a policy of promoting free and open organizing rights because of the importance of the railroad industry to the nation’s economy. The other is the fact that worker rights to a union under the Railway Labor Act preempt so-called “right-to-work” laws. It is the proposition of the National Labor Relations Act that addresses the subject.

Now, let me take a side track for a moment. Proponents of so-called “right-to-work” laws argue that workers should have a right not to join a union … but what they don’t admit is that it already is unlawful to compel someone to join or belong to a union in order to keep his or her job.

Conversely, under American labor law the union is required to provide representation to all workers in the craft for which the union is the collective bargaining representative, whether they are members of the union or not … in legal terms, the union has a duty to fairly represent members and non-members alike.

In a case where an individual worker does not want to join the union, the worker is required to pay what is called an agency fee, in an amount that represents the union’s costs related to collective representation, bargaining, contract administration and grievance adjustment. But that worker never has the right to join the union … ever … under the law that’s been in effect for decades.

So, what are these supporters of so-called “right-to-work” really up to? Well, as always, the devil is in the details. What this type of legislation is attempting to do is to effectively nullify the obligation of the union to pay for the representation they receive — in that workers should not have to pay for services and benefits that the union provides for the benefit of the collective bargaining process that is critically important to ensure job security, wages, working conditions, company policies and procedures, facilities and direction… and a union contract, there is no seniority roster or seniority district. Pay rates are decided by the bosses, in many cases without regard to anything but personal favoritism and nepotism. There are no work rules that limit what you can or cannot do, and if you complain about any of this, you are terminated without the hearing and arbitration process that your contract currently provides you with.

What I have just described is the non-union short-line railroading industry in this country. Whenever the BLET organizes a non-union short-line railroad, the first contract we negotiate with the workers is to end the legal right for us to enter into a payroll deduction agreement with the railroad. Thus, not only would freeloaders be encouraged, we also would have to create and maintain a structure to manage collective bargaining and representation issues.

Each year, the BLET agrees to pay every employee that works for the BLET and the TCU the corporation’s cost of health insurance and Medicare. We pay for every employee that works for the BLET and the TCU and are not old enough to qualify for Medicare. About 93% of all medical costs, that — despite some flaws — pays for Medicare.

The bottom line is this: the union has a duty to fairly represent all workers in the craft for which the union is the collective bargaining representative, whether they are members of the union or not … in legal terms, the union has a duty to fairly represent members and non-members alike.

The BLET is an organization that has helped thousands of railroaders in every state in the United States and Canada. We have been fortunate to have the resources and other services, with no other action required on their part, to bring about a better future for railroaders, their families and the community.

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Infrastructure seems like a forgotten policy issue to many people—for good reason. While much of Washington’s focus has been on matters going nowhere fast, improving the nation’s roads and rails has taken a back seat despite having bipartisan support. The public is still demanding action. A new poll of swing state voters in Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin found infrastructure is the most popular of President Trump’s platform thus far, with 57 percent saying they would be disappointed if no action is taken on it by 2018. Additionally, 26 percent said they wouldn’t support the GOP in the midterm elections if steps aren’t taken to fix the problem.

While some elected officials continue to stick their heads in the sand when it comes to the need for infrastructure investment, there is a real cost to doing nothing. A survey conducted by AAA noted that more than 35,000 people died in traffic crashes in 2015, and hundreds of thousands more were seriously injured. The document noted more could be done to improve transportation safety. “Highway infrastructure improvements have the potential to reduce both the likelihood and consequences of crashes caused not only by the roadway environment but also by driver error,” AAA stated. “Improvements to highway infrastructure features, including the roadway, roadside, and traffic control devices, can constrain driver behavior even without the need for a conscious decision by drivers to do so differently.”

John Tolman, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative, echoed that message during testimony at a House hearing in late April 2017. “The people want, need and deserve better and safer infrastructure. We should have the best airports, rail systems and freeways in the world,” he said. And those views don’t even begin to address the economic gains that could come from beefing up the nation’s essential transportation networks. Workers would prosper from the good-paying construction jobs such work would bring, while the business sector would gain from the ability to bring goods to market in a quicker fashion.

To adequately maintain our transportation systems, the Congressionally Budget Office says an additional $13 billion a year needs to be invested by federal, state and local governments. However, surface transportation investment actually has declined at all levels of government between 2002 and 2012, when adjusted for inflation. So the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that $3.6 trillion should be spent on all infrastructure by 2020 to get the U.S. back on track.

There was a time when building infrastructure and improving job training and education weren’t partisan issues—they were American values, something everyone could support. There needs to be a return to that way of thinking. This country’s future depends on it.

Fraternally,

James P. Hofva
Teamsters General President

Lyons reelected General Chairman of CSX-Northern Lines GCA

William P. Lyons was reelected by acclamation to the office of General Chairman of the CSX-Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment at its quadrennial meeting in Pittsburgh, Pa., that began on May 9, 2017. Brother Lyons is a CSX locomotive engineer and a member of BLET Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio). He first joined the Brotherhood on September 1, 2003. This is his second term as General Chairman, having won election in 2013 and serving as Acting General chairman prior to that. He was elected to the office of 2nd Vice General Chairman at the GCA’s 2009 quadrennial meeting.

First Vice General Chairman J.D. Scott of Division 34 (Columbus, Ohio) and Secretary-Treasurer Chris C. Colacy of Division 526 (Willard, Ohio) also were reelected by acclamation. The following GCA officers were also elected: 2nd Vice General Chairman Brian Farkas, Division 121 (Indianapolis, Ind.); 1st Alternate Vice General Chairman David “Doc” Woods, Division 246 (Evansville, Ind.); 2nd Alternate Vice General Chairman William Reminski, Division 370 (Pittsburgh, Pa.); Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Ken Burkhalter, Division 526 (Willard, Ohio); Eastern Region Vice General Chairman Marty Brochers, Division 231 (Philadelphia, Pa.); Western Region Vice General Chairman Abe Vasquez, Division 582 (Chicago, Ill.); Midwest Region Vice General Chairman Ed Donnelly, Division 542 (Detroit, Mich.); and Central Region Vice General Chairman William Rominski, Division 370 (Pittsburgh, Pa.).

Elected to serve on the Audit Committee were: Mike Huber, Division 100 (Danville, Ill.); Marty Brochers, Division 231 (Philadelphia, Pa.); and Ed Donnelly, Division 542 (Detroit, Mich.).

In addition to regular business, the GCA also recognized Brothers Richard Woolridge, Division 561 (Richmond, Va.) and Abe Vasquez, Division 582 (Chicago, Ill.) for their dedicated service to the Brotherhood.

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno; and National Vice President Gil Gorr. I congratulate Brother Lyons and all officers of the CSX Northern Lines GCA on their elections and thank them for their service to the members of our Brotherhood,” President Pierce said. “I have every confidence that Brother Lyons and his team of officers will continue to do an excellent job of protecting the rights of the members they represent.”

The CSX-Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment represents nearly 3,000 active and retired members of the Brotherhood.
the Michigan Central agreed in 1862 to the rate of $60 a month on the condition that they run at least 2.500 miles each month, regardless of the time consumed.

Because of complaints about this low rate of pay and inequitable way of earning it, among others who knew nothing of the work the Michigan Central were being paid at the Michigan Central Railroad became discouraged with pay cuts and the dismissal of their fellow workers.

During that time, locomotive engineers at the Michigan Central were being paid at the rate of $60 a month on the condition that they ran at least 2,500 miles each month, regardless of the time consumed. Because of complaints about this low rate of pay and inequitable way of earning it, the Michigan Central agreed in 1862 to advance the pay of first class engineers to $85 a month. These and other concessions by the road, however, proved to be of short duration. Runs were changed in such a way that the engineers experienced reductions in rate rather than increases.

A. S. Sweet, who occupied the post of superintendent of machinery with the Michigan Central at that time, had been given that job on the promise that he would reduce costs. He was responsible for cutting costs and eliminating unnecessary expenses. The consequence was that the Michigan Central agreed in 1862 to advance the pay of first class engineers to $85 a month. These and other concessions by the road, however, proved to be of short duration. Runs were changed in such a way that the engineers experienced reductions in rate rather than increases.

Dennis Pierce message

Continued from page 2

liam, even though the average Social Security disability recipient paid into the program in premium taxes, which were being forced to collect benefits; and

• $800 billion would be cut from Medicare.

And those who are not in extreme need wouldn't face much better, as cuts are proposed for things like Meals on Wheels and the Public Service College Loan Forgiveness Program. The budget also proposes deep reductions to agriculture subsidies and eliminates funding for support for farmers affected by the trade war.

The children, the elderly and needy Americans are easy targets, because — unlike locomotive engineers, and trainmen, and other railroad workers — they have no organization to fight for them. Corporate America, on the other hand, has a very powerful organization fighting for their interests.

A committee was formed and went to Sweet's office. Sweet refused to see them at first, refusing even to speak to them. Angered by the situation, a group of Michigan Central employees, and other railroad workers — they, too, would be affiliated with the group, they, too, would be active in this way that he laid off a number of firemen who had been long in service and gave their places to others who knew nothing of the work required of them. This brought an immediate clash, for the engineers refused to go out on their runs where regular firemen had been dismissed.

Men all over the system were discour-aged. Angered by the situation, a group of 13 Michigan Central engineers, failing to find peace to a meeting on company property, gathered at the home of William D. Robinson of Marshall, Mich., to discuss their conditions and map out a plan of action.

They agreed that if any one of them was dismissed by Sweet, the rest would quit on the spot. A circular was prepared and they all signed it. Then they carried fur-ther their plan, which they called a Pro-active Association. If other engineers affiliated with the group, too, they were required to promise to quit the service if another member were fired.

Copies of this were circulated over the Michigan Central and additional engi-neers, subscribing to the oath, joined the movement with enthusiasm.

A committee was formed and went to Sweet's office. Sweet refused to see them at first, refusing even to speak to them. But through patiently explaining their mission, the group finally got his per-mission for an interview. He is said to have called out to the waiting members of the committee as he entered his office:

"Well, boys, what do you propose to do, shut up the road?"

Said Hill, one of the committee members:

"We are here as gentlemen, representing menkind, and desire to be treated as such."

Hill went on to say that the committee was acting as a unit, that they were speaking for all the engineers from Detroit to Chicago, that they had grievances that they wished to adjust. The committee dis-cussed all of the points at issue very thor-oughly, and ended by Sweet granting the whole of their requests.

When the success of this conference became known, it gave a tremendous im-petus to the Protection Association, and it was decided to extend the movement to all railroads. A call for a general meet-ing of all engineers to be held in De-troit on May 5, 1863.

The Detroit convention marked a new epoch in the organization of American railroad workers. It brought together engineers from the Michigan Central, Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana, Detroit & Milwaukee, Grand Trunk, and Michigan Southern. Together, the 12 del-e gates present drafted a presentation, which combined democratic control with efficient central administration, thus solv-ing the fundamental problem that had wrecked many previous labor organiza-tions. After three days of deliberations and debates, the convention met on May 8 and issued a resolution of the Brother-hood of the Footboard with William D. Robinson as chief engineer.

By August 1, 1863, 10 divisions had been organized. The International Brotherhood organization provided that when five di-visions were organized a delegate from each should be chosen to come together to create a grand division. So on August 18th, at Detroit, the Grand National Di-vision of the Brotherhood of the Foot-board was formed. W. D. Robinson was elected grand chief engineer.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLET National President
NORTH PLATE RAILROADERS PAY A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO A FALLEN BROTHER

At 10 a.m., sharp on February 16, 2017, all engineers working at Union Pacific’s Bailey Yard in North Platte, Neb., sounded their horns in honor of the late Anthony L. (Tony) Znaniecki, a member of BLET Division 381. Brother Znaniecki, 63, died in a dirt bike acci- dent on February 10. The locomotive horns were sounded to coin- cide with the start of Brother Znaniecki’s fu- neral, providing a way for co-workers who could not attend to keep him in their thoughts and prayers. Brother Znaniecki hied out with UP in 1997 as a brakeman. He eventually worked his way up to engineer and joined BLET Division 381 effective September 1, 2005. Brother Znaniecki served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1993-1997 and was a member of the Nebraska Cornhusker Motorcross Association and Tri-State Dirt Riders. He is survived by his wife, Cheri; sons Markus and Carlin; and many other family members and friends.

WISCONSIN JURY DETERMINES RAILROAD WORKER’S LEUKEMIA WAS DUE TO CREOSOTE EXPOSURE

Article from the National Law Review, Febru- ary 13, 2017

In February 2017, a jury in Madison County, Wisconsin, ruled against the Union Pacific Rail- road, awarding a former worker $75.5 million in damages for injuries linked to long-term expo- sure to creosote and other toxic materials during his 31-year career as a railroad worker.

The plaintiff, Mr. Brown, was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia and alleged that the di- agnosis was due to the failure of his employer to provide protective equipment despite knowing of the dangers linked with the substances workers were exposed to on a regular basis.

Mr. Brown worked for the Chicago & North Western Railroad (C&NW) for 18 years before it was taken over by the Union Pacific. During his time at C&NW, he alleged that he was exposed to toxic chemicals on such a routine basis that his clothing often became soaked with substances such as creosote, lead and degreasing solvents.

Evidence exists that suggests the railroad indus- try was aware of the health risks associated with these substances for decades but failed to warn employees or provide equipment that would pre- vent contamination.

Studies have shown clinical links between lead, creosote and certain solvents and health problems for a long time. Some experts believe that the railroad was privy to these connections for over a century. Brown’s claim stated that C&NW knew about the health concerns and how to re- duce exposure to the contaminants but chose not to provide adequate protective gear.

He was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syn- drome prior to a 2008 diagnosis of acute myeloid leukemia.

This ruling is likely to influence future cases as more workers and their families come forward now that the link between creosote exposure and cancer has been made public.

BELLA DINH-ZARR NOW ACTING CHAIR OF NTSB

On March 16, 2017, Christopher A. Hart’s term as Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) concluded and Vice Chairman Bella Dinh-Zarr began serving as the agency’s acting chairman.

Dinh-Zarr began her tenure as the NTSB’s Vice Chairman March 31, 2015, and began her term on the board March 23, 2015. Prior to her ap- pointment to the board she served as Director of the U.S. Office of the FIA Foundation, an interna- tional philanthropy dedicated to promoting safe and sustainable transportation, and as the North American Director of Make Roads Safe – The Campaign for Global Road Safety. Prior to that she held positions at AAA, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Texas Transportation Institute.

TEAMSTERS: ‘BUY AMERICAN AND HIRE AMERICAN’ EXECUTIVE ORDER BENEFITS U.S. JOBS, PRODUCTION

On April 18, the Teamsters Union announced that it supports the “Buy American and Hire American” Executive Order by President Donald Trump. The initiatives that promote American workers and investment in domestic products will help the country take a positive step toward a stronger economy.

The order outlines federal procurement poli- cies that will focus on utilizing goods, products and materials produced in the United States. It directs federal agencies to minimize the use of waivers and exemptions that allow them to bypass the Buy America laws that encourage the use of Ameri- can-made products.

America has always been at its strongest when the middle-class program. By investing in Ameri- can manufacturers and their products, those com- panies can return good jobs to the working man and women of the middle class. The order also addresses the flaws in the H-1B visa program which is in desperate need of reform as employers continue to exploit this program to undermine good jobs and wages that should go to qualified American candidates.

SEND US YOUR NEWS! Please submit any photos and/ or stories that showcase events and news from your Local Division, State Legislative Board or General Committee of Adjustment and they will be considered for publication in the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News as well as the Teamsters (in Transportation) as well as the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal. We are also looking for publication in the Teamsters (in Transportation) and Teamsters News as well as the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal. Please submit any photos and/or stories that showcase events and news from your Local Division, State Legislative Board or General Committee of Adjustment and they will be considered for publication in the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News as well as the Teamsters (in Transportation) as well as the Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Journal.

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(800) 233-7080
Mark B. Kenny was re-elected by acclamation to his sixth term as General Chairman at the Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment’s fourth quadrennial meeting held in San Diego, CA from May 9-12, 2017.

Brother Kenny is a member of Division 11 (New York, N.Y.). He joined the Brotherhood on March 1, 1981, and has served as General Chairman since 1998, having also won re-election by acclamation in 2009 and 2013. Brother Kenny also serves as Chairman of the BLET’s Eastern General Chairman’s Association.

All other officers of the General Committee were also elected by acclamation, including: Vice General Chairman and Secretary-Treasurer David P. Estes, Division 60 (Seattle, Wash.); Western Region Chairman John M. McGregor, Division 22 (El Paso, Texas); Midwest Region Chairman Martin J. Gaab, Division 27 (St. Cloud, Minn.); Eastern Region Chairman James J. O’Neill, Division 483 (Philadelphia, Pa.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Patrick W. Darcy, Division 77 (New Haven, Conn.). Brother Estes was reelected to his fourth term as Secretary-Treasurer. Brothers Gaab, McGregor, and O’Neill were appointed to the GCA audit committee to serve as Trustees.

Officers, members and guests attending the Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment’s quadrennial meeting in San Diego on May 12, 2017.

Mark Kenny reelected by acclamation at the Amtrak General Committee meeting in 2009 and 2013. Brother Kenny also served as General Chairman since 1998, having also won re-election by acclamation in 2009 and 2013. Brother Kenny also thanked the Amtrak GCA officers on their election and my sincere thanks for their continued service to our great Brotherhood.”

Additional BLET members in attendance included: retired member and former Local Chairman, Dino Raptis (Division 15, Albuquerque, N.M.); former Local Chairman, Greg Luiz (Division 20, Los Angeles, Calif.); and recently retired member, former Local Chairman Richard Pasquale, Division 33, Los Angeles, Calif., who was recognized for his distinguished service to both Division 20 and the Amtrak GCA.

Local Chairmen (unless otherwise noted) in attendance included: J.J. Cawley, Division 11 (New York); R.M. Grogan, Division 12 (Fort Wayne, Ind.); Vice Local Chairman J. Wooldridge, Division 14 (Washington, D.C.); C.E. Harris, Division 15 (Albuquerque, N.M.); B. Porter, Division 17 (Kansas City); D.L. Haltman, Division 18 (New Orleans, La.); E.R. Like, Division 19 (Detroit, Mich.); C.M. Skinner, Division 20 (Los Angeles); J.M. McGregor, Division 22 (El Paso, Texas); M.J. Gaab, Division 27 (St. Cloud, Minn.); F.D. Bowen, Division 35 (Jacksonville, Fla.); A.S. Carr, Division 49 (Chicago); B.J. Cleary, Division 45 (Carbondale, Ill.); D.D. Lewis, Division 47 (Denver, Colo.); J.D. Pugh, Division 51 (Salt Lake City, Utah); D.M. Cadogan, Division 57 (Bristol, Mass.); D.P. Estes, Division 60 (Seattle); J.D. Coleman, Division 65 (San Jose, Calif.); P.W. Darcy Jr., Division 77 (New Haven, Conn.); J.K. Loger, Division 144 (Oakland, Calif.); D.J. Adams, Division 197 (San Antonio, Texas); D.J. Luna, Division 312 (Baltimore); G.L. Perez, Division 474 (Blue Island, Ill.); L.L. Buse, Division 482 (Washington, D.C.); J.K. O’Neill, Division 483 (Philadelphia); and S. Crossman, Division 752 (Rensselaer, N.Y.).

Other invited guests included Randall Jamieson, Principal, Atticus Consulting Group. Jamieson gave a presentation on the “Science of Attention” from his work on the Attention Performance Training Pilot Program developed for Washington, D.C.-based Amtrak Engineers.

General Chairman Kenny thanked the National Division officers for attending. Brother Kenny also thanked the Amtrak delegates for their hard work and focus throughout the meetings and subsequent training workshop.

The BLET’s Amtrak General Committee of Adjustment represents more than 2,300 active and retired locomotive engineers and trainmen who work for Amtrak, Keolis Commuter Services, Keolis Rail Services Virginia, and Caltrain.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO: WWW.BLETREGIONALS.ORG

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Railroad Retirement survivor benefits

On monthly benefits may be payable under the Railroad Retirement Act to the surviving (widow(er), child, or surviving divorced spouse) of the deceased railroad employee, if the employee was “insured” under the Railroad Retirement Act at the time of death. Lump-sum death benefits may also be payable to qualified survivors in some cases. The following Q&A describe the survivor benefits payable by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) and the eligibility requirements for these benefits.

What are the general service requirements for railroad retiree survivor benefits?

With the exception of one type of lump-sum death benefit, eligibility for survivor benefits depends on whether or not a deceased employee was “insured” under the Railroad Retirement Act. An employee is insured if he or she has at least 120 months (10 years) of railroad service, or 60 months (5 years) performed after 1955, and a “current connection” with the Alaska Railroad as of the month the annuity begins or the month of death, whichever occurs first.

Generally, an employee must have served for a railroad in at least 12 months in the 30 months immediately preceding the month his or her railroad retirement annuity begins or will meet the current connection requirement. If an employee dies before retirement, railroad service in at least 12 months in the 30 months before the date of death will meet the current connection requirement for the purpose of paying survivor benefits.

If employment does not qualify on this basis, but has 12 months of service in an earlier 30-month period, he or she may still meet the current connection requirement. This alternative generally applies if the employee did not have any regular employment outside the railroad industry after the end of the last 30-month period which met the current connection requirement before the month the annuity begins or the month of death.

Full or part-time railroad service for a nonrailroad employee in the interval between the end of the last 30-month period including 12 months of railroad service and the beginning date of an employee's annuity, or the month of death, if earlier, can break a current connection.

Self-employment in an unincorporated business will not break a current connection; however, self-employment can break a current connection if the business is incorporated.

Working for other U.S. government agencies - Department of Transportation, National Transportation Safety Board, Surface Transportation Board, Public Transportation Security Administration, National Mediation Board, Railroad Retirement Board - will not break a current connection. State employment with the Alaska Railroad, so long as that railroad remains an entity of the State of Alaska, will not break a current connection. Railroad service in Canada for a Canadian railroad will neither break nor preserve a current connection.

A current connection can also be maintained, for purposes of supplemental and survivor annuities, if the employee completed the required service and was involuntarily terminated without fault from his or her last job in the rail industry, and did not thereafter decline an offer of employment in the same class or craft in the rail industry, regardless of the distance to the new position.

Once a current connection is established at the time the railroad retirement annuity begins, it continues in effect unless the employee terminates the connection any matter what kind of work is performed thereafter.

What if these service requirements are not met?

If a deceased employee did not have an insurable status, the portion of any survivor benefits payable is transferred to the Social Security Administration and survivor benefits are paid by that agency in the same manner as with regular employees. Regardless of whether the deceased employee's railroad retirement and social security credits will be combined for benefit computation purposes.

What are the age and other eligibility requirements for widow(er)s who haven't remarried?

Widow(ers)' benefits are payable at age 60 or over. They are payable at any age if the widow(er) is caring for an unmarried child of the deceased employee under age 18 or a disabled child of any age who became permanently disabled before age 22.

Widow(ers)' benefits are also payable at ages 50-59 if the widow(er) is totally and permanently disabled and unable to work at any regular employment. The disability must have begun within 7 years after the employee's death or within 7 years after the termination of a railroad retirement annuity based on caring for a child of the deceased employee. In most cases, a 5-month waiting period is required after the onset of disability.

Generally, the widow(er) must have been married to the employee for at least 9 months prior to death, unless she or he was the natural or adoptive parent of their child, the employee's death was accidental or while on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, the widow(ers) was potential or adopted parent of who is unmarried or social security benefits in the month before the month of marriage, or the employee was an employee at the time of death and the parent's support.

How are railroad retirement widow(ers)’ benefits computed?

The tier I amount of a two-tier survivor benefit is based on the railroad employee's combined railroad retirement and social security earnings credits, and the maximum earnings tested for benefits are equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public pension. A survivor annuitant should notify the RRB promptly if he or she becomes entitled to any such benefits.

What if a widow(er) was also a member of the military?

If the widow(er) and the deceased railroad employee started railroad employment after 1974, the survivor annuity payable to the widow(er) is reduced by the amount of the military retirement.
Division 32 seeks donations for family of fallen Brother

S uddenly and tragically, a member of the BLET has passed away and left behind a wife and two young children. Brian Jr. Cadore, age 32, was a member of BLET Division 32 (Aurora, Ill.), and the members of his division are asking BLET members to make a charitable donation to help support his family.

For many years, Brian Jr. was a passenger in a vehicle that rolled over in a crash and he was pronounced dead at the scene. Brother Cadore leaves behind his wife and two young children, making a charitable donation to support his family.

Donations to assist Brother Cadore’s family can be made at the following: www.youcaring.com/easylifethroughbled-785240

Are you a photographer? The National Division’s Public Relations Department has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their photos to the “Photo of the Month” section of the News letter. If you would like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email JohnB@ble-t.org.

Please note only high resolution images can be used. Members are encouraged to review their employer’s policies regarding the use of cameras and other electronic devices while on duty.

BLET in 2015. According to the BLET in 2015. Accord-