

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

— SINCE 1937 —

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

As your president I have traveled some since the May Convention to address the various issues confronting NARVRE mostly membership as that is always one of the top priorities along with protecting our railroad retirement system. We have been to Unit 92 at Proctor/Duluth, Minnesota, Unit 107 at St Cloud, Minnesota and celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the Railroad Retirement Act at a luncheon in Chicago. We returned to Proctor, MN to participate in their annual “Hoghead Days” parade in July and August. In October we attended Unit 96 Meeting in Galesburg, Illinois, Unit 90 in Kansas City, KS, Unit 95 Meeting in Kansas City, MO as well as a visit

to Arcadia, California organized by Area 8 Director Bob Bloomer with a group of railroad retirees that was quite successful. In November we held two Informational meetings at Raton, New Mexico and Trinidad, CO as well as attending Unit 99’s meeting in La Junta, Colorado. In December we had a Budget Meeting at our new National office in Moberly, MO as well as attending Unit 165’s meeting in Moberly. An open House was held as well at the new office. Closing out the year were meetings at Willmar, MN, Staples, MN and Grand Forks, North Dakota attempting to establish new Units in those areas.

The 2012 National Convention will be held May 20, 21& 22, 2012 in Bloomington, Minnesota at the Holiday Inn. This will be the 75th

Anniversary of NARVRE and you will be making history by attending whether you are a delegate, spouse or guest. In less than a year there will be election of local Unit officers and delegates to this convention. At our last convention in May 2010 we set an all time record with over 87 delegates attending and 75 form local units. We have pointed out in past newsletters that Units can raise money such as drawings, contests, raffles such as 50/50 goes along way in supporting your delegate to the convention. So be planning now and don’t wait until next fall and than have the debate on whether or not to send a delegate.

In talking about conventions anyone planning on bidding on the 2014 convention should bring this to the attention of their membership before placing a bid at the 2012 convention as to the site. It takes a two year commitment by your membership when doing so just to make them aware. This is for information purposes to all Units.

Finally, At the Budget meeting NARVRE has taken in approximately \$8,000 for the NARVRE PAC since its inception in 2009. Contributions have tapered off since than. There are no limitations on how much money one can contribute. I want to point out that only individuals can make a contribution to the PAC for whatever amount you care to donate. I cannot point out enough that no Unit nor bundling (meaning passing the hat) at a meeting is allowed to contribute to the PAC. Please adhere to these guidelines so to keep our books straight.

— Tom Dwyer, National
President

FROM THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR —

As of this writing, Congress has not passed governing legislation which will fund the day-to-day operations of major agencies and Cabinet departments. A two week stop-gap spending bill cleared Congress last December 2nd, averting a threatened shutdown, which buys some time for Congress to work out an appropriation package for the remainder of the 2011 fiscal year ending Sept. 30th. The democrats would prefer to move forward with an omnibus appropriations measure which has some bipartisan support in the Senate, but probably not enough to get the 60 votes needed to avoid a filibuster. Short of that, they will attempt to pass a nine month continuing resolution (CR) aware that the House Republicans are only interested in one that would expire next March.

The White House and Congress have agreed to a compromise on keeping the current tax rates in affect, avoiding huge tax increases in every tax bracket. However, the deal will add the lost revenue and combined costs of almost a trillion dollars on to the national debt. Presently, there is much disagreement among democrats over extending tax cuts to the wealthiest two percent, but I believe the votes are there to pass this new proposal. I report on this due to the incredible and cruel irony of this so-called “compromise”. A

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From the National Vice President —

Happy New Year to one and all! I wish I were writing a very different article. We have been through tough times in the past, demonstrated by a N.A.R.V.R.E history full of struggle, and success, since 1937. We have survived, and we will continue to remain strong as we meet new challenges. The Membership Committee, with the guidance of Chairman James Brewer is just beginning to get its feet wet and will need your help and cooperation. Area 2 Director Rich Renz sent encouragements you may not have considered, like the following:

“...One hand can't clap; we must all participate to achieve our membership goals.” T.E.A.M. . . . Together Everyone Achieves More.

A great number of dedicated members have demonstrated on many occasions their abilities to be a dominant force in the Congress of the United States by assisting in the passage or defeat of legislation affecting railroad retirees. We at N.A.R.V.R.E. want that tradition of protecting our futures to continue. We do not want to be the generation that lets the future retiree down. Please help, as no one person can meet this challenge alone. There are thousands of railroad retirees, and many near retirement, who have never heard of N.A.R.V.R.E. We, working together, can tell them one at a time. It takes very little time to pass out a membership form and invite someone you know to join with us to help protect our retirement. I want to thank you for all your good work last year and let's have a great 2011!

The book, History of N.A.R.V.R.E., by Mary David is still available from the National Office for only \$15.00, which includes shipping. When the last copy is sold there may never be another copy made.

You are important to N.A.R.V.R.E.; please continue to make N.A.R.V.R.E. important to you.

— **George Wisdom**

From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

New Feature to the Newsletter

I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday. We have added a new feature to our monthly newsletter. We will be having guest writers from time to time through out the 2011 year. We are hoping you will find this interesting. Mr. Jim Brewer is our National Chairman of the membership committee. We thought Jim would be a good guest to start with since our main goal is to provide service to our membership and look at ways to add new members to our great NARVRE family.

Our local Unit Secretary/Treasurer's are in the process of renewing your 2011 dues. Their job is very difficult so try to get your yearly dues money to them and save your unit the cost of postage. Remember to keep your local S & T posted on any address change you have or are going to have. The US Post Office will only forward your mail for a short time. A current address is necessary for you to receive your NARVRE newsletter. If you are talking to a friend remind them of this address update also.

This summer I took AMTRAK into Chicago, IL. It was the SOUTHWEST CHIEF from Los Angeles to Chicago. The train was on time both ways and the food was outstanding, the service was great and the prices were very much in line. The scenery was wonderful. So, if you are starting to have the winter blues and you have AMTRAK service available I highly recommend a train ride. I'll bet your grand kids would love to ride on the train. Here is the AMTRAK reservation number 1-800-872-7245. A lot of us have a rail pass so don't forget to use it.

— **Richard L. Duley**
National S & T, NARVRE

Train Trivia

- 1) Who became known as The Father of Railways?
- 2) What do the initials APT stand for?
- 3) Which Illinois folk hero is associated with the Cannonball Express?
- 4) Which county witnessed the Great Train Robbery in 1963?
- 5) The Huey P Long, the world's longest railway bridge is located in which US city?
- 6) What is the world's largest railway station?

(1) George Stephenson; (2) Advanced Passenger Train; (3) Casey Jones; (4) Buckle; (5) New Orleans; (6) Grand Central in New York

Guest Editorial

This is the first column from me as The National Membership Committee Chairman. It is my hope that the things you learn from this column about recruiting members will be helpful for all of the units. I do not view my role as The National Chairman as the person who supplies all the answers to this very important part of our organization. I see my role as more of the head cheerleader. Each individual member must take up the cause of increasing and maintaining memberships. Unless we succeed in this there may not be a NARVRE in the future to protect our railroad pensions as NARVRE has done for many years. Down the road we hope to have a membership booklet, contests, prizes, and good suggestions from this committee. However, the reason for success of increasing and maintain our membership must from come each member.

— **Jim Brewer, Chairman**
National Membership Committee

(National Legislative Director from page 1)

day after this costly deal was announced, H.R. 5987, The Seniors Protection Act came to the floor of the House under special rules which limited debate, and assured a vote. The bill would have paid out \$250.00 to retirees facing a second consecutive year without a cost-of-living increase. President Obama and democrats supported this bill, but the Republican leadership has contended that the nation could not afford the estimated \$14 billion cost of this legislation. This bill was voted down on December 8th and fell short of the needed two-thirds majority required under the House fast-track procedure. One single day after insisting on the tax deal to include tax cuts to the wealthiest taxpayers which would add somewhere around a \$ trillion dollars to the deficit, the Republican party, except for 26 votes, killed this bill, with the minor help of 12 Democrats. All seniors and retirees will be better served to remember this in the next election...there's supposed to be consequences to elections. How do these people keep getting elected??

Medicare

On Wednesday, Dec. 8, Congress passed S. 3965, "Protecting Seniors' Access to Doctors Act" which will avoid a 23 percent reduction in the reimbursement rates for doctors treating Medicare patients. This legislation will continue current doctor's fees for all of 2011, without reductions. This ongoing problem is better known as the "doc-fix" issue. Congress has had to pass delays on similar reductions four separate times in the past twelve months. NARVRE agrees with major medical organizations that the current reimbursement formula needs to be changed, with fair increases in doctor fees over longer periods of time. More and more, attending Medicare physicians are stating that they cannot continue to take on new Medicare patients in this present situation. We are also concerned with many plans

being offered that will threaten the solvency of Medicare and the many benefits that seniors now rely on. The Presidential Debt Commission recently debated different proposals in order to curb Medicare spending in their aim to help reduce the federal budget deficit. Their final report offered new plans put forth by the bipartisan panel, and they have ample support among Republican lawmakers who will assume control in the next Congress. The plans would require beneficiaries to pay a larger share of Medicare, the federal health program for the elderly and disabled. One idea would fundamentally transform the 45 year-old program by giving seniors a set amount of money to buy their own Medicare coverage in the private market of the health care insurance industry. This proposal would, in effect, have the government cut checks to beneficiaries for purchasing coverage rather than promising a specific set of benefits as the current Medicare program does. This proposal, from Rep. Paul Ryan, who is expected to be next Republican Chairman of the Budget Committee, would replace the current Medicare program with one that would give seniors "vouchers" to spend in the private insurance market. These proposals in the panel's final report are called "premium support" or vouchers, and they would shift Medicare from the concept of a defined benefit toward a defined contribution, meaning you would receive fewer benefits or pay more in premiums than you do under the current Medicare program. Many analysts already contend that the amount the government pays in these type of plans will not cover the projected increase in health care costs. The Commission's report states that the costs of Medicare Part B borne by beneficiaries would increase from 25 percent to 35 percent under a voucher type plan. AARP has stated "The burden of Medicare out-of-pocket costs is already very high, to the point where many people are literally having to choose between necessities of life and health care". The final report of the Commis-

sion was defeated in that they did not receive the necessary 14 votes in this 18 member panel to order Congressional action. The eleven votes they did receive means they reached a 60 percent outcome, so hopefully they will take these discussions back to Congress and work on more fair and equitable measures. They need to offset the deficit and also preserve the care we need without bankrupting the Medicare Trust Fund...and all of us. The final report needs work on their ongoing theme of shared sacrifice.

The two newly-elected Governors in Ohio & Wisconsin have stated they will kill the high speed rail projects in their states and keep the federal money to use as they see fit. Well, elections do have consequences, and the National Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, has just announced that both states will lose all of the \$1.9 billion in federal grant money, and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will now dispense those dollars to other rail projects across 13 states. They have also killed the promise of 30,000 new jobs this work would have created.

Rep. John Mica (R, Fla.) will be the next chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee. There will an abundance of work to be done on surface transportation and road, rail and bridge infrastructure, all legislation that was stalled due to the elections and politics of the 111th congress. Our work will also continue and we will begin next year to address our concerns with his office and staff, as well as continue the work with the House Subcommittee on Railroads which has jurisdiction on our issues. There will be new assignments made in these large committees, and we will update the membership once they are announced. I thank you for the help you all provide to this legislative office, and wish each of you a healthy and Happy New Year.

**— Gary M. Faley
National Legislative Director**

FROM PALMETTO, GBA

The Holidays: Red, Green And Sometimes Blue

The holidays are a time for friends and family to get together, to share traditions, to make promises and plans for the New Year, and, for many of us, to eat too much.

However, for some, this time of year brings feelings of sadness or loneliness - which can happen before, during and after the holidays. These feelings have come to be called the "Holiday Blues".

The Holiday Blues can affect anyone of any age and are usually short-lived, lasting for a few days to a few weeks prior to and after the holiday season. The Holiday Blues are manageable, and the University of Maryland offers the following tips you can use, even after the holidays:

- Eat right (don't overdo holiday left-overs high in fat and sugar)
 - Get plenty of rest
 - Exercise regularly (or begin an exercise program such as walking short distances and gradually increasing the time and distance spent walking. Regularity is the key here)
 - Let go of the past
 - Allow yourself to feel sad or lonely but not for long periods of time (these feelings are normal, especially at this time of year) but don't allow yourself to dwell
 - Avoid drinking too much alcohol
 - Spend time with people who care about you and the ones you care about. Life is too short to miss opportunities to show the most important people in our lives that we are still here.
- If these tips above are not helpful, or if the Blues persist for weeks beyond the holidays, don't hesitate to get help. In 2011, Medicare will cover many outpatient Mental Health Care services. Visits to your doctor or other health care provider to diagnose your condition will be paid at 80% (you will pay the 20% of the Medicare approved amount).
- For outpatient treatment (such as counseling or psychotherapy), Medicare will pay 55% (you will pay 45% of the Medicare-approved amount). This coinsurance amount will continue to decrease in the next three years and is expected to follow this plan:

In Year	You Pay
2011	45%
2012	40%
2013	35%
2014	20%

For more articles like this, please visit the Railroad Medicare Web site at: www.palmetto-gba.com/medicare. In the next few months, you will see Railroad Medicare offer a Facebook page where you can interact with Railroad Medicare to ask questions and receive responses in an interactive forum. Please watch for this change in the coming months.

To learn more about other resources Railroad Medicare has for you, please sign up for our listserv by visiting www.palmetto-gba.com/medicare, then clicking on the link titled 'E-mail Updates' on the top bar of the page. As you go through the registration process, you will see choices for Step 3 - "Selecting Your Specialties." "Beneficiary" is the first selection.

Until then, the staff at Railroad Medicare wish you and yours a joyful and safe holiday and post-holiday season.

— Jennifer Johnson

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