Flexible Spending Account will provide real savings

Registration for the money-saving Flexible Spending Account (FSA) begins next month, and BLET members are encouraged to take advantage of this valuable new health and welfare benefit. The program allows BLET members to pay for doctor co-pays and other medical expenses with pretax dollars.

A partial list of items that qualify for this type of payment includes: Doctor co-pays; Drug Co-pays; Dental Co-pays or other dental expenses not covered in our dental plan; Vision Co-pays or additional cost for eye care not covered under the national plan; and Over the counter medications, such as cold medicine, decongestant medicine, aspirin, Tylenol or their generic brands.

At the Union Pacific Railroad, Southern Region General Chairman Gil Gore is a staunch supporter of the program. He encourages all BLET members to sign up.

“I have a personal experience with the medical portion of the FSA,” Brother Gore said. “The program has helped tremendously with braces and other major dental work for my children not covered by our health insurance.”

Brother Gore gave braces and orthodontist work as an example. He said the FSA could really help BLET members who have children save money.

“If you have some major dental work scheduled (such as braces for your kids) up to $3,600 of that expense can be paid with pretax dollars,” he said. “If you are in a 25%–33% tax bracket, that amounts to as much as a $1,200 reduction in the federal taxes that you pay.”

“We planned ahead to have our children’s dental work done at the proper time to get maximum benefit from the plan,” he said.

In much the same way that a 401k plan provides retirement savings, the FSA allows BLET members to set aside pre-tax dollars to cover certain medical expenses. The savings can be substantial, especially for those in high tax brackets.

For more information about the FSA and other health and welfare benefits, visit www.ble-t.org.

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Deadly Hurricanes
Ike and Gustav ravaged Louisiana and Texas.

Many BLET members are rebuilding their lives with assistance from other BLET members and the Teamsters Disaster Relief fund.

BLET members at Norfolk Southern ratify new contract

Members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen have overwhelmingly ratified a new contract agreement with Norfolk Southern.

The six-year agreement governs about 4,800 engineers and provides for general wage increases of 19 percent in addition to bonuses that members can earn based on the company’s financial performance. It was ratified by a vote of 1,894 in favor and 1,091 against. Members will also receive lump sum bonus payments totaling $4,700 — a signing bonus of $1,200 plus an additional lump sum payment of $3,500 by January 1, 2009. "Substantial wage increases of 19 percent put NS engineers in line with engineers covered by the National Agreement as of July 1, 2009,” said BLET General Chairmen Ray Wallace, Willard Knight and Cole Davis, negotiated the contract.

The agreement provides for substantial improvements in lifestyle related areas and holds the line on health and welfare cost sharing. The agreement also institutes an important Scope Rule that protects the work of locomotive engineers in the face of new and changing technologies. “We want to stress that the agreement does not serve to eliminate any positions in any other craft,” the General Chairmen said.

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MetroLink Tragedy: Accident claims 25 lives
BLET Engineer Robert M. Sanchez among the dead

Labor Day 2008
Celebrating our holiday in Douglas, Wyoming

Your Rights,
Your FELA
Joseph L. Bauer Jr. provides an overview of FELA

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Election 2008
John McCain’s health care plan proposal a disaster for BLET members, absentee voting information, legislative board endorsements and more.

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Disaster Relief
Ike’s Aftermath

Continued on page 11

Continued on page 3

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Published by the BLET, a division of the Rail Conference, International Brotherhood of Teamsters
For most folks, Labor Day is a holiday that marks the end of the summer season. But that’s not the case in towns and cities throughout the United States where trade union members gather to celebrate “their” day.

Such was the case for BLET members in Douglas, Wyo., on Labor Day 2008.

As do many other Divisions throughout the U.S., BLET Division 31 has held a union Labor Day picnic for several years. The last two were held in conjunction with Local 257 of the United Transportation Union. “It just made sense to combine the picnic with the UTU,” said Division 31 Local Chairman Don Hill. “We work on the same trains, we can certainly get together for a Labor Day picnic.”

The 2008 picnic was an all day family affair.

“The burgers started grillin’ about 10 a.m. and we didn’t finish until after 6 that day,” said Brother Hill, who was one of the organizers of the event, along with Shawn VonWald, shop steward of UTU Local 257. “We had a good turnout with over 150 people being served, and lots of kids who had a great time. We have 70 pools working in place now, and almost half were able to lay off, which left about 20 pools working at any one time during the day, so it worked out pretty nice for most everyone to get to the picnic at one time or another during the day.”

“We roasted a 200 pound pig, went through about 90 pounds of hamburger, 300 bratwurst, and lots of salads, chips, sodas and cold beer,” he said. “We started plan-
ning for the picnic sometime in June. It takes a lot of work, but it is great to see the members and their families get together, especially for the kids.”

Even the weather seemed to co-
operate for a time in Douglas, Wyo., but a late afternoon shower, try as it might, could not dampen the spirits of guests. Later, as if to make amends, the sun broke out and shown again near the end of the picnic.

Political candidates paid visits to the picnic in Douglas, Wyo., as they were no doubt doing elsewhere throughout the United States on Labor Day.

“Terry J. Jones, BLET member and Chairman of the Wyoming State Legislative Board, is a candidate for the Wy-
oming State House running in District 3 from Wheatland, Wyo. He attended the picnic and visited with guests. “In this campaign, I got my work cut out for me,” he said. “It won’t be easy, but I’m gonna give it all I got.”

Gary Trauner also spent a good deal of time with guests. The 49-year old Wyoming Democrat is running for the U.S. House of Rep-representatives. In a short time, guests learned that Gary is a husband, father, businessman, entrepreneur, community volunteer, and former elected official residing in Wilson, Wyo. Eighty-sixers and others are familiar with his wife Terry chase Wyoming as the place they wanted to live and raise a family; they are now the proud parents of two Wyoming born-and-raised young boys — ages 14 and 8.

Division 31’s members work for the Union Pacific Railroad out of Bill, Wyo., some 35 miles from Douglas (where most of the members reside), and the Division is a part of the UP Northern Lines General Committee of Adjustment. Bruce D MacArthur, General Chairman of the committee, was also in attendance. His office is in Clinton, Iowa, and visited with guests and their families.

As holidays go, Labor Day has a lot of “seniority.” It originated in 1882 as the Central Labor Union (of New York City) sought to create a “day off for the working citizens.” As a result, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1887, and Congress made Labor Day a fed-
eral holiday on June 28, 1894, two months after the May Day riots of 1894. All 50 states have since made Labor Day a state holiday.

Labor Day has been celebrated on the first Monday in September in the United States since the 1880s. The form of the celebration of Labor Day was outlined in the first propos-
al for the holiday: a street parade to exhibit to the public “the strength and the spirit de corps of the trade and labor organizations,” followed by a festival for the workers and their families which became the pat-
ttern for a Labor Day celebrations.

Speeches by prominent men and women were introduced later, as more emphasis was placed upon the economic and civil significance of the holiday. Still later, by resolution of the American Federation of Labor convention of 1909, the Sunday pre-
ceding Labor Day was adopted as laborers Sunday and dedicated to the spiritual and educational aspects of the labor movement.

“The Labor Day picnic is getting to be a popular event with the members of both unions here in Douglas,” says Brother Hill.

In conclusions, as if to reaffirm the future of the labor movement itself, he said confidently, “You can bet your bottom dollar we’ll be here next year to do it again.”
Norfolk Southern contract
Continued from page 1

The balance of the Agreement provides that:

• Effective January 1, 2009, conditions eligibility for the Thoroughbred Performance Bonuses on accumulation of an agreed to number of starts based on type of service and, for through freight service, length of the trip. Establishes two levels of bonus potential eligibility tied to two levels of start attainment. Does not affect the bonus potential for 2008 payable in 2009. Provides for an opt-out of the bonus program that can be exercised at the end of 2014.

• The wage increases begin on July 1, 2009 and continue for six years according to the following schedule:
  - July 1, 2009 — 3%
  - July 1, 2010 — 3%
  - July 1, 2011 — 2%
  - July 1, 2012 — 2%
  - July 1, 2013 — 2%

• The above represents a simple total of 19% increases, which when compounded total 20.5%.

• Effective January 1, 2010, the current weekend differential payments of $30.00 in through freight and $7.00 in other than through freight services are raised to $45.00 and $21.00 respectively. These are substantial increases to these differentials that help to recognize the negative aspects of the “railroad lifestyle.”

• Beginning in 2010, the Carrier will designate six (6) “Extra Pay (EP) Days.” On these specially designated days, which the Carrier will choose regionally on days they typically experience difficulty in crewing through freight assignments, employees in through freight service working on these days will be paid time and one half for the service performed, as well as an additional basic day. This should harmonize the desires of employees who want to be off on special days with those who would rather make extra money and represents another incremental reform of the railroad lifestyle.

• Effective January 1, 2010, the away from home meal allowance is raised from $9.00 to $12.00.

• Effective January 1, 2010, the 40(h) match is raised to 30%.

• Effective September 1, 2008, the Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineer (DSLE) rate is raised to $275.00.

• Effective January 1, 2010, the waiting time for held away payments will be lowered from 16 to 14 hours, a long sought improvement that was sought by those who experienced long delays, and represents another incremental reform of the railroad lifestyle.

• Effective September 1, 2008, the Carrier’s portion of the disability premium payment is raised from $13.00 to $44.00, which will allow the employee’s share to return to the $13.68 level it was at before the premium was recently raised.

• Effective January 1, 2010, raises the Trainer (Coach) allowance from $15.00 to $20.00.

• Effective upon the utilization of the appropriate technology, establishes a Standing Bid system for the assignment of permanent vacancies. Engineers will maintain a standing bid with their desired assignments listed in their order of preference. When and where operative, the system will make assignments every Monday at 12:01 p.m. The system also will accelerate the assignment of permanent and subsequently generated vacancies, thus placing engineers on their most desired job sooner than the previous methods of having to run bulletin periods for all subsequent vacancies, but does not disturb any rules concerning displacement rights or temporary vacancies.

• Effective January 1, 2010, limits the number of times per month to three (3) that the Carrier can reduce the number of positions on a Guaranteed Extra Board. This will help to stabilize the work lives of young engineers assigned to these boards, especially those who are “on the bubble” between train and engine service, and represents another lifestyle improvement.

• Health and Welfare coverage for NS engineers continues to be tied to National Handling, and NS engineers will be protected against short term increases in H&W cost premium sharing in the same manner as the National Agreement provides for based on the 2009 cost sharing rate.

• Moratorium provision expires on November 1, 2014; however, the Parties may always negotiate sooner if they mutually agree to do so.

The negotiating committee consisted, variously of:
Ray Wallace, GC Southern Lines; Bill Thompson, VGC Southern Lines; Mark Wallace, VGC Southern Lines; Cole Davis, GC Northern Lines/WLE; Willard Knight, GC Eastern Lines; Kevin Peek, VGC Eastern Lines; and Marcus Rued, VP assigned to NS.

• This is a tremendous accomplishment that these officers should be rightly proud of,” said Vice President Marcus J. Rued, who assisted General Chairmen Wallace, Knight and Davis in the negotiations. Other members assisted in various capacities such as preparing materials to be used in the informational meetings held at various points on the system.

From left: Ray Wallace, BLET General Chairman, Steve R. Budzina, NS Assistant VP Labor Relations, Harold R. Mobley, NS VP Labor Relations, Chris S. Decker, NS Assistant Director, LR; Cole Davis, BLET General Chairman; and Willard Knight, BLET General Chairman.

Reviewing the contract prior to signing are Ray Wallace, Willard Knight, Cole Davis and Harold R. Mobley.

1,340,387 carloads of freight originated on U.S. railroads in August 2008. That includes:
11,399,000 carloads of freight originated on U.S. railroads in the first eight months of 2008.

From left: Ray Wallace, BLET General Chairman, Steve R. Budzina, NS Assistant VP Labor Relations, Harold R. Mobley, NS VP Labor Relations, Chris S. Decker, NS Assistant Director, LR; Cole Davis, BLET General Chairman; and Willard Knight, BLET General Chairman.
O B I T U A R I E S

Former Kentucky SLBC Tommy Mayne, 1951-2008

Brother Robert M. Mayne, a member of BLET Division 20 in Los Angeles, was killed in the line of duty on September 12 when his Metrolink train collided head on with a Union Pacific freight train near Crestline, Calif.

He was one of 25 people killed in the crash, which is being described as the worst train disaster in California in the last 50 years. More than 130 people were injured.

Brother Sanchez was a founding member of the California State Legislative Board. He joined the Brotherhood on September 19, 1974. During his tenure as State Chairman, he played a key role in passage of the Railroad Retirement and Survivors’ Improvement Act of 2001, a significant piece of national legislation that lowered the retirement age for all railroad workers in the United States. The BLET and the 32,000 members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes Division constitute the more than 70,000-member Teamsters Rail Conference.

The following statement is from Ed Rodzwicz, the president of the Teamsters Rail Conference and National Legislative Board (BLET) about the Metrolink railroad accident in Chatsworth, Calif.

"He always put the Brotherhood and its members first, a trait that Brother Sanchez brought to our organization. Tommy was a dedicated Brother, but also a loving father and husband. He was very proud of his daughter Samantha." For many years, he was a leader of the BLET’s National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen. He also represented the BLET at the National Conference of State Legislatures, a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation’s 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. He also served as Vice-President of the Kentucky State AFL-CIO for transportation.

Ed Rodzwicz statement on Metrolink accident

The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the accident and will not issue a probable cause determination for several months. The BLET Safety Task Force was dispatched to the scene immediately to assist the NTSB in its investigation. STF Members Ben Blissett and Scott Palmer are representing the BLET during the investigation.

Due to its tragic nature, the accident has garnered significant levels of media attention. The NTSB is investigating the fact that Brother Sanchez worked a split shift on the day of the fatal accident to determine whether or not fatigue played a role in the accident. Friends of Brother Sanchez have told the media he struggled with sleep.

The NTSB has also subpoenaed Brother Sanchez’s cell phone records to determine whether or not he was sending and receiving text messages while on duty. Media reports indicated Brother Sanchez may have been in touch with teenage rail fans while on duty.

"Rob seemed to really enjoy being a railroad engineer," Chairman Smith said. "If he was testing those teenagers, he’d have to have loved his job and wanted to share it with people. Someone who’s a malcontent is not going to reach out to those enthusiasts."

Soon after the crash some rail buffs posted a video tribute on YouTube with footage taken the previous week. The video shows a smiling Mr. Sanchez along his route, driving the same locomotive and passenger cars that collided with the freight train.

"You take care, Rob," said a message at the end of the tribute. "God speed and God bless you."
In the Line of Duty: Philip T. Myers

A BLET member working as an employee of the Indiana Rail Road died on September 10 after a tanker derailed at low speed from the main line spur at a Terre Haute company that makes railroad ties.

Philip T. Myers, 42, was a member of BLET Division 204 in Linton, Ind. He joined the BLET on January 1, 1998. He began working for the Indiana RR in 2006, and prior to that, was employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Brother Myers is the fourth BLET member to die while on duty in 2008. "This is a terrible tragedy," said BLET National President Ed Rodzwicz. "I extend deepest sympathy to Brother Myers' family and friends."

Brother Myers was taken to Terre Haute Regional Hospital after the accident, which happened on the property of Tangent Rail Products, in Terre Haute. According to Vigo County Coroner pathologist Dr. Roland Kohr, Myers was pronounced dead at the hospital from blunt force trauma to the head.

The accident happened about 10:30 a.m. Myers was part of a two-man work crew on the Tangent rail cars, pushing a line of cars down the rail spur. A locomotive engineer was in the engine, which was pushing the line of cars, while Myers was on the lead car up at the front. Myers was observing the path to make sure it was clear.

For a still-unknown reason, the car derailed, and Myers was pinned between it and a load of cross ties, one of the products made at that location.

"It is a tragic situation and all of us are in shock and we are deeply saddened," said Chris Rund, a spokesman for the company that makes railroad ties.

Indiana Rail Road operates a 500-mile route rail service in Indiana and Illinois. "We are a smaller regional railroad company and our employees are a little more tightly knit than you might find on a larger railroad, so this has been very impactful for all of us. Our hearts are with the family."

Indiana Rail Road hired out on the Indiana Rail Road in 2006, and prior to that, was employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway. "We are a smaller regional railroad company and our employees are a little more tightly knit than you might find on a larger railroad, so this has been very impactful for all of us. Our hearts are with the family."

According to the coroner, Myers was a highly competent engineer who was well respected by his coworkers, who say he enjoyed "seeing the world" from the cab of a locomotive.

"In my opinion, that was a heroic effort because if they didn't, there was nothing to stop that train between here and Enid," he said. "They probably prevented another major catastrophe." Enid is about 35 miles south of Medford.

When time permitted due to his career demands as a locomotive engineer, Brother Pendarvis attended church with his family members at Grace Christian Fellowship. He sang in the choir and was an usher.

When a veteran of the United States Navy and served aboard the USS Talbot for several years prior to receiving an honorable discharge, Brother Pendarvis was a highly competent engineer who was well respected by his coworkers, who say he enjoyed "seeing the world" from the cab of a locomotive.

National President Ed Rodzwicz extended his deepest sympathies to the family of Brother Pendarvis on behalf of the 55,000 members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Is financial protection against discipline a multiple choice decision?

Invest in a BR&CF membership. It offers more benefits and is the least expensive protection when disciplined for eligible occurrences.

Waste money purchasing an expensive policy from a company that offers much less.

Spend your money now. Live payday to payday. Collect toys.

Do nothing. Gamble. Convince yourself that procrastination is a good thing.

The best choice is obvious! A. Invest in a BR&CF membership.
Disaster Relief assistance in Louisiana, Texas

The Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund is accepting applications for assistance from members in Louisiana and Texas after hurricanes Gustav and Ike caused significant property damage.

The assistance is available in Texas for Hurricane Ike only; assistance is available in Louisiana for damage caused by Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike.

According to General Chairman Pat Williams, more than $15,000 was raised in the first week in response to hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Brother Williams has worked with his Secretary-Treasurer Roland Kleinsorge to set up a fund to accept donations to help these BLET families. Anyone wishing to donate can send a check, in any amount, made out to "BLET BNSF/ATSF GCA - Ike Relief Fund" to the following address:

BLET BNSF/ATSF GCA - Ike Relief Fund c/o Roland Kleinsorge 5505 N. Jesse Drive San Bernardino, CA 92407-2517

The Carrier is doing almost everything in their power to help alleviate some of the problems by agreeing to guarantee all the pools and other jobs so there will be income for these families. In addition to this, they have opened the Hardship phone lines again to allow all BNSF employees to receive money and other kinds of aid during these trials. They have pretty much suspended all work rules, so to speak, to help protect these brothers by allowing others to be called around rather than having to lay off.

"The willingness of all our members stepping forward to help amazes me to say the least," General Chairman Williams said. "All these brothers and sisters are more worried about those affected than they are about themselves and money."

"I have a challenge for each and every one of us that have not had this misfortune to make at least a minimum contribution of $100 to aid these members and their families," he said.

Brother Williams has worked with his Secretary-Treasurer Roland Kleinsorge to set up a fund to accept donations to help these BLET families. Anyone wishing to donate can send a check, in any amount, made out to "BLET BNSF/ATSF GCA - Ike Relief Fund" to the following address:

BLET BNSF/ATSF GCA - Ike Relief Fund c/o Roland Kleinsorge 5505 N. Jesse Drive San Bernardino, CA 92407-2517

Mail to: Southern Region Railroad Relief Fund c/o Kathie Bailey-Todd 10051 Barr Lake Dr. Houston, TX 77095

Wells Fargo Branch Deposits: Southern Region Railroad Relief Fund Account # : 3597720238

Wire Transfer Information: Call or Email for wire transfer information

If anyone has any questions or needs more information, please feel free to contact Kathie Bailey-Todd, at (713) 298-9253 or via email at kbaleytodd@att.net

United Airlines workers repairing an area washed out by flooding near a street crossing on Galveston Island

Photos: courtesy of FEMA

Locomotive Engineers & Conductors Mutual Protective Association
4000 Town Center • Suite 1250 • Southfield, MI 48075-1407
(800) 534-0000 • (313) 962-1512
Fax: (313) 633-1910 • E-Mail: lecmpa1910@lecmpa.org • Web: www.lecmpa.org

Job Protection Headquarters for Transportation Employees Since 1910
railroad workers face a dangerous work environment filled with potential hazards. As a result, at the turn of the century, in 1906 Congress passed the Federal Employer’s Liability Act (known as “FELA”) for the protection of the thousands of railroad workers employed nation wide. The FELA established and continues a federal system of legal recovery for railroad workers and their families, for injuries or deaths resulting from an injury or death to a railroad employee who is hurt or killed while on the job. If an accident causes injury or death to a railroad employee, the employer will likely be liable for those injuries or deaths under the FELA, for failure to properly maintain its equipment, for failure to properly inspect its equipment and railroad work environment, and in some cases to be exonerated for the liability of the equipment defect itself.

When Congress enacted the FELA for the protection of railroad workers nation-wide, it was not created a system where injured workers could receive compensation for their injuries, it also provided for railroad companies with a uniform liability standard applicable to working conditions and employee safety in the job. The FELA affirmatively requires that railroads provide their workers with a reasonably safe place to work at all times and in all situations. However, the FELA also places responsibility on the employee for working safely as well.

Unlike worker compensation systems, the FELA requires the railroad to be responsible for injuries that occur in the workplace and the employee to be responsible for injuries that occur while on the job but not while working. The employee must prove that the railroad was negligent in order to be compensated for the full extent of his damages on an issue by issue basis. Such damages may include past lost wages, future lost wages, past pain and suffering, and future pain and suffering. This is in sharp contrast to the method of using a chart to put all similar amounts of damages in a worker compensation system.

As with any legal proceeding, there are numerous traps and pitfalls to be avoided by an injured employee. The following basic principles are necessary:

1. Each party to the arbitrator shall bear their own costs. The appellants shall have the option of paying a pro-rata portion of the arbitrator’s fees and expenses. The balance of such fees and expenses shall be paid by the BLET.

2. The court reporter shall make a transcript of all proceedings before the arbitrator. This transcript shall be the official record of the proceedings and may be purchased by the appellants. If appellants do not purchase the transcript, the court reporter shall make a copy available at the close of the hearing. The court reporter shall make copies of the transcript and provide a copy to the parties at the conclusion of the hearing at the National Division during normal business hours. The fee for such copies may be by key or oral or other representative of choice. Appellants need not appear at the hearing and shall be permitted to file written statements with the arbitrator instead of appearing. Such statement shall be filed no later than fifteen (15) days after the transcript becomes available, but in no more than thirty (30) days after the hearing.

3. The arbitrator shall determine that more than one day of hearings is necessary, all hearings shall be scheduled to continue from day to day until completed. The court reporter shall have the right to file a brief within fifteen (15) days after the transcript of the hearing is available, but in no more than thirty (30) days after the hearing closes. The arbitrator shall also be entitled to any further copies of the transcript in forty-five (45) days after the submission of posthearing briefs or a request for additional time as determined by any employee of the BLET.

4. The arbitrator shall give full consideration to the legal requirements pertaining to the amount of damages that may be charged, and shall set forth in the decision the legal and artistic basis for such decision.
The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen is joining the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the rest of the labor movement in the United States by endorsing Barack Obama for President.

“We believe Senator Obama is the best candidate to fight for the rights of the 55,000 men and women of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen,” BLE National President Ed Rodzwicz said.

“The next President will make several decisions and appointments that will have a major impact on the rail industry. The next President will appoint the members of the Surface Transportation Board, who regulate the carriers, the Federal Railroad Administrator, who oversees the workplace safety of BLE members, and the members of the National Mediation Board, who can force the railroads to bargain in good faith.”

Also included in this voter guide are state-level candidates who have been endorsed by the BLE, as well as instructions on how to vote by absentee ballot.

“You can exert a strong influence on your family’s economic future when casting your vote in November, and we believe Senator Obama will fight to make the right decisions when it comes to doing what’s right for all rail workers,” President Rodzwicz said.

In preparation for national bargaining that will begin late next year, the National Division has begun research on a number of subjects that must be considered as the BLE’s bargaining strategy is shaped. A review of the health care “reform” plan offered by Presidential candidate John McCain uncovered some facts that should worry BLE members and all railroad workers.

In contrast to the health care plan proposed by BLE-endorsed candidate Barack Obama, the cornerstone of the McCain plan is to end the tax deductibility of employer-sponsored coverage. This move would have a significant impact on our coverage under the national industry plan. This year, each railroad’s total contribution toward the various elements of our national freight benefits package — including short-term disability — exceeds $15,000 per BLE member. Enactment of the McCain plan would subject the carriers to Medicare and Railroad Retirement Tier 1 and Tier 2 taxes on this sum. Depending upon an individual’s taxable income, carrier costs could rise over $3,000 per employee. This would be the equivalent of a 19.75% increase in the carrier’s cost.

Each member also would be subject to additional Medicare and Railroad Retirement tax rates of up to $2,000 or more. BLE members would be further impacted in two other ways. First, the “pre-tax” status of the $166.25 monthly employee premium contribution and the carrier’s $40 monthly short-term disability contribution would end, and those contributions would have to be made with after-tax dollars. Second, the value of the carrier’s contributions would be included in each member’s taxable income.

For someone in the 25% marginal tax bracket — which includes single people with a taxable income in excess of $31,850, and married people filing jointly with a taxable income over $63,700 — the total income tax impact is over $4,500. For someone in the 28% marginal tax bracket — which includes single people with a taxable income in excess of $77,100, and married people filing jointly with a taxable income over $128,500 — the total income tax impact is over $5,100.

Promoters of the McCain plan point to $2,500 individual and $5,000 family tax credits that are included in the plan. However, it is unclear whether workers who receive employer-sponsored health benefits will be entitled to the tax credit. What is clear is that, in either case, the railroad’s costs will rise significantly, and your taxes also will increase steeply.

“John McCain claims that — as he puts it — ‘opening up the health insurance market to more vigorous nationwide competition, as we have done over the last decade in banking, would provide more choices of innovative products less burdened by the worst excesses of state-based regulation,’” said BLE National President Ed Rodzwicz.

“In other words, he’s going to bring to the nation’s health care system the same changes that produced the current crisis on Wall Street and throughout the global financial sector,” added Rodzwicz. “This proposal is a disaster for BLE members, for American workers, and for the country.”

ELECTED 2008

McCain health care plan a disaster for BLET members

Sen. McSame has a staunchly anti-worker voting record:

McSame:

Voted AGAINST funding Amtrak in 2007. If Amtrak were to shut down, over 20,000 employees would not be paying into Railroad Retirement, seriously weakening the fund.

Voted to ALLOW employers to hire permanent replacements during a strike.

Voted AGAINST an amendment which provided transportation workers with an employee engagement mechanism for addressing workplace issues, the right to collective bargaining, and smarter lower protections.

Believes that OSHA policies should be so made that they do not “overburden” employers.

ELECTING Sen. McSame this fall would be a continuation of President Bush’s failed policies on the economy and our jobs while keeping the power in the hands of billionaires. We can’t afford another four years of a Bush White House.

McSame will not support working families. He is a self-appointed “free-trader” who supported NAFTA and is still under the delusion that the trade agreement helped our economy.

A McCain presidency would only do further damage to American railroad families.
Democratic National Convention

Representatives of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen converged on Denver in August to participate in the 2008 Democratic National Convention. BLET officers were able to meet with key leaders of the House and Senate, including Senator Frank R. Lautenberg of New Jersey. Also, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters made their presence known in Denver and several BLET officers were able to participate in important meetings with Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa.

Absentee voting information for BLET members

Railroaders in a demanding occupation often require compassionate solutions. BLET engineers and trainmen are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Due to the importance of the upcoming November elections, the BLET urges its members to vote by absentee ballot in case they are on duty or away from home on Election Day.

To that end, the BLET’s National Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., issued the following Absentee Voter Guide for BLET members. The following state-by-state guide gives members an idea of what they need to do in order to make sure their vote is cast in the November elections.

Alabama

Absentee Voter Guide

Early & Mail-in Voting:

Secretary of State Website: http://www.sos.state.al.us/ele/index.htm

County Election Officials: http://www.elections.alabama.gov/form_data/county_info.htm

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by October 24, 2008 - 5pm

Absentee Ballot Return:

By 8 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Application:

Received by October 31, 2008 - 5pm

Arkansas

Absentee Voter Guide

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by October 30, 2008 - 5pm

Absentee Ballot Return:

By 8 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

Primary Election:

Tuesday, September 2, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received noon, October 2, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

By 8 p.m. on Election Day

California

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by October 28, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

By 8 p.m. on Election Day

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/hsr.htm

County Election Officials: http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/hsr/counties.htm

District of Columbia

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by October 30, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

By 8 p.m. on Election Day

State Elections Website: http://www.dcboe.org/

Florida

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before midnight, October 28, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before 10 a.m., November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.dcboe.org/

Georgia

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before midnight, October 28, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before 10 a.m., November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.ga.us/2008/elections/zAbs.htm

Hawaii

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by 5 p.m. before Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.hi.us/sos/ele/conf Absentee/Default.htm

Idaho

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 8 a.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://vote.idaho.gov/2008abs.htm

Illinois

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received by 11:59 a.m. on October 28, 2008 (faxed) or 11:59 p.m. on October 28, 2008 (mailed)

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008 (mailed)

State Elections Website: http://www.elections.idaho.gov/elechat.asp

Indiana

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 9 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.in.gov/sos/elec/elechat.htm

Kentucky

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.voteselect.ky.gov

Louisiana

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://vote.westafrica2.com/

Maine

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.maine.gov/sos/elections/elechat.htm

Maryland

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.maryland.gov/elechat.htm

Massachusetts

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.ma.us/elechat.htm

Michigan

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 1 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.monsterballot.com/

Minnesota

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.mn.us/sos_elections/Default.htm

Mississippi

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.ms.us/elechat.htm

Missouri

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 5 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.mo.us/elechat.htm

Montana

Absentee Voter Guide

Mary D. Jones

General Election:

Tuesday, November 4, 2008

Absentee Ballot Request:

Received before 1 p.m. on Election Day

Absentee Ballot Return:

Received before close of polls, November 4, 2008

State Elections Website: http://www.sos.state.mt.us/elechat.htm

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Absentee voting
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North Carolina
Absentee Voter Guide
Last updated July 11, 2008
General Election:
Tuesday, November 4, 2008
Absentee Voter Application:
Received between September 15th and October 28th, 2008
Absentee Ballot Request:
Received by October 7, 2008
Absentee Ballot Return:
Received by 8:00 PM Election Day
State Election Website:
http://www.elections.state.nc.us/ncovr/pdf/county-elec-officials.rtf

New Hampshire
Absentee Voter Guide
Last updated July 03, 2008
General Election:
Tuesday, November 4, 2008
Absentee Ballot Request:
Received by close of polls on election day
Absentee Ballot Return:
Received by close of polls on election day
State Election Website:
http://www.sos.state.nh.us/doc/county-elec-officials.rtf

New Jersey
Absentee Voter Guide
Last updated August 01, 2008
General Election:
Tuesday, November 4, 2008
Absentee Voter Application:
Received by October 28, 2008
Absentee Ballot Request:
Received by October 28, 2008
Absentee Ballot Return:
Received by 8:00 PM Election Day
State Election Website:
http://elections.state.nj.us/

New Mexico
Absentee Voter Guide
Last updated July 03, 2008
General Election:
Tuesday, November 4, 2008
Absentee Ballot Application:
Received by October 7, 2008
Absentee Ballot Request:
Received by October 31, 2008
Absentee Ballot Return:
Received by close of polls on election day
State Election Website:
http://www.sos.state.nm.us/
Flexible spending account

Flexible spending benefits

In much the same way that a 401(k) program allows individuals to use pre-tax dollars to save for retirement, the Railroad Employees Flexible Benefits Program allows members to use pre-tax dollars to pay for certain medical expenses or dependent care expenses. The current 2008 plan allows members to save anywhere from $120 to $5,000 per year for dependent care expenses, or $250 to $3,600 per year for medical expenses. It is expected the dollar amounts will change under the upcoming 2009 plan.

Just like 401(k) contributions are automatically deducted from your paycheck, membership contributions to the Flexible Spending Account are withheld from your paycheck. Your contributions to the plan are spread out over 12 monthly payments (in other words, if you elect the 2008 maximum of $3,600, then you would place $300 per month into your Flexible Spending Account). If you elected the 2008 maximum of $120, then you would have $10 per month deducted from your pay and placed into your Flexible Spending Account.

You can receive payment from your election account when you have maximized in her flex spending account for the last eight years and been able to provide receipts to receive a total refund even if she has only earned $200,000 in a year. "Our over the counter medicine for your family in the year 2006 came to $217. If you are on maintenance medications, this program can put real dollars into your pocket allowing you to pay your co-pays with pretax dollars." Side Letter 8 of the 2007 BLET National Agreement stipulates that the BLET must reach at least 5% participation by the year 2009 in order to retain this benefit. This is a big reason why it is strongly encouraging its members to participate in the Flexible Spending Account program.

This is a benefit that will put real dollars into your pockets and I encourage you all to enroll at an amount you are comfortable with to see how the plan works, "Get your money working for you!"

Enrollment opportunity for the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) should arrive in your mailbox soon from UnitedHealthCare.

OTCMedFSA.pdf

The plan also has a "use it or lose it" provision. For example, if you sign up for the maximum in your flex spending account and only have expenses equal to $1,900, then you would only be able to collect $1,900 of the $2,000 you put into your account. But if you were in a 33% tax bracket, that would still net you $533 in savings for the year ($633 tax savings minus the $100 max in the account - $533 net savings).

"While I know the 'use it or lose it' function of the plan can be scary, you can easily meet the minimum deduction of $120 for the year just on the counter medications, which would yield you a net savings of $40 for the year if you were in a 33% tax bracket," Brother Gore said.

Additionally, some over the counter medications are not covered by the Flexible Spending Account. UnitedHealthCare has provided a list of medications that it will reimburse under the Flexible Spending Account http://www.shlc-e.org/pdf/
Election Day and Our Country’s Future

Everything Teamsters are doing in this election cycle, from phone banking to house visits to voter education and more, is done with one goal in mind: getting people to the polls on Election Day – Tuesday, November 4, 2008.

And time and again, just a few votes have made the difference in elections. You can bet there were plenty of people in Florida in 2000 kicking themselves after George W. Bush was declared the winner there, hence winning the presidency. Washington state is another great example. In 2004 Christina Greigson won the governor’s race by a scant 129 votes. This election is expected to be another close shave, and it is my hope that members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen will join me in voting for Barack Obama.

When the Teamsters Union endorsed Sen. Obama, it was only after a lengthy process where we came to the conclusion that only he could provide working families with very real and very necessary change.

So many issues important to working families and the Teamsters Union hang in the balance during this election. What’s at stake? The Employee Free Choice Act. The fate of the Mexican truck program. Amtrak funding. Trade policies. The list goes on and on.

The upcoming election is about more than who has the better personality and who can generate better sound bites. It’s about the future of our country and the health of the American labor movement. That future should not be left in the hands of someone like John McCain, who recently said he “doesn’t really understand economics” and that “the fundamentals of the economy are strong.”

No matter what the polls are saying leading up to Election Day, it is essential that each and every one of us get to the polls and vote. As Election Day approaches I hope you will evaluate your state and local candidates with the same scrutiny with which we evaluate our candidates for president. We can’t afford four more years of ant working policies taking America in the wrong direction.

Canadian Pacific Railway’s Spirit Train is moving the Olympic Spirit through Canada to generate buzz for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. The railroad is one of many sponsors for the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The CP Spirit Train began its run in Port Moody on September 21, and traveled across six provinces, finishing its adventure in Montreal on October 18.

Advisory Board August Activity

In accordance with the BLET Bylaws, summaries of BLET Advisory Board members’ activities are published monthly:

**National President Edward W. Rodzwicz**—National Division office; General supervision of BLET activities; General office duties; Various correspondence & phone calls; President, Teamsters Rail Convention; UP Western Region general committee mtg.; Kansas State Legislative board mtg.; Town Hall mtg.; Kansas City; FRA meeting, International Western Convention, Democratic National Convention.

First Vice-President and Alternate President Paul T. Sorrow—for former duties in Office Administrator capacity; Various duties assigned to First Vice President; Various correspondence and telephone communications, General supervision of Special Representatives, SBA awards. 1116; Jacksonville, Fla.; Bob Goldberg Memorial golf tournament, Fresno, N.Y.; North Dakota State Legislative Board mtg.; Mike Maucha, Biomark, N.D.; 68th Annual International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Democratic National Convention, Denver.

National Secretary-Treasurer William C. Walpert—for General supervision of BLET financial, record dates, ND office, BLET Education & Training Dept., In- ternational, Mobilizing & Strategic Planning Dept., Safety Task Force, Meetings with vendors and financial institutions, Standard Building operations oversight; Eastern Union Meeting Association, Harlem, Ohio; Union Pacific/Southern Region GCOA mtg.; New Orleans, La.

Vice-President Richard K. Rudek—for ND office; BLET Decertification Hili- pines services; Director of Administration Dept. National Railroad Adjustment Board (NRAB); Illinois Central; Wisconsin Central; Indiana Harbor Bell; METRA; Bell Rwy. of Chicago; Chicago Central & Pacific, Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range; Routine office duties, Chicago; Public Law board establishment, Metal; Chicago; NRAB case prep.; w/ Doug Donovan, NRAB Arbitrator, Sec. 3 mg.; New secondary sidem meeting; Mgr. W/G. Fauklee, Cleveland, NRAB arbitration, various GCOAs, Mgr. w/ A. Brut & J. Atoyin, re: R.B. Raymond, B & UER mtg. prep; CN/WC, Green Bay, Wisc.; W/LC management/DE mtg.; FRA Part 240.495 dockets. EGAI.

Vice-President Marle W. Geiger, Jr.—Assigned to: BLET Trainmen’s Department, Kansas City Southern, Texas-Mexican Rwy, Midland Rail, Southwest Gateway Western, CP Rail System U.S.; Portland & Western RR; Great Western RR, Utah Railway, Chery eyes and mtg. w/ GC Parker and Division 812 BCTC, Lake Charles, La.; Mgr. w/ GC Clark and Division 244 (Ser. Mure); Lasano, Texas and Houston, Texas; Vacation, Research, correspondence and general office duties. Vice-President Stephen D. Spouge—Assigned to Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Montana Rail Link, Pacific Harbor Line, Mason & Northern Arkansas (M&A); National Wage/Rail Committee, General office duties, Conference call on NS tentative agreement. Conference call for RPB 7166; RPB 7151, Chicago; Vaccation day, International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Democratic National Convention, Denver.

Vice-President E.L. “Lee” Pruitt—Assisted general chairman & members of UP Western Lines, UP- Western Region; UP-Central Region; UP-Southern Region; UP-Texas Belt; UP-GCOA mtgs., Las Vegas (Young GCOA mtg), San Antonio Yard negotiations, UP-GCOA; Las Vegas BNSF (SO) crew-enhanced customer services; Arbitration Board 7159; UP-GCOA, San Antonio, Voyage; International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.; Various office preparations, telephone correspondence, etc; Arbitration Board 7228, UP-GCOA, Assisting DC Dayton.

Vice-President & National Legislative Representative John P. Talman—Assigned to: BLET Washington, D.C. office; BLET Security Officer, General Office Duties, Telephone, correspondence, Coordinate content of M&NA website; Continued coordination w/ I/BT Government Affairs Dept.; Coordinated PAC contributions, Kansas State Legislative Board mtg.; Kansas City, North Dakota State Legislative Board mtg.; Biomark, N.D.; International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.; B LET State Legislative Board conference call; Attended various functions at Democratic National Convention, Denver.

Vice-President Marcus J. Ruf—Assigned to: Amtrak; Portrait Authority Torres Haden (PATH), Long Island Railroad (LIRR), Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA); New Jersey Transit (NJT); MNRR, Norfolk-Southern All-General Committee, Wheeling & Lake Erie, and NYAL; Discuss Norfolk Southern tentative agreement, NSN conference call. Prepare for NS-S GCOA mtg. to discuss tentative contract; NS-S GCOA mtg.; Asheville, N.C.; Present NS tentative agreement to NS-S GCOA for Q&A by local chairman; Discuss SEPTA arbitration issues, conference call; NSF conference call w/ GCOA B to discuss tentative agreement; NSL, study upcoming arbitration cases; Study RPB cases for hearing in NYC, RATH.

Vice-President Dennis R. Pierce—Assigned to: CSL General C ommittees—Eastern Lines, Western Lines, Northern Lines, Connal (SAA/CSX-Northern District) — and Indiana Rail Road, Alabama State Dock, Special projects, BNSF GCOA, General office duties; CSX-LET General Chairman’s mtg.; Jacksonville, Fl.; NS-Southern contract mtg.; Asheville, N.C., CSX international service agreement; Huntington, W.Va.; International Western Convention, Santa Luis Obispo, Calif.; Democratic National Convention, Denver.

Vice-President Mike Tennyson—Assigned to: Delaware & Hudson, Springfield Terminal; St. Lawrence & Atlantic, Maine & Atlantic; Union Railroad; Birmingham Southern, New York, Susquehanna & Western, New England Central, South Buffalo Rwy, Iowa, Chicago & Eastern, Indiana & Ohio; Indiana Southern, Louisville & Indiana; Marion Southern, Terminal Railroad, Springfield Terminal conference, Office calls and administration; Union Railroad PRR 7006, Pittsburgh, Montreal, Maine & Atlantic contract negotiations, Bangor, Maine; International Western Convention, San Luis Obispo, Calif.

Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News National Western Conference

A message from Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa

PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT CLEVELAND, OH