

# National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.

— SINCE 1937 —

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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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## FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

It appears if when it comes to Unit election time (every two years) there is a lack of members stepping up to run for office. We realize that there are older Units out there where the membership and officers are up in age. We have had nine Units that have closed since March 2011. Most of these Units were established when there was a railroad presence in their area. Since the 1980's because of railroads decentralizing and closing terminals, moving their operations caused by mergers and downsizing, there are only seven Class 1 railroads left in the country. Many of the small communities once served were left with no railroad presence at all. The bottom line is that there are no younger retirees in those areas to man the current NARVRE Units as they were first organized. That is the reason they have closed.

So where do we go from here? The NARVRE organization was founded in 1937. We are the only federally chartered railroad retiree organization in the country. Who would speak for us in the future if we cease to exist. Many would say rail labor although we have the same goals in many respects but keep in mind they represent the active employee under collective bargaining agreements. When railroaders retire they are no longer covered under collective bargaining except maybe for Health and Welfare. NARVRE is the only other alternative. It is the NARVRE organization time and time again who have been in the trenches when it comes to supporting railroad retirement or opposing those who would destroy it.

Each and everyone of us are potential recruiters in seeking membership. Your National Secretary Treasurer has indicated to the Governing Board the loss of membership from established Units due to lack of

communication from the local Units to their membership. Delinquent members can be reached with little or no effort by establishing a calling committee to reach them. Many of these members may have moved in with family members, assisted living, nursing homes or just changed their address failing to contact the local secretary treasurer of their move. With little or no effort this can be rectified. Sadly, some may have passed on and we are unaware of their death.

Our biggest supporter is the Will Moody Law firm when it comes to reaching out to new potential pockets of railroad retirees. Past President A.W. "Whitey" Westphal is the retiree coordinator for the Moody Firm. He will along with your national officers and Area Directors will come to your area to reach out through informational meetings of possible new leads when they arise. Once again, you are the local contact to notify us of this potential so we need to hear from you. Cost to you is nothing! Not everything is gloomy as we chartered two new Units in Los Angeles and restarted Bakersfield, CA. Through the efforts of Area 8 Director Bob Bloomer he is working on establishing Units in Stockton, Needles, San Bernardino and Glendale, CA, Winslow and Phoenix, AZ and Las Vegas, NV.

In closing, we hope that your local Unit will send a Delegate to our National Convention on May 20-22 in Bloomington, Minnesota at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Details will be coming after local elections take place.

— Tom Dwyer,  
National President

## From the National Legislative Director —

Our efforts in contacting our Representatives in Congress in support of the full funding for Amtrak continues to be a pressing issue. Latest funding proposals in the Senate have risen but proposals in the House remain at unrealistic levels which would impact the entire operation of Amtrak and threaten the Railroad Retirement System. Most likely, a continuing resolution (CR) will have to be passed to extend the current funding levels well into FY 2012 while the House & Senate try to reach an agreement on these dif-

ferences (a six week stop-gap spending bill just extended all funding through Nov. 18).

The bipartisan 12 member Joint Committee on Deficit Reduction must agree on cuts that will reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years, and report their recommendations by November 23. If they fail to agree, or if Congress fails to approve the cuts, automatic across the board reductions will then take affect in 2013. It is possible that this "Super-Committee" may recommend cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. In September, while Pres. Tom Dwyer and I were in Washington

## From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

### National S & T

This is our last newsletter for the year of 2011 November/ December. We have had a lot of fun sharing information with you about the activities at your National Office. All of our Area Directors, Assistant Area Directors, and all the members of our Legislative Department and most of all the Local Officers have done an outstanding job serving the membership. There have been many summer picnics and other

activities that have made being a NARVRE member very rewarding. The friendship that has continued with all the members of our Railroad family has been great. We get a lot of calls from people who have a very important question about their benefits. They will tell us they were talking to a NARVRE member and were given information they did not know about or had forgotten about. So when we are with our friends don't forget to ask them if they are members of NARVRE and if not, help

them become a member.

Our 75th National convention will be May 20, 21 & 22, 2012 in Bloomington, MN.

Local units will be holding elections for all local officers' positions. Plus Unit Delegates and Alt. Delegates will be elected. Our convention committee will be posting convention details soon. This information will also be available on our web page [www.narvre.org](http://www.narvre.org) We would like to see a great turn-out at this convention.

— **Richard L. Duley**  
**National Secretary/Treasurer**

## 75 Years And Still Going Strong

I get emails from across the country telling me about successful campaigns to keep and recruit new members of NARVRE. I have one full notebook and am working on another of printed email. I appreciate you keeping me informed.

I know our national officers are working hard for membership. I see them in person or talk to them by phone or email. I am proud of them.

Our local unit 140 is working hard for membership. Here is a picture of Roger Barr and I recruiting new members at a local railroad days event. That is just one event. We have been to another and checks for membership came in. We are going to more events.

Our Kansas legislative group is active. I see these fine men and women and hear their stories in person and by phone and email. Many have been active in NARVRE for more years than I can count.

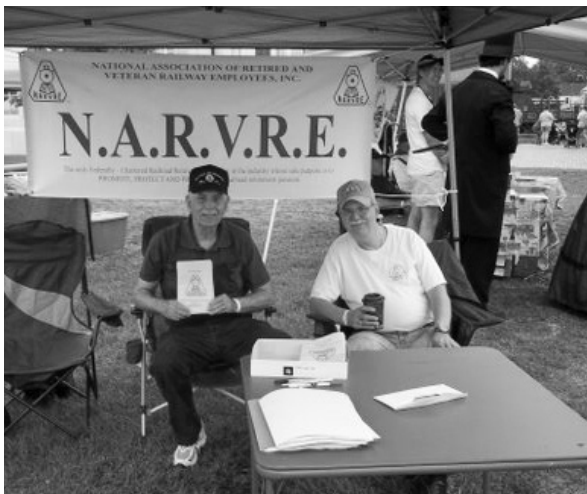
Our national membership committee has some things in the planning that will help with recruiting new members we will be active at the NARVRE National Convention in may next year with a booth and presentations. We are here to help.

But it still depends on each of us to keep NARVRE strong. Recently my wife and I were on a short vacation in Branson Missouri. We were going on a sight seeing train. I stuck up a conversation with the couple next to us waiting in line to get on the train. It turns out he was a short line railroader with one year to go before he retired. I asked him if he had heard of NARVRE and he said "no". I told him about NARVRE and he and his wife were immediately interested. I gave him one of my new membership recruit-

ment cards (which can be available to each of you) and he said the check will be in the mail. I hope so.

The National Office can help, the state units can help and the local units can help, but it is up to us individually. Because my railroad pension may depend on it, I don't want to think that "in the end I did not do enough."

— **Jim Brewer**  
**National Membership  
Chairman**



(National Legislative  
Director from page 1)

D.C. working on Amtrak and other issues, we joined with other retiree organizations and senior community groups to pressure Congress on the need for shared sacrifice in addressing the deficit reduction problem. Our message was that they must not look to seniors on fixed budgets to now bear an unfair burden in this national spending issue. We further advised these Representatives of Congress that we expect them to ignore the proposals that would change the current Medicare system into a voucher program while doing nothing to reduce the costs of health care. The GOP House Budget plan would give seniors a small stipend towards the cost of their health care and seniors would purchase their coverage from the private health care Insurance Industry...and the amount of the voucher would not be enough to keep up with medical inflation. Looking long term, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has reported that by 2030, the Medicare vouchers would be about \$9,750 a year, while annual medical costs would be about \$30,460, leaving seniors with an average \$20,700 to pay out-of-pocket. A major illness would bankrupt most seniors.

We also objected to any "technical" change in the formula used to calculate the annual COLA that would cut the benefits of seniors on Social

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Security and Railroad Retirement. **This proposal is called the chained CPI, and it is a COLA cut in money for retirees over time.** We would favor the idea floating around that would change the current method of calculation to better reflect more accurate cost-of-living expenses for seniors and include medical costs and other expenses relative to aging and retirement. The current formula is based on the Consumer Price Index or CPI-W (wages), which should be changed to use a new formula based on CPI-E (elderly). These concerns were delivered in many different Congressional Offices on Capitol Hill, to include the 12 members of the deficit reduction committee.

NARVRE also agrees that Social Security has not caused the deficit and should not be part of debt reduction strategies. Any contemplation of changing the Social Security system might bring Railroad Retirement into the discussion, which we do not want happening at a time when new members of Congress are asking ignorant questions about the administration of our Railroad Retirement annuities. We do the best we can in efforts to educate members of Congress and their staff, yet there are always those that get confused, and/or believe that the RRB should be rolled in with Social Security. The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has a financial interchange agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA) that handles our monthly annuities. We do not support any proposals to change the SSA that might undermine that administrative process, especially by this new super-committee panel that may not have knowledge of these agreements between the RRB and the SSA.

We must continue to remember what actions in Congress threatens our Railroad Retirement System. Legislation that is introduced meant to destroy Amtrak is action that we have all taken seriously. There are members in Congress that repeatedly introduce legislation to eliminate

specific funding for Amtrak, some in disguised efforts to cripple train service operations while bankrupting the system. Other members like Rep. Michelle Bachmann (R.-MN), and Pete Sessions (R-TX), are two examples that continue to offer up Amendments that are meant to end all funding for Amtrak in one vote. Rep. John Mica R-FL, and Rep. Bill Shuster R-PA, have introduced proposals in their Transportation Committee to strip away Amtrak train routes and hand over the northeast corridor (NEC) to private investors, while continuing to subsidize these investments with federal funding. Again, we all know the underlying intention is to destroy Amtrak along with the jobs that pay into our retirement system. NARVRE must always work to defeat these killer proposals, both in committee and on the floor of the House of Representatives. As members, we all need to take the battle to the ballot box come election day in 2012. This office is compelled to eliminate these actions that continue to threaten the solvency of the Railroad Retirement System. We all need to take these actions seriously...and personally.

Stupid email update: More ignorant and senseless emails are still being circulated, funded by political money meant to scare seniors with lies. The latest stupid email contains lies about COLA's and higher Medicare premiums. As information, calculations that determine COLA's have not been finalized and news of any COLA for 2012 won't be released until later in October. When any information is released on the subject, you can be assured that all statements regarding Medicare and/or any new premium changes will be handled in a timely manner through the Palmetto GBA Railroad Medicare offices. The RRB and this NARVRE office also send out releases with any new information that needs to be reported. As for any member that has already deleted one of these stupid emails...we all thank you.

— Gary M. Faley  
National Legislative Director

### From the National Vice President —

Our membership is down, there are many reasons for that, they have been discussed over and over, we all know what they are, but the one blaring reduction is in our units, that is why I have sent an e-mail to all unit officers asking for your help with renewal. I want everyone to be very, aggressive toward renewal this fall. We lost members last year, because many did not renew, could it have been because they were not notified? A second reminder and/or telephone call may have been all that was needed. Please make this your # 1 priority this fall. There is just two months left in 2011 and the New Year 2012 will be here. Unit 109 St Paul/Minneapolis, MN have a full time membership committee man who visits groups of retirees who meet for a get together also Union meetings, no wonder unit 109 has over 1,200 members.

As we close in on this new year of 2012, it's essential to contact as many railroad friends, and talk about NARVRE explain that our strength is in numbers and we are working for them. Let's start, with every Unit, organizing a membership drive, to help the unit officers in contacting members. Can it be done you may ask? Of course as we need to address the problems we have to protect our retirement benefits. We may never have faced a more important year in our nearly 75-year history. Stay informed in what is going on in Congress. For the sake of NARVRE and future generations, let's make the year 2012 a turning point.

We still have those, contract employees, who are not aware of or forgot they may have \$2,000.00 life insurance from the old Travelers ga23000, now it is MetLife, and for information or make a beneficiary change write MetLife Recordkeeping Center P.O. Box 6129 Utica, NY 13504-6129 phone 800-310-7770.

— George Wisdom,  
National Vice President

**From Palmetto, GBA**

## **Act Now: Open Enrollment Earlier For 2011-2012**

This year's open enrollment period begins October 15, 2011 and ends December 7, 2011.

Because the enrollment period starts and ends earlier than in the past, if you are looking to explore your choices for health and drug plans, now is the time to do it.

For the next seven weeks you can compare which plans might benefit you best. Many people with Medicare investigate choosing a "Part D" plan to assist in prescription drug coverage. Please keep in mind if you select Part D, you do not have to give up your Railroad Medicare Part B benefits.

If you are enrolled in "Part C" -- a Medicare Advantage Plan that is a substitution to Railroad Medicare's Part B coverage -- now is the time to determine if you want to stay with your Part C plan or return to Railroad Medicare.

Because many plans change yearly, it's important to do your research. The following are some tools that can assist you:

Visit [www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan](http://www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan) to use the "Medicare Plan Finder".

Take a look at the 2011 "Medicare & You" handbook, which contains listings of plans in your area. If you don't have a copy of this handbook, you can download one at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). The most current copy is dated August 1, 2011.

You can also contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) for free personalized health insurance counseling. To find your local SHIP office, visit [www.shiptalk.org](http://www.shiptalk.org) for a listing by state. Each listing contains the phone number, TDD number, physical address and Web site address.

For additional information, please contact the Railroad Medicare Beneficiary Contact Center at (800) 833-4455. Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern Time.

Now is the time to make your selections. Coverage starts January 1, 2012.

— Jennifer Johnson

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