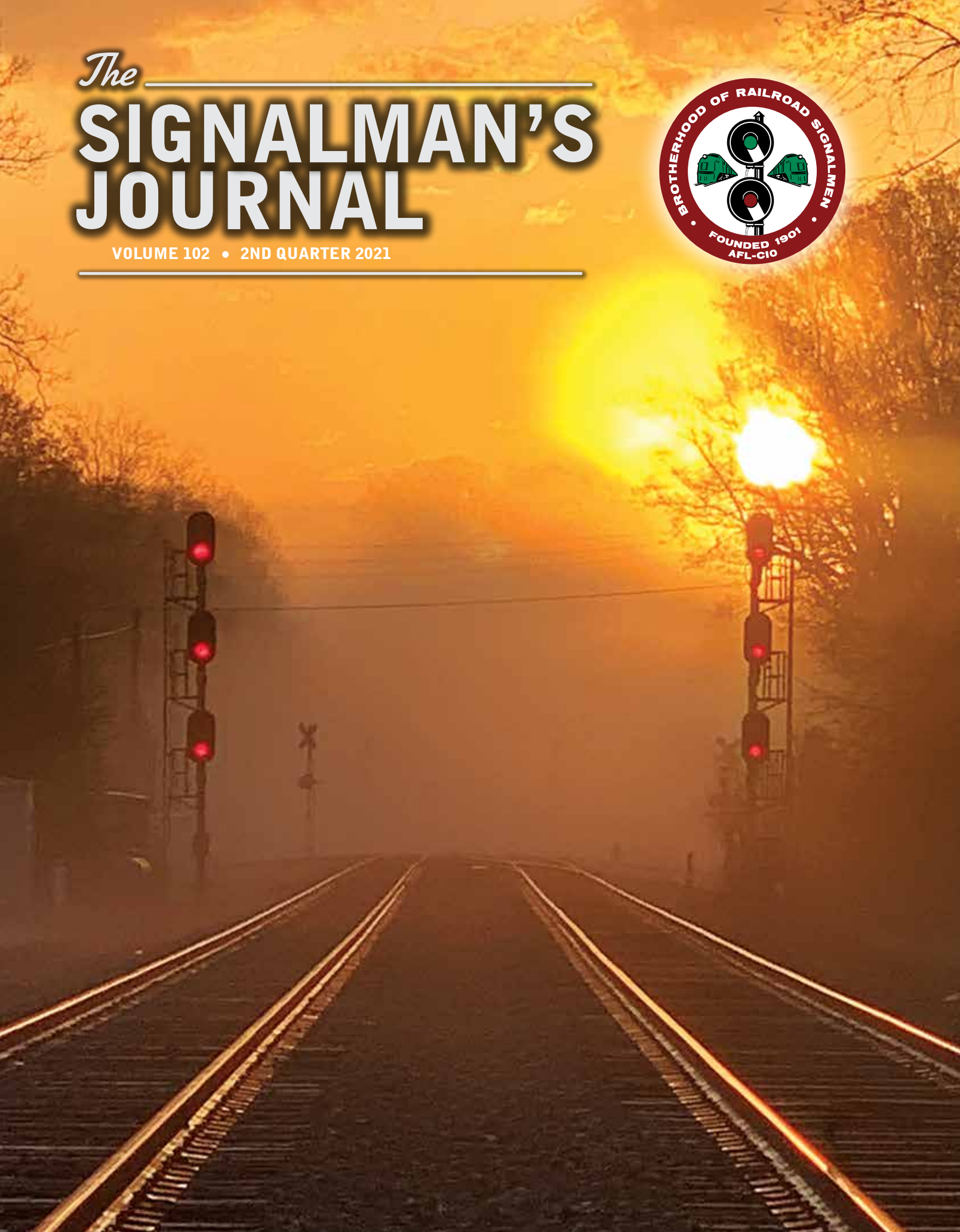
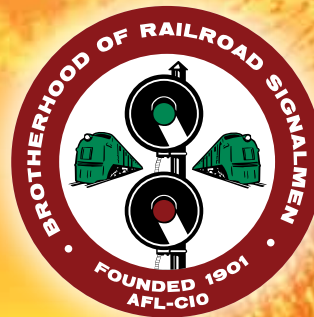


# *The* **SIGNALMAN'S JOURNAL**

VOLUME 102 • 2ND QUARTER 2021





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# The SIGNALMAN'S JOURNAL

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**COVER:** Morning sunrise, looking east at Scott Control Point, CA 473.3, in Scott Depot, West Virginia.

Photo submitted by Joe Bocook, CSX Signal Maintainer and Local 136 member.





## FROM THE PRESIDENT

————— *Jerry C. Boles, BRS President*

# *Improvements, Growth, & New Jobs in the Railroad Industry*



**T**he Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen has been following the progression of an Infrastructure bill which includes money for improvements, growth, and new jobs in the railroad industry; currently it is awaiting debate in the Senate, but I remain optimistic. Additionally, there is a Surface Transportation bill in the House of Representatives with a proposed creation of Passenger Rail Improvement, Modernization, and Expansion (PRIME) grants. This would provide billions for priority rail projects, including high-speed rail. Lastly, this administration wants to allocate \$80 billion for passenger rail in the American Jobs Plan. I am keeping a close watch and have Grand Lodge engaging with influential leaders in Congress regarding the status and progress of long-awaited investment in rail and infrastructure.

The BRS, joining with all of rail labor, support new high-speed rail and/or expansion of Amtrak lines, so long as the entities operating these passenger railroads are deemed rail carriers under 49 U.S. Code § 10102(5). This is vitally important so that the employees fall under the Railway Labor Act (RLA), Railroad Retirement Act (RRA), and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA). We believe that these employees should reap the same benefits and protections that laws provide to Amtrak and other commuter line employees that fall under the government agencies listed above.

So long as these new carriers fall under the RLA, RRA, and the RUIA, the planning, development, and construction of high-speed rail would create thousands of high paying union jobs with great benefits. Projects like those mentioned below help to develop the communities the line will connect, thereby creating long-term

railroad union jobs that are needed to operate and maintain the high-speed rail network.

Texas is in the initial stages of providing high-speed rail service from Dallas to Houston. The Texas high-speed rail would be eco-friendly, and an alternative means of travel to hundred of thousands between Dallas and

Houston. California has proposed high-speed rail from Bakersfield to Madera that would be constructed in four different stages. The Virginia Department of

Rail and Public Transportation is working on a plan that would provide high-speed rail service from Washington, D.C., to Richmond, Virginia, reducing the traffic on the heavily congested I-95. Amtrak is also seeking approval and financing for high-speed rail to continue to the southern states, Chicago, and major cities west of the Mississippi.

**The BRS supports the position that any project that receives federal funding through rail improvement grants must follow the grant requirements found in 49 U.S. Code § 22905, which includes:**

- Davis-Bacon prevailing wage standards, to provide the strong union wages.
- Buy American standards, using domestic companies for construction and buying American made equipment.
- Protect rail workers that might be adversely impacted by the federal grant and Amtrak employees if Amtrak is replaced by another operator.
- Required to become a rail carrier.

We are also concerned for the safety of rail employees and the communities that these high-speed rail lines

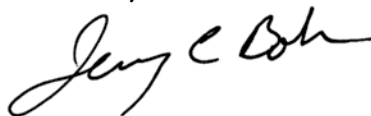
***The BRS, joining with all of rail labor,  
support new high-speed rail and/or  
expansion of Amtrak lines...***

travel through; the Carriers should be regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on existing track and safety standards, to include current FRA regulations regarding testing and inspections. We cannot, and will not, let the high-speed rail carriers to be unregulated.

Rail labor needs to be proactive when these projects are in their early stages, so we can ensure these protections and benefits for the future employees of high-speed rail. If you hear of any developments with high-speed rail in your locality, please contact your

local officers, General Chairman, or Grand Lodge. We want to grow the rail workforce with well-trained and qualified union employees doing the work, union employees testing and inspecting the work, and union employees dispatching and operating the lines.

In Solidarity,



Jerry C. Boles — *BRS President*



*The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen Grand Executive Council is*

*Accepting Resumés for*

## **Grand Lodge Representative(s)**

**The role of the Grand Lodge Representative is primarily involved in the preparation of submissions for grievance resolution and other labor/employee-related functions.**

*The BRS President will assign duties and duties may vary.*

**Qualifications:** Only active BRS members are eligible for appointment to these positions. Union activism is a fundamental quality. Successful candidates will be detail oriented and have strong writing, communication, and organizational skills.

Computer skills, including experience with Microsoft Office suite is a plus.

*If interested in submitting resumés for this opening(s), please send to: [jcb@brs.org](mailto:jcb@brs.org) or mail to the address below:*

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Attn: President's Office  
917 Shenandoah Shores Road  
Front Royal, Virginia 22630



## FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

Mike Baldwin, BRS Secretary-Treasurer

# Challenges, Progress, & a Path Forward

**T**his past year has required things of us that we never imagined we would encounter, but one thing Signalmen are experienced in is adapting. There have been many challenges, but those challenges have helped us progress. With in-person meetings at a very limited capacity, it was time to do more virtually. Many locals took the initiative and continued to conduct their meetings virtually. We have started virtual Trustee Training sessions via Zoom, and I am pleased with the outcome and participation so far. These virtual sessions are still available for anyone who would like to participate. We are exploring other areas of training that could benefit from using a virtual platform.

With the help of our Training Committee, we have started developing Financial Secretary Training videos that can be broken down into pieces and used by Local Secretaries as refresher courses when they need to brush up on a certain subject. We have also been developing a new membership database through UnionTrack. This tool will provide much better communication with the field and efficient ways for secretaries to submit status changes and review their per capita reports. This is a web-based system; information that is input will be viewed in real time with no need for quarterly update files from our membership department at Grand Lodge. Members will also be able to log in and view their membership record, make changes, and view

documents that are related to their membership or a grievance filed on their behalf.

We conducted an in-person Financial Secretary Training on May 10–12 at Grand Lodge for the first time since March of 2020. The class was full, and it was a promising sign that we are moving toward normalcy. We have Financial Secretary Trainings scheduled for August 9–11, 2021, and October 18–20, 2021, at Grand Lodge in Front Royal, Virginia. Please see the website at [www.brs.org](http://www.brs.org) for more information if you are interested in attending. ■



## DID YOU KNOW? FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

As Local Financial Secretary, the first time you purchase QuickBooks Desktop Pro, Grand Lodge will reimburse the expense. QuickBooks is a big help when it comes to LM and 990 filings, as well as banking and bookkeeping. When submitting your per capita payments, deduct the amount of the software expense and include your receipt. ■



# Get a COVID-19 vaccine



**It's SAFE!**

**\$0.00**

**It's FREE!**



**It will help PROTECT  
you and your family!**



**You might get side effects.  
But you should FEEL BETTER  
in a few days.**



**Get the FIRST  
vaccine you can!**



**Keep taking basic prevention steps  
until you are fully vaccinated.**

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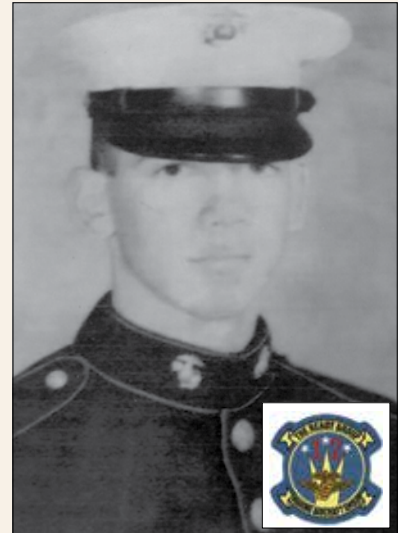
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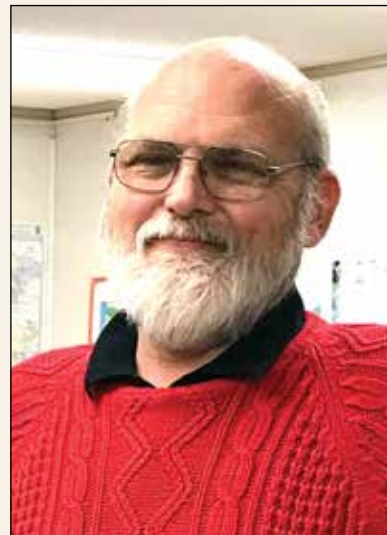
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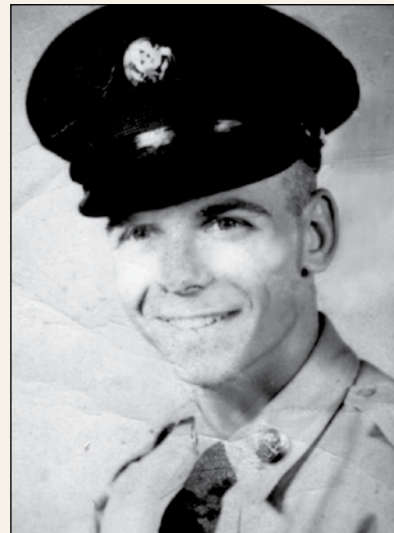
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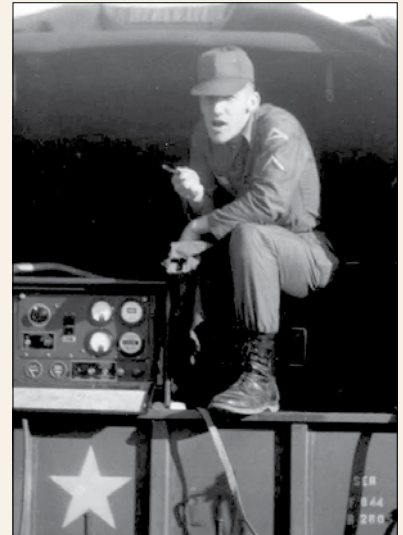
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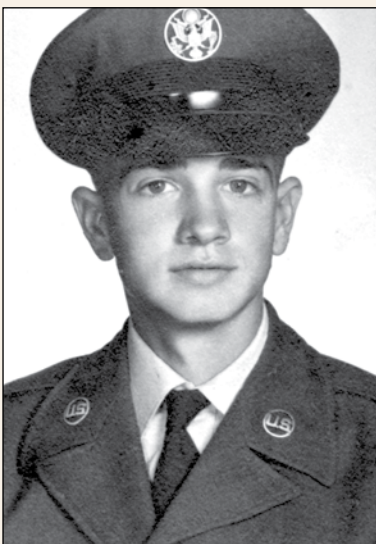
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## COMMENTS TO THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD REGARDING THE Potential Sale of Kansas City Southern Railway

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division-IBT; the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen; the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Mechanical Division; and National Conference of Firemen and Oilers, 32BJ/SEIU, have submitted comments to the Surface Transportation Board regarding the potential sale of Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS). Together, the four unions will be collectively referred to as the Allied Rail Unions (ARU). Those comments are summarized below.

The concern of the ARU is the non-productive, and potentially destructive, competition between Canadian National (CN) and Canadian Pacific (CP). After CP offered a premium to KCS shareholders for its proposed acquisition, CN upped the ante by 21 percent; it bid \$5 billion over what CP was offering. Now CN has increased its offer by another \$770 million. According to the Surface Transportation Board *"CN intends to raise 'approximately \$19.3 billion of new debt' to finance its proposed merger with KCS"; and CN's most recent offer "represent[s] 'an implied premium of 45% when compared to KCS; unaffected closing stock price on March 19, 2021."* In response, CP may increase its offer. As CN and CP compete for KCS, they may negate any potential transportation benefits of a consolidation with KCS, and there is a likelihood that innocent bystanders — employees of CP, CN, and KCS, and shippers which use those carriers — will pay a price for this exercise in one-upmanship.

A bidding war has consequences. By overpaying to keep the target out of the hands of its rival, the successful bidder would have less capital to invest in the ultimate railroad; every dollar spent wooing shareholders of the target is a dollar not invested in the railroad. The successful bidder, having spent more than what was anticipated would likely seek to recoup its excess expenditures by seeking so-called cost-cutting *"efficiencies"* from rail workers; and it would likely seek to reduce other costs, which, in turn, would diminish service.

When CSX tried to acquire control of Conrail, offering a premium to Conrail shareholders, NS offered to top CSX's bid, which led to CSX upping its offer, then STB Chair Linda Morgan brokered a resolution — a division of Conrail between CSX and NS. But some damage was done, as a result of inflated payments to Conrail sharehold-

ers CSXT and NSR sought to reduce labor costs by implementing so-called efficiencies. However, unlike Conrail, there does not appear to be a reasonable way to divide KCS.

The Board should recognize it has a role to play to ensure that any acquisition of KCS is in the public interest. Under the Interstate Commerce Act, when presented with the merger or control of two Class I carriers, the Board *"shall consider the effect of the transaction on adequacy of transportation to the public," "the total fixed charges that result from the transaction," "the interest of carrier employees affected,"* and whether the proposed transaction would have an adverse effect on competition. Ultimate approval of a transaction is dependent on a determination that the transaction is *"consistent with the public interest."* The ARU contend that the successful bidder overpaying for KCS, depleting resources and taking on debt and chasing *"efficiencies"* in order to recoup the overpayment are bad for rail transportation.

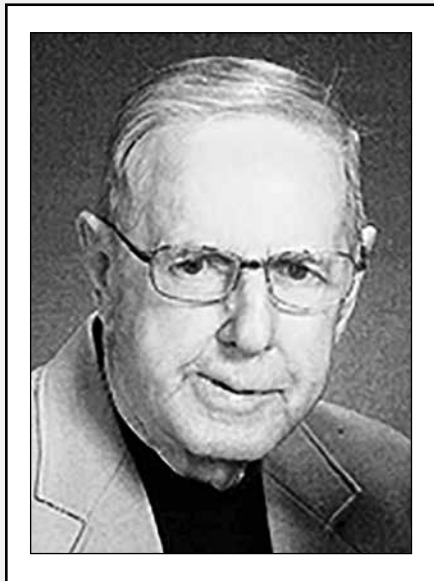
KCS's current shareholders seek the highest price for their shares; the long-term health and vitality of the ultimate railroad is not their foremost concern. But they do not decide whether an acquisition is in the public interest; the Board must make that determination. The shareholders should be cautioned that their efforts to maximize the bids for their shares may lead the Board to find that the bidding war has undermined the potential value of the transaction.

The Board should make it clear that its assessment of whether a proposed acquisition of KCS is in the public interest will turn in part on evaluation of the purchase price and any premium paid. The Board should also make it clear that just because the applicants have invested time and money in bringing forward an application, financial markets like the transaction, and it has lined-up supporters, that will not be sufficient to gain approval of the transaction. And the Board should declare that it will not approve plans for cost-cutting and so-called *"rationalizations"* that appear to be driven by a desire to recoup overpayment for control of KCS, and it will not approve a bid when the transportation value of the proposed transaction has been diminished by overpayment that has resulted from corporate one-upmanship to obtain advantage in a rivalry. ■



# *In Memoriam*

**TOM G. GRACE • 1926–2020**



Tom G. Grace passed away on June 30, 2020. Brother Grace began his railroad career on the Chicago Great Western Railway in March 1947. Brother Grace served Local 98 in the capacity of Local President, Recording-Financial Secretary, Local Chairman, and Trustee. Most notably, Brother Grace served as General Chairman of the Chicago & North Western Railway General Committee. In 1989, after 46 years of service with the Chicago & North Western Railway, Brother Grace retired as a Signal Maintainer at Oelwein, Iowa. Brother Grace is a U.S. Army Veteran. ■



## **Belonging to a Union**

What do my dues pay for?

The Union doesn't do  
anything for me!

What good is the Union?

These are all questions we may have asked ourselves or heard others asking. The truth is, "there is power in a union" and it takes the dues and involvement of all members to maintain that power, strength, and solidarity; a fundamental involvement includes an understanding from all members.

Sign-up at [WWW.BRS.ORG](http://WWW.BRS.ORG) & click on the Union Education Tab for more information.



**Find us on Facebook**





# Railroad Retirement Survivor Benefits

*Monthly benefits may be payable under the Railroad Retirement Act to the surviving widow(er), children, and certain other dependents of a railroad employee if the employee was “insured” under that Act at the time of death. Lump-sum death benefits may also be payable to qualified survivors in some cases.*

*The following questions and answers describe the survivor benefits payable by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) and the eligibility requirements for these benefits.*

## **What are the general service requirements for railroad retirement survivor benefits?**

With the exception of one type of lump-sum death benefit, eligibility for survivor benefits depends on whether or not a deceased employee was “insured” under the Railroad Retirement Act. An employee is insured if he or she has at least 120 months (10 years) of railroad service, or 60 months (5 years) performed after 1995, and a “current connection” with the railroad industry as of the month the annuity begins or the month of death, whichever occurs first.

## **How is a “current connection” determined under the Railroad Retirement Act?**

Generally, an employee who worked for a railroad in at least 12 months in the 30 months immediately preceding the month his or her railroad retirement annuity begins will meet the current connection requirement. If an employee dies before retirement, railroad service in at least 12 months in the 30 months before the month of death will meet the current connection requirement for the purpose of paying survivor benefits.

If an employee does not qualify on this basis, but has 12 months of service in an earlier 30-month period, he or she may still meet the current connection requirement. This alternative generally applies if the employee did not have any regular employment outside the railroad industry after the end of the last 30-month period which included 12 months of railroad service and before the month the annuity begins or the month of death, if earlier.

Full or part-time work for a nonrailroad employer in the interval between the end of the last 30-month period including 12 months of railroad service and the beginning date of an employee’s annuity or the month of death, if earlier, can break a current connection.

Self-employment in an unincorporated business will not break a current connection; however, self-employment can break a current connection if the business is incorporated. All self-employment will be reviewed to determine if it meets the RRA’s standards for maintaining a current connection.

Working for certain U.S. Government agencies — Department of Transportation, National Transportation Safety Board, Surface Transportation Board, Transportation Security Administration, National Mediation Board, Railroad Retirement Board — will not break a current connection. State employment with the Alaska Railroad, so long as that railroad remains an entity of the State of Alaska, will not break a current connection. Also, railroad service in Canada for a Canadian railroad will neither break nor preserve a current connection.

A current connection can also be maintained, for purposes of survivor annuities, if the employee completed 25 years of railroad service, was involuntarily terminated without fault from his or her last job in the rail industry, and did not thereafter decline an offer of employment in the same class or craft in the rail industry, regardless of the distance to the new position.

A current connection determination is made when an employee files for a railroad retirement annuity. If an employee dies before applying for an annuity, it is made when an applicant files for a survivor annuity. Once a current connection is established at the time the railroad retirement annuity begins, an employee never loses it no matter what kind of work is performed thereafter.

### **What if these service requirements are not met?**

If a deceased employee did not have an insured status, jurisdiction of any survivor benefits payable is transferred to the Social Security Administration and survivor benefits are paid by that agency instead of the RRB. Regardless of which agency has jurisdiction, the deceased employee's railroad retirement and social security credits will be combined for benefit computation purposes.

### **What are the age and other eligibility requirements for widow(er)s who haven't remarried?**

Widow(er)s' benefits are payable at age 60 or over. They are also payable at any age if the widow(er) is caring for an unmarried child of the deceased employee under age 18 or a disabled child of any age who became permanently disabled before age 22. Widow(er)s' benefits are also payable at ages 50-59 if the widow(er) is totally disabled and unable to work in any regular employment. The disability must have begun within 7 years after the employee's death or within 7 years after the termination of an annuity based on caring for a child of the deceased employee. In most cases, a 5-month waiting period is required after the onset of disability before disability payments can begin.

Generally, the widow(er) must have been married to the employee for at least 9 months prior to death, unless she or he was the natural or adoptive parent of their child, the employee's death was accidental or while on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, the widow(er) was potentially entitled to certain railroad retirement or social security benefits in the month before the month of marriage, or the marriage was postponed due to State restrictions on the employee's prior marriage and divorce due to mental incompetence or similar incapacity.

### **Can surviving divorced spouses and remarried widow(er)s also qualify for benefits?**

Survivor benefits may be payable to a surviving divorced spouse or remarried widow(er). Benefits are limited to the amount social security would pay (tier I only) and therefore are less than the amount of the survivor annuity otherwise payable (tier I and tier II) by the RRB. A tier II benefit is not provided for a surviving divorced spouse or a remarried widow(er).

A surviving divorced spouse may qualify if she or he was married to the employee for at least 10 years immediately before the date the divorce became final, and is age 60 or older (age 50 or older if disabled). A surviving divorced spouse who is unmarried can qualify at any age if caring for the employee's child and the child is under age 16 or disabled, in which case the 10-year marriage requirement does not apply.

A widow(er) or surviving divorced spouse who remarries after age 60, or a disabled widow(er) or disabled surviving divorced spouse who remarries after age 50 may also receive the portion of a survivor annuity equivalent to a social security benefit (tier I); however, remarriage prior to age 60 (or age 50 if disabled) would not prevent eligibility if that remarriage ended. Such social security level benefits may also be paid to a younger widow(er) or surviving divorced spouse caring for the employee's child who is under age 16 or disabled, if the remarriage is to a person entitled to railroad retirement or social security benefits, or the remarriage ends.

### **When are survivor benefits payable to children and other dependents?**

Monthly survivor benefits are payable to an unmarried child under age 18, and to an unmarried child age 18 in full-time attendance at an elementary or secondary school, or in approved homeschooling, until the student attains age 19 or the end of the school term in progress when the student attains age 19. In most cases where a student attains age 19 during the school term, benefits are limited to the two months following the month age 19 is attained. These benefits will be terminated earlier if the student marries, graduates or ceases full-time attendance. An unmarried

*continued on page 20*



## TAKE A BREAK FROM MULTITASKING

# Tips to Help Keep Your Health On Track!



Most people don't realize that multitasking is not very productive. With the onslaught of today's tech savvy world, including email, cellphones, zoom sessions, facetime, and other types of meetings, many people are in a constant state of distraction. When your attention is pulled in multiple directions, focusing becomes muddled and each task isn't getting the proper attention. This article may help provide ways to limit or stop multitasking, so your mind and focus become clearer.

### Is multitasking really that bad?

It is important to understand what multitasking can do to you, especially over time. Some of the reasons multitasking is bad for you are:

- Multitasking makes other tasks harder and more drawn out because you lose focus when you try to do too much at the same time.
- When you multitask, you are just swapping out one task for the others, back and forth between them, pulling your focus in multiple directions causing you to use more energy.
- You will feel more exhausted and tired at the end of each day if you try to do too many tasks at once.
- Your best work may not be done if you take on too much. Over time, the quality of your work may suffer as you try to meet all the demands your day asks of you.

### How can I stop multitasking in my workday to become more productive?

There are several strategies you can use to limit multitasking to not only get more done each day but have better quality of work as well.

- Get enough sleep/rest — Getting enough sleep will help your brain stay refreshed and not prone to distraction. Take several breaks during your day to move around or just close your eyes for 15 minutes. When you are tired it's harder to stay focused.
- Have your day planned — If you take the time to plan your day, it will be harder to veer off course. A set plan helps you work more efficiently and keeps you on task as you have already preset your brain for what you would like to accomplish in your day.
- Keep only one task on your desk at a time —

Removing other work off your desk will allow you to focus on what is in front of you. When you can see the other piles, you become distracted and let that other work creep into your mindset.

- Locate your workspace in a quiet area — If you are working from home, make sure you are in a quiet area. If you work in an office, try to find a conference room or some other area where you are better able to focus.
- Learn the word no and use it — Saying no doesn't mean you need to be rude. It's saying yes too often and too quickly that can add more to your day. If you can't bring yourself to say no, at least learn to say you will think about it or you will get back to them. This allows you more time to reconsider what you will be saying yes to.

### What is the most important takeaway of easing back from multitasking?

At the end of the day there are several benefits to ceasing multitasking, such as:

- You may find you accomplish more if you can focus your attentions to one task at time.
- You may make fewer errors in your work if you concentrate on just one project at a time. The quality of your work is important.
- At the end of each day, make a task list of four to five things you want to try and accomplish the next day. By doing so, you may find it easier to jump right in and begin your work each day.
- Become more disciplined by not moving to another task until you have finished the one you are on. This one change may help you become a more productive worker. ■

# AFL-CIO NATIONAL BOYCOTTS



## HOSPITALITY, TRANSPORTATION & TRAVEL

### SUBMITTED BY UNITE HERE!

Please support the workers in these hotels by continuing to boycott the following properties:

→ **CALIFORNIA:** Hyatt Regency Santa Clara, Hyatt Regency Sacramento, Hyatt Fisherman's Wharf San Francisco, Hilton Long Beach, Le Meridien San Diego, Hilton LAX—*This includes the Crowne Plaza Hotel LAX, Yokoso Sushi Bar, the Landing Restaurant, Century Taproom, and the Boulevard Market Cafe.*

→ **SEATTLE:** Grand Hyatt Seattle and Hyatt at Olive 8 Seattle

## OTHER

### SUBMITTED BY Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)

→ Reynolds American, Inc.,  
Vuse e-cigarettes

## FOOD

### SUBMITTED BY United Steelworkers (USW)

→ Palmero Pizza

### SUBMITTED BY Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM)

→ Mondelez International Snack  
Foods (those made in Mexico)

## LEGAL

### SUBMITTED BY American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees

→ Gleason, Dunn, Walsh & O'Shea

→ McDonald, Lamond,  
Canzoneri and Hickernell

When some labor disputes with businesses cannot be resolved, the AFL-CIO supports its affiliates by endorsing their boycotts. A boycott is an act of solidarity by voluntarily abstaining from the purchase or use of a product or service.

## POLICY GUIDELINE FOR ENDORSEMENT OF AFFILIATES' BOYCOTTS

The AFL-CIO Executive Council has developed policy guidelines that regulate how the federation endorses boycotts undertaken by its affiliates. To get AFL-CIO sanction, boycotts should be directed at primary employers.

### THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE THESE PROVISIONS:

- All requests to the national AFL-CIO for endorsement must be made by a national or international union.
- Any affiliated union with a contract in force with the same primary employer will be contacted by the AFL-CIO to determine whether there is an objection to the federation's endorsement.
- Affiliates will be asked to provide the AFL-CIO with background information on the dispute in a confidential information survey. Prior to endorsement of the boycott, the executive officers, or their designees, will meet with the national union's officers, or their designees, to discuss the union's strategic plan and timetable for the boycott, or other appropriate tactics, and to discuss the federation's role.
- The national or international union initiating the boycott is primarily responsible for all boycott activities; the AFL-CIO will provide supplemental support.
- Boycotts will be carried on the AFL-CIO national boycott list for a period of one year, and the endorsement will expire automatically at the end of that time. National and international unions may request one-year extensions of the listings for actions where an organizing or bargaining campaign is actively in place. ■

(These guidelines were adopted by the  
AFL-CIO Executive Council in April 2011.)



## Rescue and Recovery American Rescue Plan

AND THE

## 2022 Fiscal Budget Highlights



**MIKE EFAW**  
National  
Legislative Director

### Rescue and Recovery

It has been over a year since the world was turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have learned much about ourselves over this time. One thing we already knew, and should be proud of, is that Signalmen are frontline workers who put the welfare of others ahead of themselves. We went to work daily during a pandemic that shut down most of the world. We made sacrifices to keep store shelves stocked and to get goods to where they were needed. We helped to keep our neighbors' utilities on and available to them. We helped get exports to the ports safely and efficiently, helping do our part to keep the economy running. We were able to get the nation's frontline workers to their jobs, and we got much-needed supplies where they needed to be, helping to keep them safe. Signalmen are crucial to a safe, efficient, and strong national transportation system and the economy.

Since the start of the 117th Congress, Lawmakers and the Biden Administration have worked diligently on passing legislation to get America out from under the crippling grip the COVID-19 pandemic caused, which is possibly the worst public health and economic crisis our country has ever seen. The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS) is making sure your voice is heard and priorities are known as legislation is crafted. Congress is also working on an economic recovery package to build back better from where we were before COVID-19 wreaked havoc throughout the world.

### American Rescue Plan

On March 11, 2021, one year after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, President Biden signed into law the \$1.9 Trillion American Rescue Plan. The American Rescue Plan is a lifeline to our economic recovery. It provides desperately needed support to our cities and states, committing billions to our transportation network and supports its workers. The American Rescue Plan provides necessary funding for many of the country's needs, including public health, workplace safety, the reopening of schools

safely, and much more. For transportation funding, which is of utmost important to us, the Bill includes:

- \$1.7 billion for Amtrak, and requires restoration of full long-distance service within 90 days of enactment to pre-pandemic levels and recall employees furloughed on or after October 1, 2020;
- \$28 million for the Railroad Retirement Board to overhaul its outdated IT system and hire staff; and
- \$30.5 billion in emergency relief for transit agencies and their frontline workers.

Once the American Rescue Plan was enacted, President Biden and his Administration continued working on his promise to build the country back better than it was before the pandemic. President Biden kicked-off this campaign by fixing our nation's infrastructure, which was given a grade of C- on the latest infrastructure report card by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and ranks 13th in the world when it comes to overall quality. On March 31, 2021, President Biden unveiled his American Jobs Plan, which aims to create millions of good jobs focusing on rebuilding our country's crumbling infrastructure and is being heralded as an investment in America. The American Jobs Plan is a \$2 trillion proposal for infrastructure that focuses on large-scale investments, including \$621 billion for transportation. Other investments include clean drinking water, broadband internet access, clean energy, a renewed electric grid, research and development, domestic manufacturing, and ensuring workers have a free and fair choice to join a union.

On April 9, 2021, President Biden released his \$1.52 trillion FY2022 discretionary budget request, which focuses on domestic programs. Of interest to us is the allocation to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The President's budget request allocates \$25.6 billion for DOT, which is a \$317 million or 1.3 percent increase. The proposed discretionary request aims to spark the second great rail revolution, move Amtrak into the 21st Century, and expand access to high-quality



transit among other critical investments in the DOT's discretionary programs. Some of the budget highlights are below:

### **FY2022 Budget Highlights:**

- \$625 million for a new, yet-unnamed passenger rail competitive grant program to invest in passenger rail as a competitive, low-carbon option for intercity travel;
- \$2.7 billion, a 35 percent increase, to improve and expand Amtrak;
- \$2.5 billion for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program, a 23 percent increase from the 2021 enacted level, to improve accessibility to high-quality transit;
- \$375 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement (CRISI) grants;
- \$1 billion for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program; and
- \$110 million in new funding to establish a Thriving Communities Initiative. This program would serve as a down-payment on advancing transportation equity.

A couple of other bills that affect us have been introduced. As you are probably aware, railroad unemployment and sickness benefits have been placed under sequestration for nearly a decade. While the last two COVID-19 relief bills have temporarily lifted railroad unemployment and sickness benefits out from under sequestration, without a permanent fix they fall right back under the sequestration orders once federal extended unemployment COVID benefits expire; legislation has been crafted to fix the problem permanently. The Railroad Employee Equity and Fairness Act (REEF Act) has been introduced in the Senate (S. 545) by Senators Rob Portman (R-OH), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Deb Fischer (R-NE). The REEF Act is a bipartisan bill that would eliminate the sequester on railroad unemployment and sickness benefits. BRS will be supporting this legislation to see that it gets incorporated into one of the larger bills on the horizon or that it will make it to the floor as a standalone bill.

Another piece of legislation that will be very beneficial to us was introduced in February to the House of Representatives. The Railway Upgrades for Rural American Lines Act or RURAL Act (H. R. 947). The RURAL Act would modify requirements for the Railway-Highway Crossings Program (23 USC 130). This bill

requires the DOT to set aside highway safety improvement funds for states for the replacement of functionally obsolete warning and protective devices at railway-highway crossings, increases the federal share payable on account of any project financed with highway safety improvement funds from 90 percent to 100 percent, and revises the amount of incentive payment a state may provide a local government for permanent closure by such government of public at-grade railway-highway crossings. A Senate companion bill for the RURAL Act is expected to be introduced soon.

There are a few other Transportation Bills up for re-authorization this year that the BRS will be watching closely: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST), the Federal Rail Safety Act (FRSA), and the Interstate Commerce Act (ICA). We will be sure to keep you updated on the progress of the legislation that affects us as it moves through Congress. ■



*Agreement*



**MTA LONG ISLAND  
RAIL ROAD (LIRR)**

In April 2021, MTA Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) and members of Local 56 reached an Agreement, which was officially agreed to on April 7, 2021, and ratified on May 4, 2021.

The contract contains general wage increases of 2% for 2019, 2.25% for 2020, and retroactive adjustment. ■

## RAILROAD RETIREMENT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*continued from page 15*

disabled child over age 18 may qualify if the child became totally disabled before age 22. An unmarried dependent grandchild meeting any of the requirements described above for a child may also qualify if both the grandchild's parents are deceased or found disabled by the Social Security Administration.

Monthly survivor benefits are also payable to a parent at age 60 who was dependent on the employee for at least half of the parent's support. If the employee was also survived by a widow(er), surviving divorced spouse or child who could ever qualify for an annuity, the parent's annuity is limited to the amount that social security would pay (tier I).

### **How are railroad retirement widow(er)s' benefits computed?**

The tier I amount of a two-tier survivor benefit is based on the deceased employee's combined railroad retirement and social security earnings credits, and is computed using social security formulas. In general, the survivor tier I amount is equal to the amount of survivor benefits that would have been payable under social security.

December 2001 legislation established an "initial minimum amount" which yields, in effect, a widow(er)'s tier II benefit equal to the tier II benefit the employee would have received at the time of the award of the widow(er)'s annuity, minus any applicable age reduction.

However, such a tier II benefit will not receive annual cost-of-living increases until such time as the widow(er)'s annuity, as computed under prior law with all interim cost-of-living increases otherwise payable, exceeds the widow(er)'s annuity as computed under the initial minimum amount formula.

A widow(er) who received a spouse annuity from the RRB is guaranteed that the amount of any widow(er)'s benefit payable will never be less than the annuity she or he was receiving as a spouse in the month before the employee died.

The average annuity awarded to widow(er)s in fiscal year 2020, excluding remarried widow(er)s and surviving divorced spouses, was \$2,333 a month. Children

received \$1,549 a month, on the average. Total family benefits for widow(er)s with children averaged \$4,395 a month. The average annuity awarded to remarried widow(er)s or surviving divorced spouses in fiscal year 2020 was \$1,301 a month.

### **Are survivor benefits subject to any reduction for early retirement or disability retirement?**

A widow(er), surviving divorced spouse, or remarried widow(er) whose annuity begins at full retirement age or later receives the full tier I amount unless the deceased employee received an annuity that was reduced for early retirement. The eligibility age for a full widow(er)'s annuity is gradually rising to age 67 for those born in 1962 or later, the same as under social security. The maximum age reduction is also rising to 20.36 percent, depending on the widow(er)'s date of birth. For a surviving divorced spouse or remarried widow(er), the maximum age reduction is 28.5 percent. For a disabled widow(er), disabled surviving divorced spouse, or disabled remarried widow(er), the maximum reduction is also 28.5 percent, even if the annuity begins at age 50.

### **Are these benefits subject to offset for the receipt of other benefits?**

Under the Railroad Retirement Act, the tier I portion of a survivor annuity is subject to reduction if any social security benefits are also payable, even if the social security benefit is based on the survivor's own earnings. This reduction follows the principles of social security law which, in effect, limit payment to the highest of any two or more benefits payable to an individual at one time.

The tier I portion of a widow(er)'s annuity may also be reduced for the receipt of certain Federal, State, or local government pension based on the widow(er)'s own earnings. The reduction generally does not apply if the employment on which the public pension is based was covered under the Social Security Act throughout the last 60 months of public employment. However, most military service pensions and payments from the Department of Veterans Affairs will not cause a reduction. Pensions paid by a foreign government or inter-

state instrumentality will also not cause a reduction.

For those subject to the public pension reduction, the tier I reduction is equal to 2/3 of the amount of the public pension.

A survivor annuitant should notify the RRB promptly if she or he becomes entitled to any such benefits.

### **What if a widow(er) was also a railroad employee and is eligible for a railroad retirement employee annuity as well as monthly survivor benefits?**

If the widow(er) is entitled to a railroad retirement employee annuity and neither the widow(er) nor the deceased employee had any railroad service before 1975, the survivor annuity (tier I and tier II) payable to the widow(er) is reduced by the total amount of the widow(er)'s own employee annuity.

If a widow or dependent widower is also a railroad employee annuitant, and either the widow(er) or the deceased employee had at least 120 months of railroad service before 1975, the tier I reduction may, under certain circumstances, be partially restored in the survivor tier II amount.

If either the deceased employee or the widow(er) had some railroad service before 1975 but less than 120 months of service, the widow(er)'s own employee annuity and the tier II portion of the survivor annuity would be payable to the widow(er). The tier I portion of the survivor annuity would be payable only to the extent that it exceeds the tier I portion of the widow(er)'s own employee annuity.

### **What types of lump-sum death benefits are payable under the Railroad Retirement Act?**

A lump-sum death benefit is payable to certain survivors of an employee with 10 or more years of railroad service, or less than 10 years if at least 5 years were after 1995, and a current connection with the railroad industry if there is no survivor immediately eligible for a monthly annuity upon the employee's death.

If the employee did not have 10 years of service before 1975, the lump sum is limited to \$255 and is payable only to the widow(er) living in the same household as the employee at the time of the employee's death.

If the employee had less than 10 years of service but had 5 years after 1995, he or she must have met social security's insured status requirements for the lump

sum to be payable.

If the employee had 10 years of service before 1975, the lump sum is payable to the living-with widow(er). If there is no such widow(er), the lump sum may be paid to the funeral home or the payer of the funeral expenses. These lump sums averaged \$1,030 in fiscal year 2020.

If a widow(er) is eligible for monthly benefits at the time of the employee's death, but the widow(er) had excess earnings deductions which prevented annuity payments or for any other reason did not receive monthly benefits in the 12-month period beginning with the month of the employee's death totaling at least as much as the lump sum, the difference between the lump-sum benefit and monthly benefits actually paid, if any, is payable in the form of a deferred lump-sum benefit.

The average for all types of lump sums was \$933 in fiscal year 2020.

The railroad retirement system also provides, under certain conditions, a residual lump-sum death benefit which ensures that a railroad family receives at least as much in benefits as the employee paid in railroad retirement taxes before 1975. This benefit is, in effect, a refund of an employee's pre-1975 railroad retirement taxes, after subtraction of any benefits previously paid on the basis of the employee's service. This benefit is seldom payable.

### **How does a person get an estimate of, or apply for, survivor benefits?**

As all of the RRB's 53 field offices are physically closed to the public until further notice because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the best way to obtain a survivor's annuity estimate is to call the agency's toll-free number (1-877-772-5772).

Under normal circumstances, applications for survivor benefits are generally filed at one of the RRB's field offices, with an RRB representative at one of the office's Customer OutReach Program (CORP) service locations, or by telephone and mail; however, while RRB field offices remain physically closed, applications can be filed solely by telephone and mail by first calling 1-877-772-5772. It is important to note that callers may experience lengthy wait times due to increased call volume caused by COVID-19 related issues. ■



# BRS DESIGNATED COUNSEL

ON-THE-JOB INJURY | FELA | RAIL LABOR | INFO | LAW  
RAILROAD SIGNALMEN | CLAIM  
EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

*When Signalmen suffer a work-related injury or illness, BRS members or their families are encouraged to determine their rights and benefits under the Federal Employers' Liability Act (FELA) before agreeing to any settlement with the railroad employer. The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen has designated the attorneys listed in this directory to serve as qualified counsel for BRS members in employee injury cases covered by FELA.*

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*See Minnesota*

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*Attorneys are listed by state and are designated to serve BRS members living or working in the general region of their offices. Designation of FELA counsel is by authority of the BRS Executive Council only.*

*BRS members are encouraged to provide information regarding FELA cases, including criticism or commendations regarding the service of designated counsel, and information on injuries and settlements.*

*This information, which will be used in the continuing evaluation of this program, should be sent to: Jerry C. Boles, President, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen 917 Shenandoah Shores Road, Front Royal, VA 22630-6418*

# BENEFITS DIRECTORY

INSURANCE | CLAIMS | GROUP POLICIES | INFO  
HEALTH | RAILROAD RETIREMENT | PLANS  
PHARMACY BENEFIT

## Your Track to Health

[www.yourtracktohealth.com](http://www.yourtracktohealth.com)

Whether you want to better understand your plan and coverage, access a form, add a dependent, or research retirement benefits – it's easy to find the information you need on this site. (*NOTE: Information on this site does not apply to Amtrak employees.*)

### UNITED HEALTHCARE

**National Plan** — GA-23000

Managed Medical Care Programs (MMCP) &  
Comprehensive Health Care Benefit (CHCB)

**1-800-842-9905**

[www.myuhc.com](http://www.myuhc.com)

**Retiree Claims** — GA-46000

UnitedHealthcare

**1-800-842-5252**

**Retiree Supplemental** — GA-23111

UnitedHealthcare

**1-800-842-5252**

### THE HARTFORD

The Hartford

**1-800-205-7651**

<https://abilityadvantage.thehartford.com>

### HIGHMARK BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield  
Railroad Dedicated Unit

**1-866-267-3320**

[www.bcbs.com](http://www.bcbs.com)

### LIFE INSURANCE

MetLife

**1-800-310-7770**

[www.metlife.com](http://www.metlife.com)

### MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE BENEFITS

For treatment, claims or inquiries call:  
United Behavioral Health

**1-866-850-6212**

[www.liveandworkwell.com](http://www.liveandworkwell.com)

ACCESS CODE: Railroad

### SUPPLEMENTAL SICKNESS BENEFITS UNDER GROUP POLICY NO. R-5000

Aetna

**1-800-205-7651 • Fax: 954-452-4124**

You may file online at: [www.wkabsystem.com](http://www.wkabsystem.com)

COMPANY IDENTIFIER: RR

### VISION SERVICE PLAN

EyeMed

Member Support

**1-855-212-6003**

[www.eyemedvisioncare.com/railroad](http://www.eyemedvisioncare.com/railroad)

### DENTAL BENEFITS UNDER GROUP POLICY NO. GP-12000

Aetna

**1-877-277-3368**

[www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com)

### MANAGED PHARMACY BENEFIT EXPRESS SCRIPTS

Retail pharmacy network provides medication for  
acute, short-term care. Mail-order prescription service  
provides medication for chronic, long-term care.  
UnitedHealthcare Plans GA-23000 and GA-46000

**1-800-842-0070**

[www.express-scripts.com](http://www.express-scripts.com)

### RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

Automated Help Line

**1-877-772-5772**

[www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov)

### UNION PLUS

Union Plus Mortgage Company • AT&T Discount  
Credit Card • Scholarships • Free College  
Insurance Discounts, and more.

[www.unionplus.org](http://www.unionplus.org)

# Continuous Membership



*The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, in recognition of BRS members' contributions to the Signalman's craft and their dedication to the principle of trade unionism, has established a Continuous Service program to honor longtime BRS members. Continuous Service lapel pins are presented to members every five years, beginning with their 25th year of membership.*

***The following is a list of the active members who recently received Continuous Service pins in recognition of their years as BRS Members:***

## **40 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Gonzales, Joey R	16
Stranimier, Joe J	55
Risley, Samuel J	55
Easterling Jr, Clyde W	60
Ryan, Glen D	111
Hio, Dave S	229

## **35 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Smith, Ronald E	77
Thornsberry, James	77
Wohltman, Keith H	84
Walker, Ainsworth A	102
Lett, Frank H	110
Cordova, Rick R	156

## **30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Baker, Joe D	20
Eagle Jr, John L	31
Crawford, Don W	34
Carter, Joseph M	49
King Jr, James D	49

## **30 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Herlong, Eddie D	49
McCadden, Patrick	56
Wright, John B	77
Lankford, Thomas W	77
Wilson, Mike A	87
Fazekas, Jeffrey P	102
Biehner, Kyle M	102
Kremp, Henry	102
Lucas, Benjamin C	141
Kegel, Michael J	226

## **25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

McCallister, Bruce E	3
Pontes, Jose F	5
Finnegan, Jim M	8
Neeld, Chad A	13
Larson, Doug C	16
McEwen, Yolanda E	16
Perez, Tony B	19
Delfs, Ken N	19
Copeland, Gary S	21
Eldridge, Mark L	25

## **25 YEARS OF SERVICE**

O'Brien, Curtis R	33
Jones, Brian R	48
Czelusniak, John M	56
Sellers, Norman J	56
Plaia, Vito	56
Bossle Jr, Joseph G	65
Bonewell, David S	72
Thormahlen, Cory A	87
Leach, Terry L	94
Trotter Sr, Mike O	99
Shafransky, David A	106
Tibbetts Jr, John W	111
Collins Jr, Floyd L	114
Flynn, Mitchell J	119
Scholes, Larry D	129
Ashworth, Thomas J	129
Raya, John M	173
Chavez, Gabe	173
Uhlig, Chris P	179
Barnett, Mike L	188
Gerrior, Joe M	229
Starkey, Lam L	229



# BENEFITS OF GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE



## COVID-19 Vaccination Will Help Keep You from Getting COVID-19



NEARLY  
**100%**

EFFECTIVE AT PREVENTING  
**COVID-RELATED**  
HOSPITALIZATION & DEATH  
IN VACCINE CLINICAL TRIALS

All COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States have been shown to be highly effective at preventing COVID-19.

## COVID-19 Vaccination is a Safer Way to Help Build Protection

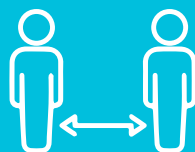


**MILLIONS  
OF PEOPLE**

IN THE UNITED STATES  
HAVE RECEIVED  
COVID-19 VACCINES

COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history.

## COVID-19 Vaccination is an Important Tool to Help Stop the Pandemic



**WEARING  
MASKS +  
SOCIAL  
DISTANCING**

PROTECT YOURSELF AND  
OTHERS FROM COVID-19.

Until you're fully vaccinated, wearing masks inside public places + staying at least 6 ft apart from people who don't live with you & who may not be vaccinated, reduces your chance of being exposed to or spreading the virus.

Three ways to find a vaccine: Go to [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), text your zip code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find a vaccine near you

# OBITUARIES

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**LOUIS J. AGLIATA**—retired member of **LOCAL 56**. Brother Agliata retired in 1978 after 27 years of service with the Long Island Rail Road. Brother Agliata was a Signal Technician at New York City, New York, at the time of his retirement.

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**HARLEY “DALE” D. ARNOLD**—retired member of **LOCAL 161**. Brother Arnold retired in 2002 after 36 years of service with the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway and the BNSF Railway Company. Brother Arnold was a Signal Maintainer at Woodward, Oklahoma, at the time of his retirement.

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**LESTER BARSTOW, JR.**—retired member of **LOCAL 56**. Brother Barstow retired in 1994 after 26 years of service with the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Long Island Rail Road. Brother Barstow was a Signal Inspector at Ronkonkoma, New York, at the time of his retirement.

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**EDWIN J. BUBLA**—retired member of **LOCAL 132**. Brother Bubla retired in 1986 after 36 years of service with the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. Brother Bubla was a Signaller at East St. Louis, Illinois, at the time of his retirement. Brother Bubla served as Financial Secretary.

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**JOSEPH E. BYRDY**—retired member of **LOCAL 109**. Brother Byrdy retired in 1983 after 31 years of service with the Erie Railroad and Conrail. Brother Byrdy was a Signal Maintainer at Youngstown, Ohio, at the time of his retirement.

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**JAMES “JIM” L. DEDE**—retired member of **LOCAL 188**. Brother Dede retired in 2011 after 44 years of service with the Great Northern Railroad and the BNSF Railway Company. Brother Dede was a Signal Maintainer at Everett, Washington, at the time of his retirement.

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**DANIEL “DAN” J. DRESCH, SR.**—retired member of **LOCAL 56**. Brother Dresch retired in 1977 after 30 years of service with the Long Island Rail Road. Brother Dresch was a Communications Foreman at Jamaica, New York, at the time of his retirement.

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**ROBERT R. DUNNAM**—retired member of **LOCAL 206**. Brother Dunnam retired in 2005 after 22 years of service with the Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Brother Dunnam was a Signaller at Palestine, Texas, at the time of his retirement.

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**RAY C. EAST**—active member of **LOCAL 72**. Brother East had 42 years of service with the Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Brother East was a Skilled Signal Foreman at Portland, Texas, at the time of his passing.

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**JOHN L. EICHHORN**—retired member of **LOCAL 10**. Brother Eichhorn retired in 1991 after 41 years of service with the Pennsylvania Railroad, Penn Central Transportation Company, and Conrail. Brother Eichhorn was a Maintainer Testman at Sandusky, Ohio, at the time of his retirement. Brother Eichhorn served as Local President and Recording-Financial Secretary.

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**JOHN J. FLEMING**—retired member of **LOCAL 109**. Brother Fleming retired in 1996 after 44 years of service with the Wheeling & Lake Erie and Erie Railroads, Erie Lackawanna Railway, and Conrail. Brother Fleming was an Inspector C&S at Cleveland, Ohio, at the time of his retirement. Brother Fleming served as Local Chairman.

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**RUSSELL A. FREE**—retired member of **LOCAL 94**. Brother Free retired in 1990 after 43 years of service with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the Chessie System, and CSX Transportation. Brother Free was a Signal Maintainer at Washington, Indiana, at the time of his retirement. Brother Free served as Local President.

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**CARL “ROCKY” A. FRESCA**—retired member of **LOCAL 2**. Brother Fresca retired in 2011 after 37 years of service with the Penn Central Transportation Company and Norfolk Southern Railway. Brother Fresca was an Electronic Specialist at Green Tree, Pennsylvania, at the time of his retirement.

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**JAMES D. GILMAN**—active member of **LOCAL 20**. Brother Gilman had 24 years of service with the BNSF Railway Company. Brother Gilman was a Signal Maintainer at Marceline, Missouri, at the time of his passing.

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**CHARLES J. JACOB**—retired member of **LOCAL 194**. Brother Jacob retired in 2007 after 42 years of service with the Belt Railway Company of Chicago. Brother Jacob was a Lead Maintainer at Oak Forest, Illinois, at the time of his retirement. Brother Jacob is a U.S. Army Veteran.

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**ROBERT L. JOHANNES**—retired member of **LOCAL 8**. Brother Johannes retired in 1996 after 44 years of service with the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Johannes was a CTC Carrier Maintainer at Council Bluffs, Iowa, at the time of his retirement. Brother Johannes is a U.S. Army Veteran.

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**ALBERT E. JOYNER**—retired member of **LOCAL 16**. Brother Joyner retired in 1993 after 43 years of service with CSX Transportation. Brother Joyner was a Signal Maintainer at Waycross, Georgia, at the time of his retirement. Brother Joyner served as Local President, Local Chairman, and General Committee Trustee.

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**JAMES B. KELLY**—retired member of **LOCAL 56**. Brother Kelly retired in 2001 after 28 years of service with the Long Island Rail Road. Brother Kelly was an Communications Assistant Foreman at Huntington Station, New York, at the time of his retirement. Brother Kelly served as Local Chairman.

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**F.M. KRATOCHVIL**—retired member of **LOCAL 99**. Brother Kratochvil retired in 1990 after 43 years of service with the Texas and New Orleans, and Southern Pacific Railroads. Brother Kratochvil was a Signal Foreman at Houston, Texas, at the time of his retirement.

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**JAMES V. LEONARD**—retired member of **LOCAL 94**. Brother Leonard retired in 1987 after 37 years of service with the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, and Baltimore & Ohio Railroads. Brother Leonard was a Signal Maintainer at Morris, Illinois, at the time of his retirement.

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**GEORGE A. LIVERNOIS**—retired member of **LOCAL 62**. Brother Livernois retired in 2009 after 30 years of service with the Providence and Worcester Railroad. Brother Livernois was a Mechanical Technician at Worcester, Massachusetts, at the time of his retirement.

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**LOUIS R. MAZZOCHIA, JR.**—retired member of **LOCAL 5**. Brother Mazzochia retired in 2017 after 42 years of service with Amtrak. Brother Mazzochia was a Signal Maintainer at Boston, Massachusetts, at the time of his retirement.

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**EDWARD F. McGRATH**—retired member of **LOCAL 188**. Brother McGrath retired in 2008 after 41 years of service with the Great Northern Railroad and the BNSF Railway Company. Brother McGrath was a Signal Inspector at Everett, Washington, at the time of his retirement.

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**WALTER E. MILLER**—active member of **LOCAL 102**. Brother Miller had 17 years of service with Amtrak. Brother Miller was a Signal Maintainer at Newark, New Jersey, at the time of his passing. Brother Miller is a U.S. Army Veteran.

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**DANNY L. ROBERTS**—retired member of **LOCAL 33**. Brother Roberts retired in 2020 after 39 years of service with the BNSF Railway Company. Brother Roberts was a Signal Inspector at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, at the time of his retirement.

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**FRANKLIN D. ROSSCUP**—retired member of **LOCAL 155**. Brother Rosscup retired in 1999 after 41 years of service with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Brother Rosscup was a Signal Maintainer at Portland, Oregon, at the time of his retirement.

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**JOHN E. RUSS**—retired member of **LOCAL 16**. Brother Russ retired in 1993 after 43 years of service with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and CSX Transportation. Brother Russ was a Signal Maintainer at Cordele, Georgia, at the time of his retirement.

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**CARLTON “PEE WEE” R. SCHIRM**—retired member of **LOCAL 1**. Brother Schirm retired in 1993 after 23 years of service with the Pennsylvania Railroad and Conrail. Brother Schirm was a Signalman at Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, at the time of his retirement. Brother Schirm is a U.S. Navy Veteran.

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**ANTHONY V. SLAVIK**—retired member of **LOCAL 132**. Brother Slavik retired in 1990 after 41 years of service with the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis. Brother Slavik was a Signalman at St. Louis, Missouri, at the time of his retirement.

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**ARTHUR H. SWINHOE, JR.**—retired member of **LOCAL 206**. Brother Swinhoe retired in 2010 after 27 years of service with the Houston Belt and Terminal Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Swinhoe was a Signal Maintainer at Houston, Texas, at the time of his retirement.

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**ROY H. SWINNEY**—retired member of **LOCAL 121**. Brother Swinney retired in 1989 after 45 years of service with the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe, and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railways. Brother Swinney was a Signal Maintainer at Pauls Valley, Oklahoma, at the time of his retirement.

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**BERNARD C. TROMBLEY**—retired member of **LOCAL 147**. Brother Trombley retired in 1998 after 33 years of service with the Delaware & Hudson and Canadian Pacific Railways. Brother Trombley was a Signal Maintainer at Willsboro, New York, at the time of his retirement.

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**RONALD “RON” J. ZIEGLER**—retired member of **LOCAL 8**. Brother Ziegler retired in 2016 after 23 years of service with the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Ziegler was a Signal Gang Foreman on Zone 1, at the time of his retirement. Brother Ziegler is a U.S. Army Veteran.

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#### **EDITOR’S NOTE:**

Please notify Grand Lodge of the passing of BRS members.

*email: [membership@brs.org](mailto:membership@brs.org)*



## RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

# Issues Statements of Service

**E**ach year, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) prepares a Form BA-6, Certificate of Service Months and Compensation, for every railroad employee with creditable railroad compensation in the previous calendar year. The RRB will mail the forms to employees during the first half of June. Anyone with compensation reported in 2020 who has not received Form BA-6 by July 1, or who needs a replacement, should contact the RRB field office by calling toll-free at 1-877-772-5772.

Form BA-6 provides employees with a record of their railroad retirement service and compensation. The information shown is used to determine whether an employee qualifies for benefits and the amount of those benefits; therefore, it is important that employees review their Form BA-6 to see whether their own records of service months and creditable compensation agree with the form.

When reviewing the 2020 compensation total, employees should be aware that only annual earnings up to \$137,700 are creditable for railroad retirement purposes in that year, and that \$137,700 is the maximum amount shown on the form. The form also shows service credited on a month-by-month basis for 2019, 2018, and 2017, when the maximum creditable compensation was \$132,900, \$128,400, and \$127,200 respectively. The employer(s) reporting the employee's 2020 service and compensation is identified on the BA-6.

Besides the months of service reported by employers, Form BA-6 shows the number of any additional service months deemed by the RRB. Deemed service months may be credited under certain conditions to an employee who did not work in all 12 months of the year, but had creditable tier II earnings exceeding the monthly proration of the creditable tier II earnings maximum for the year. However, the total reported and deemed service months may never exceed 12 in a calendar year, and no service months (reported or deemed), can be credited after retirement, severance, resignation, discharge, or death.

The BA-6 form also indicates the number of months of verified military service creditable as service under the Railroad Retirement Act, if the service was previously reported to the RRB. Employees are encouraged to submit proofs of age and/or military service in advance of

their actual retirement. Filing these proofs with the RRB in advance will streamline the benefit application process and help prevent payment delays.

For employees who received separation or severance payments, the section of the form designated Taxable Amount shows the amounts of separation allowance or severance payments that were subject to railroad retirement tier II taxes. This information is shown on the form because a lump sum, approximating part or all of the tier II taxes deducted from such payments made after 1984, which did not provide additional tier II credits, may be payable by the RRB upon retirement to qualified employees or to survivors if the employee dies before retirement. The amount of an allowance included in an employee's regular compensation is shown under Compensation Amount.

Form BA-6 also shows, in the section designated Employee Contributions, the cumulative amount of tier II railroad retirement payroll taxes paid by the employee over and above tier I social security equivalent payroll taxes. While the RRB does not collect or maintain payroll tax information, the agency computes this amount from its compensation records in order to advise retired employees of their payroll tax contributions for Federal income tax purposes.

A new addition to the form is a field in the lower-right corner of the form that indicates if the employee is eligible to claim unemployment or sickness benefits. At the same time, the RRB streamlined the form and explanatory information on the reverse, largely by providing detailed instructions for reviewing the form on the agency website at [RRB.gov/BA-6](https://www.RRB.gov/BA-6).

There are instructions on the back of the form and the web page on how to file a protest if service and compensation totals are incorrect. The law limits, to four years, the period during which corrections to service and compensation amounts can be made. If personal information is incorrect or incomplete, such as the name, birthdate or address, the employee should contact an RRB field office to have it corrected. For most employees, the address of the RRB office serving their area is provided on the form along with the RRB's nationwide toll-free number (1-877-772-5772). ■



**U.S. RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD**  
**ERHARD CHORLÉ, JOHN BRAGG, THOMAS JAYNE**  
**MEMBERS**

FORM BA-6 (6-21)

CERTIFIED 01-08-2021

BA 9999 8282

KC JONES  
 123 MAIN ST  
 CENTRAL CITY, IL

**2020 CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**  
**MONTHS AND COMPENSATION**  
 SERVICE AND COMPENSATION REPORTED  
 FOR PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020

BIRTH DATE	SEX
07-1970	F

**SERVICE AND COMPENSATION ON RECORD FOR REVIEW PERIOD**

YEAR	CREDITABLE COMPENSATION	SEPARATION ALLOWANCE/ SEVERANCE PAYMENT		SERVICE MONTHS PROFILE*												TOTAL
		TAXABLE AMOUNT	COMPENSATION AMOUNT	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
2020	100,300.00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	12
2019	96,500.00			1	1	1	1	1	1	D	D	1	1	1	1	12
2018	87,250.00			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	11
2017	24,800.00			0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	04

\*1 - A reported month; 0 - A month not reported; D - A "deemed" month

**CAREER TOTAL RETIREMENT RECORD**

CREDITABLE COMPENSATION	SEPARATION ALLOWANCE/ SEVERANCE PAYMENT		SERVICE MONTHS				EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTIONS
	TAXABLE AMOUNT	COMPENSATION AMOUNT	REPORTED	DEEMED	MILITARY	TOTAL	
923,700.00			204	2	12	218	38,100.00

**YOUR 2020 REPORTING EMPLOYER(S)**

The service and compensation shown on this form for 2020 were gathered from a report(s) received from the following employer(s): **MIDWESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY**

**RRB OFFICE SERVING YOUR AREA**

123 CENTRAL AVENUE  
 WINDY CITY, IL 60000

PHONE (877) 772-5772

**2020 RUIA EARNINGS**

QUALIFIED	QUALIFYING EARNINGS
Y	\$19,860



BROTHERHOOD OF RAILROAD SIGNALMEN

Scholarships  
Awarded

2021

## Winners Honored for Achievement and Union Values

Union Plus recently awarded \$250,000 in scholarships to 199 students representing 37 unions, including two winners representing the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS). This year's group of scholarship recipients includes university, college, and trade or technical school students from 42 states. The BRS winners are:

**Matthew Mehrtens** of Roland, Iowa. Mehrtens, whose father, Frank Mehrtens, is a member of BRS Local 43, has been awarded a \$2,000 scholarship.

**Wyatt Watring** of Otterville, Missouri. Watring, whose father, Colby Watring, is a member of BRS Local 72, has been awarded a \$500 scholarship.

*"During a time of continued disruption and hardship for many families, Union Plus is glad that we are once more able to share a higher than usual scholarship award amount to help union families offset the cost of college education,"* Union Plus President Mitch Stevens said. *"We are proud to support this year's exceptional group of 199 winners as they pursue higher education in a new environment after a year of largely virtual schooling."*

## THE 2021 BRS HONOREES

### Matthew Mehrtens

Iowa State University (ISU)

Roland-Story High School (RSHS)  
Story City, Iowa (2020)

Matthew recently completed his first year as an aerospace engineering major at Iowa State. He hopes to be admitted into ISU's concurrent graduate program, which allows juniors and seniors to begin working on a master's degree while completing a bachelor's degree. Matthew wants to be an astronautical engineer and eventually work at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. He is thankful for the support BRS has shown his father, who previously worked third-shift maintenance at a non-union factory. *"My dad was subject to unpleasant and sometimes dangerous work conditions,"* Matthew said. *"As a BRS member and trustee, he is no longer subject to the will of inhumane*

*managers or treated like an expendable object."*

RSHS vocal instructor Tanner Stutzman praised Matthew's work ethic and said that he is quick to encourage others. *"I have never seen a more ambitious, hardworking, and passionate young person. Matthew is an expert at managing his time and still enjoying the trivial parts of life,"* Stutzman said. *"He succeeds at everything to which he puts his mind. Matthew also shows a great deal of respect for authority, his peers, and those who look up to him."*

Activities and honors: National Honor Society; Eagle Scout; NASA/Texas Instruments STEMnauts; RSHS student council; RSHS Thor's Men vocal octet; RSHS concert, jazz bands; ISU Loyal Scholar; ISU College of Engineering Award; RSHS Rose Schaefer Scholar; Iowa All-State Chorus; RSHS Outstanding Senior Award; RSHS Outstanding Vocal Senior Award



## Wyatt Watring

Otterville High School (OHS)  
Otterville, Missouri (2021)

Wyatt will begin the electrical distribution systems program at the State Technical College of Missouri this fall. He plans to follow in the footsteps of his brother, who is a journeyman lineman and member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Wyatt's family has a rich union tradition. His grandfather was a BRS member and served in the U.S. Army. Wyatt's father has been a BRS member since 1992. "BRS has provided great wages and benefits to my family, and we would not have what we have today without the union's benefits," Wyatt said.

OHS counselor Maria Staus said Wyatt is an intelligent and attentive young man who takes pride in his work and is passionate about his career choice. "Wyatt has proven himself a hard worker who is ready to take on any task, no matter how large or small," Staus said. "He comes to school every day with a positive attitude and a genuine interest in and concern for his peers. Wyatt is the type of student who gets along with nearly everyone."

Activities and honors: National FFA Organization; Future Business Leaders of America; OHS varsity baseball, basketball, track and field; Otterville FFA Leadership Award; FFA Chapter Degree; FFA Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Forage Production Efficiency Award

### Learn More About the Union Plus Scholarship Program

The Union Plus Scholarship Program, now in its 30th year, awards scholarships based on outstanding academic achievement, personal character, financial need, and commitment to the values of organized labor. The program is offered through the Union Plus Education Foundation.

Since starting the program in 1991, Union Plus has awarded more than \$5 million in educational funding to more than 3,400 union members, spouses, and dependent children. Union Plus Scholarship awards are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school, or recognized technical or trade school. The selection process is very

competitive, and this year 5,008 applications were received from 67 unions and all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia, two U.S. territories, and six Canadian provinces.

Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship) for applications and benefit eligibility.

### About Union Plus

Union Plus, founded by the AFL-CIO in 1986, uses the collective buying power of America's 12.5 million union members to deliver top-quality benefits and services at competitive prices to working families. In addition to the scholarship program, Union Plus offers the Free College program, which makes it possible for union members and their families to earn an associate degree completely online at no cost. As a complement to the Free College program, Union Plus offers the Bachelor's Degree Completion program, providing union members and their families a no-cost option to complete their bachelor's degree completely online. Union Plus also provides a wide range of money-saving programs, including discounts on wireless services from AT&T, the only nationwide unionized wireless carrier; insurance protection; savings on travel and recreation; and more. For additional information, visit [unionplus.org](http://unionplus.org). ■



# MEETING PHOTOS



## Local 16 Meeting

Athens, Georgia



## Local 107 Meeting

Hammond, Louisiana





# TRAINING PHOTOS



## Financial Secretary Training

May 2021 — Grand Lodge, Front Royal, Virginia



## Local Chairmen's Training

June 2021 — Grand Lodge, Front Royal, Virginia







# SIGNALMAN'S STORE

**BRS WATCHES** — Gold BRS logo on the face.

**CAPS** — Adjustable headband. Many different styles and colors available.

**NAVY WINDSHIRT** — 100% polyester microfiber with 100% nylon taffeta lining. Includes side seam pockets.

**OXFORD SHIRTS** — Long-sleeve dress shirts contain a double yoke, button-down banded collar, and dress placket with pearl-tone buttons. Constructed from a blend of 60% cotton and 40% polyester material.

**GOLF SHIRTS** — are constructed from wrinkle resistant, snag-proof, fade resistant material.

**CANVAS COAT** — Made of 100% cotton canvas with BRS colorlight logo embroidered in red and green. Available in black or brown.

**WOOL/LEATHER BRS JACKETS** — Heavyweight wool shell, nylon lining, with leather sleeves and collar. Embroidered four-color BRS emblem. Available in black only.

**Make check or money order payable to:**  
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen

## MAIL PAYMENT AND ORDER TO:

BRS Online Store  
P.O. Box 220690  
Chantilly, VA 20153  
(703) 788-2566

ITEM DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
BRS Flag (3' x 5')		85.00	
BRS Flag (2'x3')		54.50	
Golf Balls (pack of 3)		10.50	
Coffee Mug		8.00	
Pocket Watch		94.50	
Wrist Watch		120.00	
Mantle/Desk Clock		136.00	
Magnet		6.00	
Keychain/Bottle Opener		4.00	

HATS	QUANTITY	PRICE	TOTAL
Cap (pink)		11.00	
Cap (camo/orange)		20.75	
Cap (black)		11.00	
Cap (blue)		11.00	
Cap (grey)		11.00	
Cap (black dye sub)		18.00	
Cap (brown diamond plate)		18.00	
Black Knit Hat		11.00	

APPAREL	S	M	L	XL	2X	3X	4X	PRICE	TOTAL
Union Strong T-Shirt (navy)								16.00	
Union Strong T-Shirt (charcoal)								16.00	
Golf Shirt (black w/logo)								37.50	
Golf Shirt (burgundy w/logo)								37.50	
Golf Shirt (navy w/logo)								37.50	
Golf Shirt (steel blue w/logo)								37.50	
Golf Shirt (women's burgundy w/logo)								37.50	
Oxford Dress Shirt (blue)								44.00	
Oxford Dress Shirt (grey)								44.00	
Oxford Dress Shirt (white)								44.00	
Navy Windshirt								57.50	
Black Wool & Leather Coat								201.00	
Black Canvas Coat								90.00	
Brown Canvas Coat								90.00	
Grey Sweatshirt								31.50	
Navy Softshell Jacket								96.50	
Service T-Shirt (burgundy)								18.00	
Service T-Shirt (grey flag)								15.00	

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

STREET \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ CERTIFICATE # \_\_\_\_\_

ORDER ONLINE AT [WWW.BRS.ORG](http://WWW.BRS.ORG)

# SIGNALMAN'S STORE



CHARCOAL



NAVY



BLUE



WHITE



GRAY

## UNION STRONG T-SHIRT

Graphic Shown Imprinted on Back of Shirt

## OXFORD SHIRTS



BROWN CANVAS COAT



BLACK WOOL  
& LEATHER COAT



BLACK CANVAS COAT



WINDSHIRT



BURGUNDY\*



BLACK



NAVY



STEEL BLUE

## GOLF SHIRTS (\*Women's sizes available in Burgundy only)



## ASSORTED CAPS



FLAG



POCKET WATCH



WRIST WATCH



MANTLE CLOCK

# WHAT'S IN YOUR UNION-MADE Picnic Basket?



**LOOK FOR THESE PRODUCTS FOR YOUR NEXT PICNIC**

## **HOTDOGS:**

- » Ball Park
- » Boar's Head
- » Foster Farms
- » Hebrew National
- » Hofmann
- » Hormel
- » Oscar Mayer

## **SAUSAGES:**

- » Gianelli
- » Kroger brand

## **BREAD AND ROLLS:**

- » Wonder Bread
- » Alfred Nichols Bakery
- » Stroehmann
- » Arnold
- » Francisco

## **CONDIMENTS:**

- » French's mustard
- » Gulden's mustard
- » Heinz ketchup
- » Jack Daniel's barbeque sauce
- » Vlasic pickles and relish

## **SNACKS:**

- » Munchos
- » Funyuns
- » Rold Gold
- » Frito-Lay
- » Doritos
- » Chex
- » Mikesells Potato Chips
- » Mission Tortilla Strips

## **SODAS AND JUICE:**

- » A&W Root Beer
- » Canada Dry Ginger Ale
- » Coca-Cola Products
- » Kool-Aid Sticks
- » Ocean Spray Cranberry Juice

## **BEER:**

- » Miller
- » Coors
- » Anheuser-Busch
- » Black Eye Ale
- » Black Hawk Stout
- » Blue Heron Pale Ale
- » Budweiser



The Union Label and Service Trades Department, AFL-CIO does its best to verify the products listed are union-made. Some products may be made in both union and non-union facilities, please check the packaging for the union label where available.

For these products and more, check the ULSTD website at [www.unionlabel.org](http://www.unionlabel.org).



# PHOTO CONTEST

## WINNERS FOR 2ND QUARTER 2021



*Replacing wire and upgrading the slide fences in Badrock Canyon on the Hiline subdivision near Coram, Montana.*

*Photo submitted by Chris Heaps, Jr., retired Mobile Construction Signal Inspector and Local 87 Member.*



*As a late night thunderstorm approaches from the west, a southbound train lights up the 62S intermediate signal south of Wasbash, Indiana, on the Norfolk Southern Marion District, Lake Railroad Division.*

*Photo submitted by Local 52 Member Kody L. McCoy.*

# DEER DAYS GIVEAWAY



The Union Sportsmen's Alliance wants to help you gear up and get outside this archery season!



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KNIVES

flextone

PLANO

**\$1,800+ VALUE**

**NO COST TO ENTER!**

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