BLET files joint comments regarding rail industry automation

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) was one of five rail Brotherhoods to file joint comments on May 7 in response to the Federal Railroad Administration’s (FRA) March 29 Request For Information (RFI) regarding automation in the railroad industry.

In general, the unions asserted that public and worker safety is their top priority, and also stressed that any roll-out of new technologies and/or automation should only be done cautiously under well-defined government safety regulations.

Signatories to the 26-page joint submission were: National President Dennis R. Pierce, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET); President John Previsich, SMART Transportation Division; President W. Dan Pickett, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS); President F. Leo McCann, American Train Dispatchers Association (ATDA); and General President Richard A. Johnson, Carmen Division/TCU.

The unions noted that safety should be the top goal of all involved stakeholders — especially the FRA — when considering the future of rail automation. The unions reminded the FRA of its mandate from Congress, which reads in part: “[i]n carrying out its duties, the Administration shall consider the assignment and maintenance of safety as the highest priority, recognizing the clear intent, encouragement, and dedication of Congress to the furtherance of the highest degree of safety in railroad transportation.”

“As such, safety must be first and foremost when discussing the future of automation of our nation’s railroads,” the unions wrote. “It would be unethical and would violate the mandate of Congress to sacrifice safety for potential profits.”

The unions also noted that their duty to protect the jobs and incomes of their members should not be used to discount their arguments on behalf of safety.

“Discounting our safety concerns because we fight to preserve jobs and earnings is the most extreme form of double standard, given the profit-seeking goal of the industry underlying its support of automation it may advocate,” the unions wrote.

Another major assertion from the unions is that a tight regulatory framework with clearly defined terminologies is a must when exploring the future of automation.

“DISCOUNTING OUR SAFETY CONCERNS BECAUSE WE FIGHT TO PRESERVE JOBS AND EARNINGS IS THE MOST EXTREME FORM OF DOUBLE STANDARD, GIVEN THE PROFIT-SEEKING GOAL OF THE INDUSTRY UNDERLYING ITS SUPPORT OF AUTOMATION IT MAY ADVOCATE.” – RAIL BROTHERHOOD JOINT STATEMENT

BLET President’s Message
Building strength from the ground up pg. 2

California SLB Meeting
Chairman Ryan Snow elected to second term pg. 4

Ohio, Missouri SLB Meetings
Ohio’s Price elected to first term; Groose new Chair in Mo. pg. 5

Register for News Flash email alerts at: www.ble-t.org/newsflash   Follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/BLETNational
BLET PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE  BY DENNIS R. PIERCE

BUILDING STRENGTH FROM THE GROUND UP

President Pierce addresses delegates attending the California State Legislative Board’s quadrennial meeting in April. I always get inspired. This bottom-up structure is the foundation of our strength today and the basis of our success in the future.

When I first became a Local Chairman, it was because I was tired of the way I was being treated by the railroad, and thought I could make a difference. I was told that I was too young, that I didn’t have enough seniority, and when I got elected I was tested by members who did not support me. None of that diminished my support of the Union movement, or my desire to do right by all members that I represented. I still remember the pride I felt the first time that I settled a member’s wrongly denied claim; taking hard earned money back from the railroad and putting it into the member’s pocket, where it belonged.

The BLET National Division is here to help those who are elected. Our Education and Training Department helps our newly-elected Division officers get the training they need in order to succeed. Our specialized training classes can help the newest Local Chairmen learn to be successful in representing members during investigations. Legislative Representatives learn how to effectively lobby legislators and to guide worker-friendly bills through the halls of government.

Secretary-Treasurers learn the proper way to handle dues reporting and how to file the necessary paper work to keep their financial records in order. More advanced courses are offered to officers with more experience. With Local Division triennial elections just months away, now is the time for the next generation of union members to step up and make their contributions to the Brotherhood’s 155-year-old record of distinguished service. I strongly urge you to be a part of that process.

DENNIS R. PIERCE
BLE National President

BLET CELEBRATES 155TH ANNIVERSARY

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLE) proudly marked its 155th anniversary on May 9. The union was founded as the Brotherhood of the Footboard on May 8, 1863 in Marshall, Mich. In 1864, the union changed its name to Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), the name it retained for 140 years until merging with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters on Jan. 1, 2004, when it became the BLE. The BLE is the oldest labor union in the Western Hemisphere.

The organization was formed in the early 1860s when locomotive engineers on the Michigan Central Railroad became discouraged with pay cuts and the dismissal of their foremen. During that time, locomotive engineers at the Michigan Central were paid at the rate of $60 a month on the condition that they run at least 2,500 miles each month, regardless of the time consumed.

The BLE was the first labor organization to obtain contracts with railroads. Among the earliest was an agreement with the former New York Central in 1875. Today, the BLE has hundreds of contracts with railroads large and small, and represents locomotive engineers in 98 percent of rail trackways in the United States.

In the three decades before the founding of the BLE, locomotive engineers suffered abominable working conditions. The 24-hour workday was commonplace. Railroad magnates ran roughshod over employees. Strains were murderous. Energy drained. Nutrition was meager.

Several attempts to organize locomotive engineers were made between 1855 and 1860. It wasn’t until April 1863, however, that William D. Robinson, a Michigan Central locomotive engineer, brought together 19 men of the craft to settle their grievances at his home in Marshall, Mich., and inspired them to found the organization, which survives today. A monument marking the event still stands in Marshall.

At a meeting in Detroit the following month, a dozen men agreed to tie their destinies together. They cemented a common bond on May 9, 1863.
The falling U.S. unemployment rate is not creating a path to prosperity for low-wage workers who continue to struggle to make ends meet.

A recent staff report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York finds that the nation’s 65 million workers currently scraping by in low-paying service jobs have few ladders to career success. As technology and globalization have increasingly taken hold, many traditional middle-class jobs that used to support a family have vanished.

The result is workers in low-wage jobs who are more likely to become unemployed or exit that workforce than move into a better-paying job. Only about five percent will be able to find a job that allows them to enter the American middle class.

As the document notes, the country’s economy would be functioning properly if workers were moving from low-wage jobs to better-paying opportunities. Instead, too many hard-working Americans are getting trapped in such employment, with nowhere else to go. It’s a sign that more investment is needed in education and worker training.

Unfortunately, too many elected officials seem to be ignoring these facts. They relish the latest job numbers even though they do little to improve the quality of life for their constituents. Meanwhile, families continue to struggle to keep a roof over their heads.

That’s why some are demanding change. This week, pro-worker advocates announced a plan to recreate the “Poor People’s Campaign,” which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was planning at the time of his death in 1968.

While the campaign went forward later that summer without him, the loss of the movement’s leader undermined the effort.

The Teamsters have spent much of the first half of 2018 reviving its role as a supporter of MLK’s legacy to bring dignity to working Americans. It’s time for pro-worker advocates to join together to show there is strength in numbers.

Fraternally,

James P. Hoffa
Teamsters General President

NS sues its own employees after March 18 accident

On April 9, 2018, the Herald-Leader newspaper in Lexington, Ky., reported that the Norfolk Southern Railway Co. had filed suit against two crew members whom it says were negligent and failed to prevent a March 18 train crash and derailment in Georgetown, Ky.

The suit filed April 9 in U.S. District Court in Lexington says the locomotive engineer and conductor failed to reduce the speed of the northbound train and prevent the collision with a stopped outbound train.

The crash damaged two NS locomotives and caused the derailment of 13 rail cars. The suit says the two crew members ignored a signal that required them “to be prepared to stop.” The suit says the two were negligent in failing to maintain a reasonable lookout, including a watch for wayside signals that govern the movement of the train.

The suit says the two men are liable for damages to the railway’s property, including, but not limited to, damages to the locomotives, rail cars, tracks, right of way, communications and signal equipment, expenses related to getting the train and car back on the track, transporting the locomotives for repair, and damages for loss of use of the locomotives and rail cars.

(Reporting from the Lexington Herald-Leader)
Ryan K. Snow was elected to his first full term as Chairman of the California State Legislative Board during the Board’s 4th quadrennial session in Lake Tahoe, Calif., April 24-26, 2018.

A member of BLET Division 126 in Bakersfield, Calif., Brother Snow is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer. He first joined the Brotherhood on December 1, 1999. He hired out with the Union Pacific at Bakersfield, Calif., in 1998 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 1999, learning from former Vice Chairman Ron Marney. Brother Snow was elected to the office of 1st Vice Chairman at the California State Legislative Board’s 2010 quadrennial meeting and was re-elected by acclamation in 2014. Brother Snow began serving his first term as Chairman following the retirement of Timothy L. Smith on January 31, 2017. Also elected during the quadrennial session were: 1st Vice Chairman John B. Mobley, Division 398 (San Bernardino, Calif.); 2nd Vice Chairman Jose M. Vargas, Division 214 (Long Beach, Calif.); and Secretary-Treasurer A. O. (Tony) Langel, Division 664 (San Luis Obispo, Calif.). Brother Langel was elected by acclamation.

The delegates elected the following members to serve on the Board’s Executive Committee: R. L. (Rick) Rodriguez, Division 20 (Los Angeles, Calif.); Jose M. Vargas, Division 214 (Long Beach, Calif.); Robert J. Tuttle, Division 692 (Tracy, Calif.); and Christopher J. Delgado, Division 739 (Bakersfield, Calif.).

The following were elected to serve on the Rules Committee: Christopher D. Carranza, Division 283 (Oakland, Calif.); Chad E. Castagnetti, Division 800 (Portola, Calif.); Lon Simmons, Division 660 (Los Angeles); Christopher J. Delgado, Division 800 (Roseville, Calif.); and R. L. (Rick) Rodriguez, Division 20 (Los Angeles, Calif.).

Three members were elected to serve on the Board’s Audit Committee: Joshua S. Faulkner, Division 739 (Bakersfield, Calif.); Christopher D. Camara, Division 283 (Oakland, Calif.); and Stefan Alexis, Division 56 (West Colton, Calif.).

National Division officers at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; First Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; and Vice President & National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman. Also representing the BLET National Division were Director of Regulatory Affairs Vincent G. Verna; and Director of Political and Legislative Affairs Robert F. Hagan.

“I am pleased to congratulate Brother Snow and all officers of the California State Legislative Board,” President Pierce said. “I thank them for making time in their busy lives to serve our Brotherhood, and I have every confidence that they will do an excellent job of representing the interests of our members in the proud State of California.”

Special guests included: Mathew Park, Nevada State Legislative Board Chairman; Brian Carr, Union Pacific-Western Lines General Chairman; Susie Burrola, National 1st Vice President, BLET Auxiliary; and Kathleen Bishikis, 2nd Vice President and National Legislative Representative, BLET Auxiliary. David O. Cameron, Assistant to the Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference, was in attendance and gave a presentation on the California high-speed rail project. Additional guest speakers included: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Region Seven Chief Inspector Mark Gallogly; and Brian Lewis and John Herriman of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees (NARVRE).

Many spouses of BLET members were in attendance to hear the presentation by Kathleen Bishikis of the BLET Auxiliary, and various BLET members were also in attendance, including Oscar A. Burrola, Local Chairman of Division 839 (Richmond, Calif.). Retired Brother Darrell Axaceon, the long-serving former First Vice Chairman of the California State Legislative Board, was also in attendance.

Brother Snow is a U.S. Navy veteran, having proudly served from 1982-1986. He and his wife Verna were married in 1987. The BLET California State Legislative Board represents nearly 3,000 active and retired members in 19 different Divisions.
Tim Price reelected Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman

The following Brothers were elected to serve on the Board’s Executive Committee in 2010 and again in 2014. Also elected during the quadrennial meeting were: 1st Vice Chairman Tom Davis, Division 511 (Portsmouth, Ohio); 2nd Vice Chairman Kevin McGinty, Division 3 (Cleveland, Ohio); Secretary-Treasurer Brian D. Garrison, Division 306 (Cleveland, Ohio); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer Luke Tuckerman, Division 4 (Toledo, Ohio). Brother Garrison was reelected by acclamation.

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce, 1st Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno; and Vice President and National Legislative Representative John F. Tolman. Robert F. Hagan, BLET Director of Political and Legislative Affairs, was also in attendance. Brother Hagan is a member of BLET Division 757 and served for many years as an elected official in both the Ohio House of Representatives and the Ohio State Senate.

“I am proud to thank and congratulate Brother Price and all officers and members of the Ohio State Legislative Board,” President Pierce said. “I am sure they will do an excellent job of representing our members in Ohio and educating elected officials regarding railroad safety and other issues of importance to the BLET.”

Delegates also heard from BLET Auxiliary National President Serena Hogan.

Officers, members and guests attending the Ohio State legislative Board’s quadrennial meeting in Columbus, Ohio, April 25, 2018. Numerous special guests representing various BLET General Committees of Adjustment and State Legislative Boards were also in attendance.

On the first day of the session, delegates, spouses, and guest participated in the Ohio SLB’s inaugural visit and tour of the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus, Ohio. They were met by: Ohio House Representative Michelle Lepore-Hagan, District 58 (Youngstown, Ohio), who is the wife of BLET member Bob Hagan; and John Patterson, Ohio House Representative, District 99 Representative Lepore-Hagan discussed the importance of rail legislation currently in the House and Senate and the process of educating the BLET member in contacting their District Representatives and Senators as to how they should vote on these issues. Representative Patterson spoke on a brief history of the Ohio House of Representatives and their procedures while in session. “It was a fantastic experience for all of us,” Brother Price said. The Ohio State Legislative Board is comprised of 22 BLET Divisions and represents approximately 2,700 active and retired members.

Groose elected Chairman of Missouri State Legislative Board

Calvin L. Groose was elected the new Chairman of the Missouri State Legislative Board at its quadrennial meeting in Jefferson, Mo., May 6-8, 2018.

Brother Groose is a Union Pacific locomotive engineer and member of BLET Division 609 in Jefferson City, Mo. He has held continuous membership in the Brotherhood since January 1, 2000. He replaces outgoing Chairman Brian P. Kelley, who did not seek reelection due to his pending retirement. Brother Groose was elected to serve on the Board’s Executive Committee in 2010 and again in 2014.

Also elected at the quadrennial meeting were: 1st Vice Chairman Steven C. Gillett, Division 107 (St. Joseph, Mo.); and 2nd Vice Chairman Michael A. McGill, Division 42 (St. Louis, Mo.). Re-elected by acclamation were: Secretary-Treasurer Tony A. Menning, Division 86 (Moberly, Mo.); and Alternate Secretary-Treasurer William D. Honeycutt, Division 285 (Thayer, Mo.). Elected to serve on the Executive Committee were: Brian J. Young, Division 48 (St. Louis, Mo.); and Alan J. Primanzon, Division 83 (Springfield, Mo.).

The following Brothers were elected to serve on the Auditing Committee: Jeffrey M. Gassen, Division 502 (Kansas City, Mo.); J.S. (Shaw) Early, Division 8 (Sater, Mo.); and Michael A. McGill, Division 42 (St. Louis, Mo.).

Representing the BLET National Division at the meeting were: National President Dennis R. Pierce; 1st Vice President E. Lee Pruitt; National Secretary-Treasurer Stephen J. Bruno; Vice President and National Legislative Representative John P. Tolman; and Vice President Cole W. Davis.

“I am proud to congratulate Brother Groose and all officers of the Missouri State Legislative Board,” President Pierce said. “They will have their work cut out for them, but I have every confidence in their ability to rise to the challenges that lie ahead. Also, I wish all the best to outgoing Chairman Brian Kelley. It has been a pleasure to work with him over the years and I thank him for his years of distinguished service to our union. On behalf of the entire BLET, I wish Brian Kelley a long, happy and healthy retirement. You have earned it, Brother!”

Special guests included: Pat Pfeifer, Nebraska State Legislative Board Chairman; and Tyler Jones, Kansas State Legislative Board Chairman. Brother Pfeifer and Brother Jones acted as parliamentarians for the business portion of the meeting.

The Missouri State Legislative Board’s 2018 quadrennial meeting in Jefferson City began with an “ice breaker” welcome reception/pizza dinner on May 6, followed by a full day of business conducted by the delegates and officers on May 7. On May 8, the Board concluded its meeting by visiting the State Capitol where several Brothers climbed the 200-plus stairs to the top of the dome before heading back to their respective homes around the Show-Me State.

“Although the quadrennial only ran for about 42 hours total, it was a very productive and festive event filled with camaraderie and brotherhood,” outgoing Chairman Kelley said. “Thank you to all who attended. I commend you for your dedication and involvement to our Union and our Board.” The Missouri State Legislative Board represents more than 2,000 active and retired BLET members in 22 different Divisions.
Disability annuities for railroad employees

The Railroad Retirement Act provides disability annuities for railroaders who become totally or occupationally disabled. Medicare coverage before age 65 is also available for totally disabled employees and those suffering from ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) or chronic kidney disease.

The following questions and answers describe these disability benefits, their requirements, and how to apply for them.

1. How do railroad retirement provisions for total disability and occupational disability differ?

A total disability annuity is based on disability for all regular work and is payable at any age to employees with at least 10 years (120 months) of creditable railroad service and, under certain conditions, to employees with 5 to 9 years of creditable railroad service after 1995.

An occupational disability annuity is based on disability for the employee’s regular railroad occupation and is payable at age 60 if the employee has 10 years (120 months) of railroad service, or at any age if the employee has at least 20 years (240 months) of service. A current connection with the railroad industry is also required for an occupational disability annuity. The current connection requirement is normally met if the employee worked for a railroad in at least 12 of the 30 months immediately preceding his or her annuity beginning date.

If an employee does not qualify for a current connection 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 included 12 months of railroad service, and before the month the annuity begins. Full or part-time work for a nonrailroad employer in the interval between the end of the last 30-month period including 12 months of railroad service, and the month an employee’s annuity begins, can break a current connection.

2. Under what conditions can disabled employees with 5 to 9 years of service be eligible for railroad retirement disability annuities?

Employees with 5 to 9 years of service after 1995, if at least 5 years were after 1995, may qualify for an annuity based on total, but not occupational, disability if they have a disability insured status under social security law. A disability insured status is generally established when an employee has social security or railroad retirement earnings credits in 20 calendar quarters in a period of 40 consecutive quarters ending in, or after, the quarter in which the disability began.

Unlike the two-tier annuities payable to a 30-year employee, disability annuity payments can be payable to 5-year employees as long as they have been initially limited to a tier I social security equivalent benefit; a tier II benefit is not payable in these cases until the employee attains age 62. And, the employee’s tier I benefit will be reduced for early retirement in the same manner as the tier II benefit of an employee who retired on the basis of age, rather than disability, at age 62 with less than 30 years of service.

3. How do the standards for total disability and occupational disability differ?

An employee is considered to be totally disabled if medical evidence shows a physical and/or mental impairment preventing the performance of any regular and gainful work. An employee is considered to be occupationally disabled if a physical and/or mental impairment prevents the employee from performing the duties of his or her regular railroad occupation, even though the employee may be able to perform other kinds of work. An employee’s regular occupation is generally that particular work he or she has performed for hire in more calendar months, which may or may not be consecutive, than any other work during the last five years; or that work which was performed for hire in at least one-half of all the months, which must be consecutive, in which the employee worked for hire during the last 15 years.

4. How does the amount of a railroad retirement disability annuity compare to a social security disability benefit?

Disabled railroad workers retiring directly from the railroad industry at the end of fiscal year 2017 were awarded almost $2,920 a month on the average, while awards for disabled workers under social security averaged over $1,295.

5. When is early Medicare coverage available for the disabled?

In general, Medicare coverage before age 65 may begin after a disabled employee annuitant has been entitled to monthly benefits based on total disability for at least 24 months and has a disability insured status under social security law. There is a 24-month waiting period for those who have ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. The fact that an employee is initially awarded an occupational disability annuity does not preclude early Medicare coverage, if the employee’s physical and/or mental condition is such that he or she is totally disabled.

Medicare coverage on the basis of permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant is available not only to employee annuitants, but also to employees who have not retired but meet certain minimum service requirements, as well as spouses and dependent children. For those suffering from chronic kidney disease, coverage may begin with the third month after dialysis treatment begins, or earlier under certain conditions. The Social Security Administration has jurisdiction of Medicare for those eligible on the basis of permanent kidney failure.

6. Do the railroad retirement disability annuity requirements include a waiting period similar to the one required for social security disability benefits?

Yes. A five-month waiting period beginning with the month after the month of the disability’s onset is required before monthly railroad retirement benefit payments can begin. However, an applicant need not wait until this five-month period is over to file for benefits.

An employee can be in compensated service while filing a disability application provided that the compensated service is not active service and terminates within 90 days from the date of filing. When an employee files a disability application and is still in compensated service, it will be necessary for the employee to provide a specific ending date of the compensation.

Compensated service includes not only compensation with respect to active service performed by an employee for an employer, but also includes pay for time lost, wage continuation payments, certain employee protection payments and any other payment for which the employee will receive additional creditable service.

7. What documentation is required when filing for a railroad retirement disability annuity?

Employees filing for disability annuities are required to submit medical evidence supporting their claim. Applicants should be prepared to furnish dates of hospitalization, names and dosages of medication, names of doctors, etc. Applicants may also be asked to take special medical examinations given by a doctor named by the RRB. If a disability applicant is receiving workers’ compensation or public disability benefits, notice of such payments must be submitted.

Sources of medical evidence for railroaders receiving disability annuities must include, but are not limited to, the applicant’s railroad employer, medical provider, physician and hospital, the Social Security Administration, or the agency paying workers’ compensation or public disability benefits. This evidence generally should not be more than 12 months old.

In addition, proof of age and proof of any military service credit claimed and a description of past work activity will also be required.

8. What is the best way to apply for a railroad retirement disability annuity or early Medicare coverage?

Applications for railroad retirement disability annuities are generally filed at one of the RRB’s field offices, or at one of the office’s Customer Outreach Program (COP) service locations, or by telephone and mail. However, applications by railroad employees for early Medicare coverage on the basis of kidney disease have to be filed with
STB investigates as shippers complain of deteriorating rail service

In March 16, 2018, the Surface Transportation Board (STB) investigated as shippers told the STB that Class I railroads provide their service outlook plans in the near term and for the remainder of 2018 due to deterioration concerns over deteriorating service. One shipper’s association accused railroads of trying to impress Wall Street investors rather than investing in their train crews and networks. In a March 10 letter to the STB, the National Grain and Feed Association complained about deteriorating rail service due to lack of locomotives and train crews.

One shipper’s association accused railroads of trying to impress Wall Street investors rather than investing in their train crews and networks. In a March 10 letter to the STB, the National Grain and Feed Association complained about deteriorating rail service due to lack of locomotives and train crews. 

There is a fundamental concern among rail customers that the root cause of these service issues is Class I railroads’ aggressive effort to reduce their operating ratios to impress Wall Street investors and shareholders. This, in turn, has resulted in the systematic shedding of resources by Class I carriers, including locomotives and crew, that has degraded service to unacceptable levels, and resulted in virtually non-existent surge capacity to meet rail customers’ needs.

The STB asked for information about each railroad’s network, including locomotive availability, employee resources, local service performance, service demand, communication strategies, and capacity constraints. The STB said it was “increasingly concerned” about the state of freight rail service in the U.S.

In recent weeks, the Board has become increasingly concerned about the overall state of rail service based on the weekly data collected by the Board pursuant to 49 C.F.R. pt. 1250,” the STB wrote. “Although there are exceptions, most Class I railroads’ data indicate that service is deteriorating, while system average dwell time has climbed. For those same railroads, other key metrics such as the average number of cars in revenue service that have not moved in 48 hours or more are trending in an unfavorable direction. The Board’s Rail Customer and Public Assistance Staff will begin holding weekly calls with these carriers.”

STB leadership requested that each Class I railroad provide a written response related to their respective outlooks for rail operations across their networks to address various related to rail service adequacy, including: locomotive availability; employee resources; local service performance; demand; communication; and capacity constraints.

### Brotherhood’s Relief and Compensation Fund

A Not-For-Profit Organization Established in 1912

The BR&C&F is not an insurance company

BR&C Officers and Directors are Railroaders

170 years of railroad experience

New Members Start with 150 Days of Benefit Eligibility

Maximum of 365 days after 5 years of beneficial membership

Lowest Membership Dues in the Industry

$50,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment Benefit

Applicable while on duty only

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

### News Briefs

#### BEGEMAN BECOMES STB CHAIR

On March 20, 2018, the White House designated Ann Begeman chair of the Surface Transportation Board (STB). A Republican legislator, Ms. Begeman is serving her second five-year term on the STB, following her nomination by President Barack Obama on December 7, 2016, and her unani- 

#### HOMENDY NOMIATED TO SERVE ON NTSB

In mid-April, the White House announced its intention to nominate Jennifer L. Homendy to serve a five-year term on the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). She currently serves as De- moc- ratic Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Rail- roads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials for the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, a position she has held since 2004. She advises members of Congress on legislation affecting railroads, the safety of oil and natural gas pipelines, and the transport- ation of hazardous materials. She is certified by the International Association of Fire Fighters on Core HazMat Operations and Mississip- pI PPE and Product Control. From 1999 to 2004, she was a Legislative Representative for the Inte- rnational Brotherhood of Teamsters. Prior to that, Ms. Homendy worked for the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, the American Iron and Steel Institute, and the National Federation of Indepen- dent Business.

#### Monthly Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>$100</th>
<th>$125</th>
<th>$150</th>
<th>$200</th>
<th>$250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BR&amp;C Monthly Dues</td>
<td>$45.00</td>
<td>$67.50</td>
<td>$90.00</td>
<td>$112.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*1E-4&amp;CPMA #16 Monthly Premium</td>
<td>$59.50</td>
<td>$78.75</td>
<td>$117.25</td>
<td>$147.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMART - TD (UTU) Monthly Assessment</td>
<td>$96.00</td>
<td>$144.00</td>
<td>$192.00</td>
<td>$Not Offered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apply today! — www.brcf.org

(Initial 2 months of membership provided at no cost)

Call the BR&C at (717) 657-1890 if you have any questions!
Are you a photographer? The National Division’s Photo, Relations Department, which produces Monitor, letter each month, has received numerous inquiries lately from BLET members volunteering to contribute their images to the "Photo of the Month" section of the News. If you'd like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email Bentley@blet.org.

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

J&E REFLECTIONS
An Elgin, Joliet and Eastern (EJ&E) locomotive (EMD SD 38) is crossing the Des Plaines River at Joliet, Ill., headed westbound with a Joliet-to-BNSF Eola, Ill., transfer. Photo taken with a Pentax K5II on October 12, 2012, by Brother Jay Norton, a member of BLET Division 404 in Chicago, Ill.

Photo: John Bentley

Plan ahead for BLET’s Washington D.C. regional meeting

The deadline for hotel reservations is approaching soon and BLET members and guests are encouraged to register now for the BLET’s regional meeting at the Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C., which will be held August 13-17, 2018.

Guests at the Washington D.C. regional meeting will stay at the Capital Hilton (1015 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C., 20036, (202) 774-1500). BLET convention registration as well as hotel registration can be handled through the BLET’s regional meeting website, www.blet.org/convention, or by calling the hotel directly.

If you’d like to submit a photo for consideration, you may call Editor John Bentley at (216) 241-2630, ext. 248, or you can email Bentley@blet.org.

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

The Capital Hilton is situated in the heart of Washington D.C., just blocks from the White House. The hotel has 1,705 guest rooms and suites, 50 conference rooms, and 14 meeting rooms. The property is located at 1015 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Capital Hilton is situated in the heart of Washington D.C., just blocks from the White House. The hotel has 1,705 guest rooms and suites, 50 conference rooms, and 14 meeting rooms. The property is located at 1015 16th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Washington D.C. regional meeting will conclude with a banquet on August 16. Attendees will travel home on August 17.