

National Association of Retired & Veteran Railway Employees, Inc. — SINCE 1937 —

NARVRE National Office
102 S Williams, Suite B
Moberly, MO 65270-3430
Phone: 660/269-8895 • Fax: 660/269-8896
Toll Free: 1-800-551-2588
Email: NARVRE@gmail.com
WEBSITE: www.narvre.org



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NARVRE NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT —

I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year and hope you all had a joyous Christmas. It is only five months to the 38th NARVRE National Convention in Bloomington, Minnesota hosted by Unit 109 of Minneapolis/St Paul. I hope each and every Unit will be sending a delegate to the convention. This is the 75th Anniversary of NARVRE and Unit 109 is pulling out all stops to make your attendance a memorable one. An all time record was set in 2010 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin when some 87 delegates

participated. We have talked many times that this is your convention and we encourage everyone to be part of it. NARVRE was organized by people who had foresight on September 6, 1937 in Louisville, Kentucky to protect the newly passed Railroad Retirement Act. Nine different states

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were in attendance Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, New York, Illinois, Georgia and Wisconsin. The founders included 6 railroad labor organizations which

many NARVRE members may not be aware of and the first name of the organization was called Association of Retired Railway Employees, Inc. The name was revised in 1938 to the National Association of Retired Railway Employees, Inc (N.A.R.R.E.)

NARVRE has been in the forefront on every major front in Congress when it relates to Railroad Retirement and there is more work to do in the future.

Keep in mind we have to deal with politicians of all political stripes and we must be ever vigilant. There is a trend to eradicate pensions as we know it in all industries as well as Social Security and Medicare. We need to be on top of all these issues and we will need your help. Many states in this past year attacked working people especially public employees as a argument to balance state budgets like they were the cause.

These same states in 2012 may be looking for revenue to balance their budgets and keep in mind that railroad retirement is not taxable by the states. This does not mean they won't try. You should also keep an eye on your tax man when he prepares your 2011 tax return that he does not show railroad retirement as taxable. We have the federal statute that prohibits state taxation and will provide any Unit or individual that information.

— Tom Dwyer,
National President

From the National Legislative Director —

The deadline passed last Nov. 23rd, and the Super-Committee failed to reach agreement on their duties to reduce the deficit and the ominous automatic cuts will now begin...well, not quite. They still have another year before those cuts are actually implemented in 2013. So while we hope that they resolve to work those problems out in the New Year, we will need to stay active with our calls to Congress on the issues that will affect us in 2012 and beyond, and that will include Medicare. Hopefully by the time you receive this Newsletter, Congress will have already acted and passed a longer extension and new payment

reimbursement plan for Medicare physicians, known as the “doc-fix”. Congress works through these doc-fix deadlines quite often and they usually are not passed until the eleventh hour. This deadline is different in that it threatens to cut payments by almost 30% effective January, 2012. There were hopes that they would work out a longer multi-year fix in the super-committee dealings, but now Congress must run this issue through the regular process in both House & Senate committees in order to reach a longer term agreement on paying Medicare providers. In reality, Congress needs to change the existing sustainable growth rate formula (SGR) which is the current method used in reimbursing our

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From the National Secretary-Treasurer —

Many Things To Be Thankful For

As 2011 comes to a close, we all have many things to be thankful for. The Railroad business has returned and most of the railroad companies are hiring new employees. We are glad all the active railroaders are back to work and not having to live on unemployment benefits. Our Railroad Trust Fund is strong and the total cash balance looks good for years to come

We will be starting 2012 with a bang. Our monthly annuity will increase by 3.6% on Tier I and 1.2% on Tier II. This is the first COLA ADJUSTMENT we have had in some time.

If you have not paid your 2012 NARVRE dues please do so now. All dues are pay able on Jan 1, 2012. If you are a MEMBER AT LARGE (801) your 2012 statement was mailed to you in October, 2011. If you cannot find your statement please call the National office (800-551-2588). For

From the National Vice President —

Happy New Year: Did You Make A Resolution?

I have made resolutions in the past, and kept a few, good luck on yours.

A little history, N.A.R.V.R.E., Was started by a few in Sept. 1937, what a job this organization has done. There are always a few that don't like the way things are going and complain, but our retirement is worth protecting & we will do our best to preserve it. What do you think we would have today were it not for NARVRE? THINK.

The book 'History of NARVRE' Author Mary David , first published 1996, and now is in 2nd printing, a few copies are still available at the National Office.

D.L. Lynch, Wildwood, FL, in a discussion about membership, said recently "... if each member would sign up one (1) new member this year we would double our membership." Everyone can be involved and this is not something that cannot be done.

From Unit 109 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: Dick Raatz the Membership Chairman said that "...This would be a great way to start the New Year with all of us signing up a New Member in NARVRE."

Over a year ago I received a call from James Thurmond, Middleton, TN. We had met in Las Vegas, NV When we were both at the Hospital Association convention, James told me of two (2) groups of railway retirees who meet monthly. One on the 1st Tuesday in Corinth, MS and the other in Jackson, TN who meet the 1st Thursday. He ask me to contact these groups. Well it took awhile, because of weather, illness and schedule, but finally made the two (2) meetings in November. Area 1 Director Harold Turner, James Thurmond and I joined up for both meetings and we met a great group of retired men who are interested in protecting our retirement. Some had never heard of N.A.R.V.R.E. except from Mr. Thurmond. How many of our members know of groups that meet and could use an Area Director, Assistant Director, officer, or outside help to assist them? Let it be known. Thanks James.

REMEMBER: Unit 109 is hosting the 2012 National Convention May 20-22 2012.

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

— **George A. Wisdom**
N.A.R.V.R.E.
National Vice President

members who belong to a Local Unit, please get in contact with your local Secretary/ Treasurer.

January is the month NARVRE members close their personal records for 2011. When you receive your (2011) statements from your bank or other accounts, please take the time to review who you have listed on these accounts or who you show as beneficiary. Keeping these accounts updated is very important. A lot of us have lock boxes at our bank but have not looked inside them for years, so maybe you can find time to stop by your local bank and inventory the contents.

NOTE: Local Unit Secretary/ Treasurers, please get your Local Election and Delegate/Alt Delegate reports mailed to the National Office. The annual audit report & 990N were mailed to you in December 2011. This is a January 2012 report.

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

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Medicare doctors. The SGR calls for automatic reductions in doctor's Medicare payments, and Congress consistently delays each cut just before it takes effect. The cuts then accumulate, making each temporary patch more expensive and putting doctors at risk of an increasingly big hit if Congress doesn't intervene. A more permanent SGR repeal would be expensive but groups such as the American Medical Association (AMA) argue that it's more cost-effective than continuing to offset temporary patches. NARVRE supports these efforts to change the current payment formula and agree with the AMA that "new payment methods are needed that maintain access and encourage the delivery of high-quality care". Remind your Medicare physicians that you and NARVRE are active in our support of these overdue changes. It's an important issue with all Medicare doctors.

In this FY2012, we will be watching for some movement on S.1876, The Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act, which was

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introduced last November by Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Jeff Merkley (D-OR). This legislation would change the Social Security & Railroad Retirement cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to use a new index formula (CPI-E) that would make calculations based on the spending habits of the elderly. For instance, the higher costs of health care and medical needs run higher for elderly and senior retirees, so those expenditures would be an integral part of this formula. We are also working with other groups on the need for legislation to be passed which would allow the Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS) to negotiate the costs of prescription drugs, which would save an estimated \$156 billion over 10 years. This certainly makes sense while Congress argues over deficit reduction, but it will take a collective effort to make another run at this endeavor, due to the extreme amounts of money spent by PhRMA, the lobbying group for the Prescription Drug Industry. We should all know where our elected members of Congress stand on this issue.

Do you

wonder if your efforts in contacting Congress are worthwhile? Can our efforts actually change the attitude in Congress on an issue we oppose? Last June, we reported on the extreme efforts of Chrm. John Mica to use the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee to lay out an ill-advised and under-researched proposal to privatize Amtrak's northeast corridor (NEC). His plans would turn over lucrative train routes to private investors who would also receive federal subsidies, much the same as Amtrak. We asked the membership to let their representatives know that they are vehemently opposed to this idea as it would have a critical impact on the overall operation on all Amtrak train service. NARVRE members advised Congress that this was just another tactic to

destroy Amtrak, and that the loss of Amtrak employees would cause a major disruption to our railroad retirement system. We also told them that while Amtrak has been inadequately funded for over 40 years, ridership has grown in record numbers for the last 8 consecutive years, with 30.2 million riders in FY2011. You informed them that Amtrak also keeps over 20,000 employees working, all paying into our railroad retirement system. Rep. John Mica isn't to concerned about the threat to our retirement system, but other members of Congress are. The chairman of the House T&I Committee has now stated that his earlier position to privatize Amtrak and fund the new operation with federal subsidies was nothing more than a "bluff". He now states that he will try to funnel federal monies and concentrate on higher speed rail & train service there on the NEC. The answer to my initial questions were delivered November 8, 2011, as Chrm. John Mica stated, in his words, "I'm willing to compromise...". To every NARVRE member that encouraged his representative in

Congress to oppose this plan, I say well done, and keep up the good

fight! Our work is not finished however, and Amtrak will be working with a smaller budget, and high speed rail funding was zeroed out in final appropriations. Train service in many states are still threatened by members of Congress that are committed to funding only highways and airlines...and they will continue to fight to destroy Amtrak and passenger train service in America. Every member should know where their representatives stand on rail issues...rail issues and railroad retirement issues are the same! Much more on these issues as we work through FY2012.

Happy New Year! Bring a new member into NARVRE this year.

— Gary M. Faley
National Legislative Director

From Palmetto, GBA

Flu And Pneumonia Shots, Your Railroad Medicare Card And Facebook

As you get ready for 2012, it's important to stay healthy and ensure your provider knows to bill Railroad Medicare for administration of the flu and/or pneumonia shots and other preventive services.

Flu & Pneumonia Vaccines

With the cold and flu season upon us, it's time to think about getting your shots to lower your risk of disease and illness. Medicare will pay for an annual flu shot and pneumonia vaccine if you need one.

Flu and pneumonia shots have been a covered benefit for Medicare beneficiaries for many years. Congress realized how important these shots were and excluded them from any beneficiary deductible or coinsurance liability. That means they are paid at 100 percent of the Medicare approved amount. In addition, you don't need a doctor's referral to get these vaccines.

The flu shot can be received once a year in either the fall or winter, while you may only need one pneumonia shot in your lifetime. Your doctor can tell you more about whether you need one. You might be at risk for pneumonia if you:

- * Are age 65 or older
- * Have a chronic illness, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes
- * Have a weak immune system

The vaccine is safe and people who get the shot are protected against almost all the bacteria that cause this illness and other pneumococcal diseases, as well. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your health risks and need for these shots.

Be Sure Your Provider Bills Railroad Medicare for Shots and Other Preventive Services

Whether you are getting a flu shot or using any of the other covered preventive services, it's important that your doctor know to bill Rail-

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road Medicare for these services. Make sure your provider knows you are a Railroad Medicare beneficiary by asking them to include a copy of your Railroad Medicare card in their files.

Providers new to Railroad Medicare and those who have supplied services to Railroad Medicare patients for years may have new staff that might file your claims to the wrong Medicare contractor in error. This can happen when they don't notice that your Health Insurance Claim Number (HICN) is different from Social Security Administration (SSA) Medicare patients.

Railroad Medicare HICN number begins with one, two or three letters, and has six or nine digits after the letters. Because Railroad Medicare HICN vary from the SSA Medicare format, it's extremely important that your provider's staff review your card to verify the number prior to billing Railroad Medicare.

Railroad Medicare beneficiaries have the same benefits as SSA beneficiaries but one national carrier, Palmetto GBA Railroad Medicare, processes all Railroad Medicare Part B claims.

If you are concerned that your provider is having problems submitting your claim correctly, please call our Beneficiary Contact Center at (800) 833-4455, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. for all time zones with the exception of PST, which receives service from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For the hearing impaired, call TTY/TDD at (877) 566-3572. This line is for the hearing impaired with the appropriate dial-up service and is available during the same hours Customer Service Representatives are available.

'My RR Medicare' on Facebook

If you have non-claim specific questions about your coverage with Railroad Medicare, come and check us out at 'My RR Medicare' page on Facebook.

The reason that Railroad Medicare has joined Facebook is to offer you another way to communicate with us. You can ask us general questions and request information online, without having to talk with a CSR on the phone or use our IVR (interactive voice response system). This page is all about sharing what we have in common and finding ways to help each other navigate Railroad Medicare together.

Come see us today at www.facebook.com/myrrmedicare!

— **Jennifer Johnson**

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National President

Thomas Dwyer

11304 Norway St. NW

Coon Rapids MN 55448-3269

763-757-1501 FAX 763-767-5794

tdwyertcu@aol.com

National Vice President

George Wisdom

729 McKinsey Pl.

Moberly, MO 65270

660-263-1056

gmswisdom@sbcglobal.net

National Secretary-Treasurer

Richard L. Duley

102 S Williams, Suite B

Moberly, MO 65270-3430

660-269-8895

narvare@gmail.com

National Legislative Director

Gary M Faley

6324 Calkins Road

Flint, MI 48532-3207

810-733-7256

faleyg@comcast.net

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Mail to National Office

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
AND VETERAN RAILWAY EMPLOYEES, INC.**

102 S Williams, Suite B

Moberly, MO 65270-3430

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