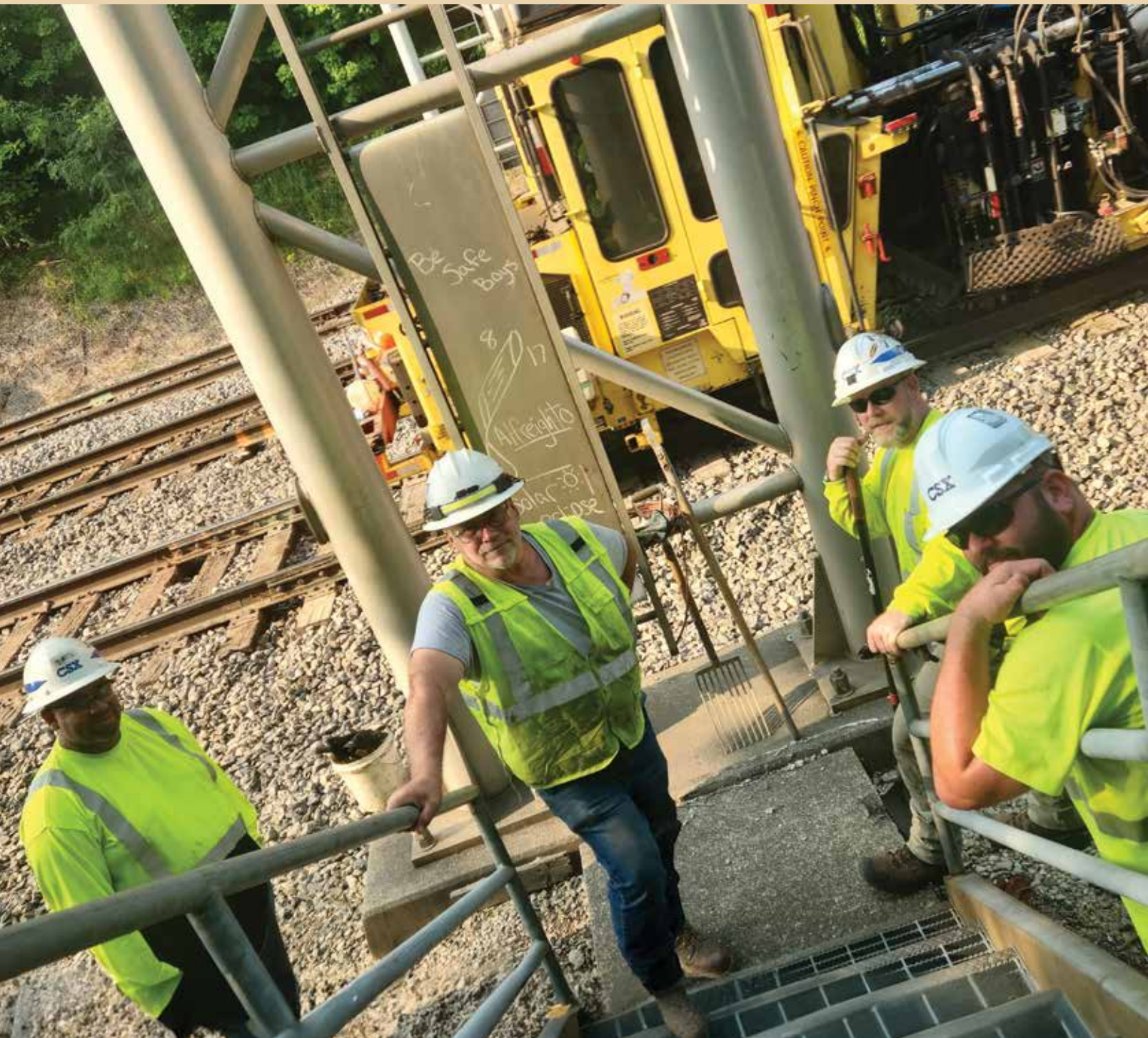


The **SIGNALMAN'S JOURNAL**

VOLUME 104
3RD QUARTER 2023





The Premier Provider of Wage Loss Protection to Railroad Signalmen Since 1923.

The best coverage and member benefits at the lowest rates in the industry!

- **20% discount** when you pay annually.
- **10% discount** when you pay semiannually.
- **\$100 cash reward** for referring a co-worker!
- Our new **No. 365 policy gives you 365 days of coverage immediately**. No waiting.
- **Accidental death coverage** on and off the job, for you and your beneficiary at no extra charge.*
- Generous **Loyalty Appreciation** program awards you with tax-free cash back at retirement.

Hear it from the source...

"LECMPA is a company you can be proud of. They are, quite simply, a group of railroaders looking out for the financial security of other railroaders. They've been providing income protection to railroaders for generations, myself included. LECMPA provides a quality product that I've seen countless brothers and sisters of the BRS benefit from."

- Jeremy Huckabee, BRS BNSF General Chairman



LECMPA

Protecting transportation workers **since 1910.**

800.514.0010 | underwriting@lecempa.org | lecempa.org



*Beneficiary Accidental Death coverage not available in California and Texas.

The SIGNALMAN'S JOURNAL

Official Publication of the
BROTHERHOOD OF RAILROAD SIGNALMEN
WWW.BRS.ORG

VOLUME 104 • 3RD QUARTER 2023



DIRECTORY

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

917 Shenandoah Shores Road
Front Royal, VA 22630-6418
Phone: (540) 622-6522
Fax: (540) 622-6532
signalman@brs.org

Mike Baldwin, President
(ext. 525) • msb@brs.org

Jim Finnegan, Secretary-Treasurer
(ext. 527) • jmfinnegan@brs.org

Brandon Elvey, Vice President NRAB
(ext. 524) • b.elvey@brs.org

Justin Pier, Grand Lodge Representative
(ext. 567) • j.pier@brs.org

Jeremy Farr, Grand Lodge Representative
(ext. 568) • j.farr@brs.org

FIELD VICE PRESIDENTS:

Tim Tarrant, Vice President Commuter/Passenger
(ext. 528) • tmt@brs.org

Cory Claypool, Vice President West
(ext. 528) • clc@brs.org

Doug VanderJagt, Vice President East
(ext. 528) • drvanderjagt@brs.org

Kurt Mullins, Vice President Midwest
(ext. 528) • kmullins@brs.org

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS:

Quinn Norman, Vice President Headquarters
(ext. 528) • r.norman@brs.org

Mike Efaw, National Legislative Director
(ext. 528) • mle@brs.org

Chris Hand, Director of Research
(ext. 566) • c.hand@brs.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Gus Demott, Chairman
P.O. Box 888, Clinton, SC 29325
(864) 938-0353

John McArthur, Secretary
P.O. Box 960639, El Paso, TX 79996
(775) 846-1794

Mike Sullivan, Member
60 Oak Place, Babylon, NY 11702
(631) 432-4760

OFFICERS EMERITUS:

W. Dan Pickett, President Emeritus

The Signalman's Journal (ISSN-0037-5020) is published quarterly by the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen 917 Shenandoah Shores Road, Front Royal, VA 22630-6418.

Periodicals Postage Paid at Front Royal, VA, and additional offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Signalman's Journal
The Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen
917 Shenandoah Shores Road, Front Royal, VA 22630-6418.



Amtrak Members Ratify Agreement 6

Legislative Activities 14



Union Plus Scholarship Program 7

Union Plus Legal Assistance 7

Did You Know? 13

The Thomson Foundation 21

Photo Highlights from Local 84 Meeting 26

Photo Highlights from Local 14 Meeting 26

Photo Highlights from Local 110 Meeting 27

Photo Highlights from Local 161 Meeting 27

Photo Highlights from Local 232 Meeting 28

Photo Highlights from Local 141 Meeting 28

Photo Highlights from Local 198 Meeting 28

Photo Highlights from Local 183 Meeting 29

Photo Highlights from Local 16 Meeting 30

Brother Dalessandro Retirement 30

Photo Highlights from Local Chairman's Training 31

Photo Highlights from Financial Secretary Training 32

From the President 2

From the Secretary-Treasurer 4

Railroad Retirement Questions & Answers 8

Washington Report 12

Obituaries 18

Continuous Membership 20

Designated Legal Counsel 22

Benefits Directory 23

Signalman's Store 24

Photo Contest Winner for Q3 2023 33

COVER: BRS Local 94 Members assist Maintenance of Way Tie Team, T8, on the former B&O at East Willard-BG 203.6.

L-R: Mike Boles, Larry Byers, Brandon Cochran, and Dan Kovac.

Photo submitted by Local 94 Member, Jeff Grenamyre.





FROM THE PRESIDENT

— *Michael S. Baldwin, BRS President*



SAFETY FIRST

Brothers and Sisters,

The BRS, as a leading non-governmental rail safety organization, strives every day to keep our members safe through initiatives internal to each Carrier and through legislation and regulation. The signal system is the safety lynchpin on the railroad, and imperative to the public trust in the rails. Beyond the traveling public, it is imperative that our members stay safe on the job!

Even though safety on the railroad has improved over the years, it is still one of the most unforgiving environments in any industry. The railroads like to say, “Safety is our number one concern!” The truth is, however, they address safety last, if at all. Safety does not help them meet deadlines. Ultimately, the responsibility to make safe decisions and make the workplace safe falls to you, as the employee. There is no doubt that we must comply with all of the railroad’s operating rules and the federal regulations to keep ourselves safe. Safety must be our number one priority and we must insist that others believe the same.

The BRS actively participates in ensuring the safety of both our members and the public in many ways, such as participation as a charter member of the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC); members of Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-Way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES); regularly commenting on notices in the Federal Register either in support of new safety rulemaking or with a contrary opinion to waivers submitted by railroads, pointing out the safety shortcomings; and knocking down doors in the halls of Congress, advocating for federal safety legislation and working to get votes from both sides of the aisle, such as the most recent efforts on the Rail Safety Bill of 2023, because the safety of our members and the public’s trust in the safety of the rails should be a bipartisan issue.

Safety must be our number one priority and we must insist that others believe the same.

As I write this article, I have just approved two more complaint letters to be submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regarding safety violations. When we hear of these issues, your union submits a letter to the FRA Office of Safety notifying them of the railroad’s violation. Lately, most of these are regarding deferred tickets, because the railroads, particularly the major Class I carriers, have decided that the price of safety does not include overtime.

Most of the comments we submit when railroads petition the FRA for a waiver are regarding federal regulations and corresponding deadlines that have become too “costly” or inconvenient for the

highly profitable railroads to implement in the timeline given, if they are not looking to completely circumvent the regulation. However, I have yet to meet with any carrier who discusses how many lives these “costly regulations” have saved. The railroads refuse to acknowledge the situations these “costly regulations” could have prevented.

The RSAC develops new regulatory standards, through a collaborative process, with all segments of the rail community working together to fashion mutually satisfactory solutions on regulatory issues. Today, the full RSAC is represented by organizations including labor, railroads, suppliers, states, chemical suppliers, and passenger advocates. In addition, advisors from Federal Transit Administration, National Transportation Safety Board, Transportation Security Administration, Canada, Mexico, and other diverse groups participate. The RSAC provides advice and recommendations to the FRA regarding the development of the railroad safety regulatory program, including issuance of new regulations, review and revision of existing regulations, and identification of non-regulatory alternatives for improvement of railroad safety.

To help prevent roadway worker fatalities, the BRS also participates in the Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-Way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee, consisting of safety representatives from a cross section of rail labor, railroad management, and federal regulators, who analyze incidents involving roadway workers to find recommendations on how to avoid future instances. Judging by the reports the Committee has published, it is clear to me that, in almost every instance, the fatality could have been avoided if the Roadway Worker Protection (RWP) regulations had been fully complied with.

I mention these groups because they give Labor a seat at the table. It is one more way to help ensure the safety of our members and the communities in which they work. If Labor did not have this seat, the railroads would have the benefit of sculpting the regulations to fit their needs and to fit their “budget.”

Further, in the halls of Congress, we implore its members to understand the harsh and hazardous conditions that railroad workers endure, and fight for legislation to increase safety protections! You are under no obligation to endanger yourself in order to perform your duties. But, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with, comprehend, and apply the RWP regulations. These regulations grant you the right, under Federal Law, to refuse

any directive to violate an on-track safety rule. Moreover, federal law guarantees you the right to challenge, in good faith, the on-track safety procedures to be applied and to remain clear of the track until that challenge is resolved. Please contact your Local, General Committee, or Grand Lodge Union Representative when this happens.

From the FAMES group reports, we know that RWP regulations are capable of virtually eliminating roadway worker fatalities if our brothers and sisters take it upon themselves to fully comply with the RWP regulations every time they work on or near the track.

As your President, one of my greatest challenges and responsibilities is to remind you of the hazardous conditions that you work in each day. At any given time, the smallest mistake or loss of situational awareness could cause a loss of life or cause you or a coworker to be permanently injured. I urge each of you to take ownership of your safety as well as the safety of the people working around you and the communities in which you work. Stay vigilant, Brothers and Sisters!

In Solidarity,



Michael S. Baldwin — *BRS President*

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

Title 49: Part 214

Railroad Workplace Safety, Subpart C — Roadway Worker Protection.

CFR 49, Sec. 214.313 (d):

(d) Each roadway worker may refuse any directive to violate an on track safety rule, and shall inform the employer in accordance with Sec. 214.311 whenever the roadway worker makes a good faith determination that on track safety provisions to be applied at the job location do not comply with the rules of the operating railroad.

CFR 49, Sec. 214.311 (b):

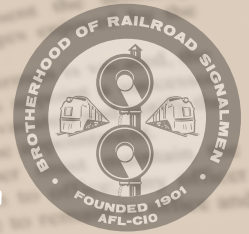
(b) Each employer shall guarantee each employee the absolute right to challenge in good faith whether the on track safety procedures to be applied at the job location comply with the rules of the operating railroad, and to remain clear of the track until the challenge is resolved.



FROM THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

James M. Finnegan, BRS Secretary-Treasurer

LOCAL MEETINGS & ELECTIONS



Local Lodge Meetings

Local Lodge meetings form the roots of our organization. From them come the views and desires of our members, which guide Local Lodge, General Committee, and Grand Lodge officers in formulating policies for the betterment of working conditions. Further, all Local Lodges have their own issues, such as grievances and maintaining strong attendance at meetings. Rarely does an event occur at a meeting, which does not affect every member in the Local Lodge. Those who fail to attend not only run the danger of missing out on decisions directly affecting themselves, they also delay the broader aims of the Organization to improve the working conditions of all members. If it were possible to devise a more just and efficient method than meetings to act collectively and unify ideas of large groups of men or women for their own welfare, somewhere, long before now, in the development of self-governing bodies the substitute would have been discovered. Just as governments are strong in proportion to the interest and support of their peoples, labor organizations progress according to the will of their members giving all their support to the most important activity of their organization — which is the Local Lodge meeting.

BRS members have access to Regular and Special Meetings; the primary purpose of conducting these is for the transaction of business that legally and properly comes before the Local. Article II, Sections 60 and 61, of the BRS Constitution, state:

Sec. 60. A Local Lodge may hold as many regular sessions at such times and places as it shall agree upon, but **every Local Lodge shall hold at least one regular session each quarter**, except in cases where special dispensation has been granted by the President. The Local Lodge will be required to notify all members by mail, electronic media, or combination of both of any

regular meetings stating the time and place of the meeting.

Sec. 61. Special meetings of Local Lodges may be called (1) by the Local President when he deems such action necessary; (2) by the Local Recording Secretary in the absence or incapacity of the Local President; (3) at the written request of at least 10 percent of the members in good standing (and not less than 25 percent with less than 100 members in the Local Lodge), but not less than five members in good standing when there are less than twenty (20) members in the Local Lodge.

A notice in due form of every special meeting shall be forwarded to each member in good standing by the Local Recording Secretary at least fifteen (15) days before date of such meeting. Such notices shall state the time, place, and purpose of meeting, and only such business shall be transacted as has been stated in the notice thereof.

The following guidelines apply:

1. A true and accurate record of Local Meeting proceedings will be taken in accordance with Article II, Section 25.
2. Quorum requirements mandated in Article II, Section 59, remain in place. The Local President must verify the members in good standing.
3. The notification requirements are mandated in Article II, Section Nos. 60 and 61. The Meeting Notice must contain the date, time, and video or audio conference call information.

4. Local Meetings will still be conducted in accordance with Article II, Section Nos. 62–64; Article II, Section 73; and the Ritual.
5. Rules of Order under Article II, Section 65, will continue to govern. To maintain order, members should identify themselves to the Local President and only speak when properly recognized. Special consideration must be given by the Local President to ensure any member who wishes to speak is recognized.

Elections

Article II, Section Nos. 15–19, outline the procedures for electing Local Officers.

Sec. 15. All elections under this Article II, including Local Chairmen and Committeemen, must be by secret ballot, except where a candidate for office is unopposed.

The regular triennial nomination and election of officers of Local Lodges and Local Grievance Committees shall be held between January 1 and October 15 of the election year. Nominations for Local Lodge officers shall be made at any regular or special meeting of the Local provided at least thirty (30) days' written notice must be given each member by the Local Recording Secretary, advising him that the nomination for Local Lodge officers will take place at that meeting.

Any member who cannot attend the meeting may nominate the candidates of his choice for Local Lodge officers by writing the Local Recording Secretary of his Local Lodge and advising him of the names of his choice for nominees. Any such nominations must be in writing and mailed to the Local Recording Secretary.

The Local Recording Secretary shall stipulate in the nomination notice the last date for receipt of the nominations which may be mailed in by the member who cannot attend the meeting.

The elections for Local Lodge officers will take place at any regular or special meeting of the Local, a quorum not being required, provided at least thirty (30) days' written notice is mailed to each member at the member's last known home address advising him that the election will take place at the meeting. If a member cannot be present at the election meeting, he may request the Local Recording Secretary to furnish him an official election ballot which will list the names of

all nominees for Local Lodge officers and the date by which it must be returned. The member may then mark his ballot and enclose it in a plain ballot envelope and return it to the Local Recording Secretary in an envelope on which he has placed his name and return address, for counting at the election meeting. Where there are three or more nominees for a position, the member, if he so desires, may mark his ballot for the candidate of his choice in preferential order which will permit his vote to count in case of a tie or a run-off election at the meeting.

All elections for Local Lodge officers shall be at the officially designated election meeting. Write-in votes and voting by proxy shall not be permitted.

If a Local so desires, it may also utilize a certified electronic balloting process to conduct their elections. This electronic ballot must also be a secret ballot. (8/2018)

Sec. 16. Before election, the Local President shall appoint two tellers who shall receive and count the votes, the Local Recording Secretary keeping tally and announcing the result to the members.

Sec. 17. When nominations for any particular office have been properly closed, additional nominations for that office shall not be considered.

Sec. 18. Members in good standing shall be entitled to one vote for each office, and a majority of the votes cast shall be required for election to any office.

Sec. 19. Where there are more than two candidates nominated for the same office in a Local Lodge, and none of them receive a majority of the votes cast, a secret ballot will be promptly issued with the names of the two candidates who received the highest number of votes cast in the first ballot, and the candidate receiving the majority of votes cast in the second ballot will be elected. In the event that more than two candidates tie for the highest number of votes cast on the first ballot or any subsequent ballot, only the names of those candidates who tied for the highest number of votes cast will be placed on the next ballot. All elections will be by secret ballot, except where a candidate is unopposed for an office. ■

Agreement



AMTRAK AGREEMENT

BRS Members at Amtrak Ratify New Collective Bargaining Agreement

On May 5, 2023, BRS members working at Amtrak ratified a new Collective Bargaining Agreement. The seven (7) year Agreement was reached after nearly 18 months of negotiations and provided for general wage increases of 28.5% with full retroactivity to 2022 (compounded 32.3% over the term of the Agreement), frozen monthly health and welfare cost sharing portions for employees under the Amplan II plan, and monthly cost sharing decreases for employees under the Amplan III plan throughout the term of the Agreement with improvements in dental coverage, vasectomy coverage, fertility treatment, and hearing aid coverage.

A Paid Time Off (PTO) plan was negotiated to replace the National Vacation Agreement which provides for significantly more time off with less years of service and an accrual method that permits an employee to accrue PTO even if they do not meet the one hundred (100) day threshold of the National Vacation Agreement.

Additionally, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day was added as a Holiday, there were improvements to Bereavement Leave, the incentive allowance for certain Gang positions was increased from \$0.65 per hour to \$1.20 per hour, and a Paid Parental Leave Rule was negotiated.

The Paid Parental Leave Rule is the third Paid Parental Leave Agreement negotiated for BRS members and provides the most benefits with up to ten (10) weeks of paid time off, which can be taken in two (2) week increments, for up to one year from the date of birth or adoption. ■

The BRS congratulates BRS members on Amtrak on the new Agreement.



Find us on Facebook





Scholarship Program

ELIGIBILITY — Current and retired members of participating unions, their spouses, and their dependent children (as defined by IRS regulations). At least one year of continuous union membership by the applicant, applicant’s spouse or parent (if applicant is a dependent). The one-year membership minimum must be satisfied by May 31, of the scholarship year.

APPLICATION TIMELINE — Applications are available starting in mid-June, and a complete application must be received on or before 12:00 p.m. (Eastern Time) on January 31, of the scholarship year. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD AMOUNTS — Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2024. Students may re-apply each year.

AWARD DATE — The Scholarship Committee will determine recipients of scholarship awards by May 31 each year. During the first week of June award recipients will be individually notified by mail, and all applicants will be sent an email with notification that the award list is posted. Please note that due to the volume of applications we cannot provide any information on the status of an application before award announcements are made.

OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS
The students selected for university, college, trade or technical school scholarships represent a wide sampling of backgrounds, union affiliations, goals and accomplishments. The selection process is very competitive since we receive thousands of applications each year. ■

To receive mobile text alerts about education-related deadlines and information, text STUDENT to 22555.

www.unionplus.org/benefits/money/union-plus-scholarships



Legal Assistance



www.unionplus.org/benefits/home/legal-help

For a fee, as low as \$19.95 a month, you'll have access to a network of experienced attorneys.

- Unlimited access to legal assistance
- Expert legal advice and representation, in person or by phone
- Network of over 18,000 attorneys
- No limitations such as hour or dollar caps on covered matters
- Digital estate planning to create wills, living wills and powers of attorney in as little as 15 minutes

Already enrolled?

For billing inquiries and membership status

Call 800-339-0616



Unemployment and Sickness Benefits for Railroad Employees

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) administers the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA), which provides qualified railroaders with unemployment benefits when they become unemployed but are ready, willing, and able to work, and sickness benefits when they cannot work because of sickness or injury. Sickness benefits are also payable to female railroad workers for periods when they are unable to work because of health conditions related to pregnancy, miscarriage, or childbirth. A new benefit year begins each July 1.

The following questions and answers describe these benefits, their eligibility requirements, and how to apply for and claim them. It also explains how the recent resumption of a Federal sequestration order reduces benefit rates.

1. What are the eligibility requirements for railroad unemployment and sickness benefits in July 2023?

To qualify for **normal** railroad unemployment or sickness benefits, an employee must have had railroad earnings of at least \$4,387.50 in calendar year 2022, counting no more than \$1,755 for any one month. Those who were first employed in the rail industry in 2022 must also have at least five months of creditable railroad service in 2022.

Employees can easily determine their eligibility for unemployment and sickness benefits by checking their Certificate of Service Months and Compensation (Form BA-6). The BA-6 includes a field in the lower-right corner that indicates if an employee is eligible to claim unemployment or sickness benefits. The RRB mails these forms each June to railroad employees with creditable compensation in the previous calendar year.

Under certain conditions, employees who do not qualify based on their 2022 earnings *may* still be able to receive benefits in the new benefit year. Employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more months of service) who received normal benefits in the benefit year ending June 30, 2023, may be eligible for **extended** benefits. Employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more months of service) *might* qualify for **accelerated** benefits if they have railroad earnings of at least \$4,737.50 in 2023, not counting earnings of more than \$1,895 in any one month.

To qualify for extended unemployment benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily quit work without good cause and not have voluntarily retired. To qualify for extended sickness benefits, a claimant must not have voluntarily retired and must be under age 65.

To be eligible for accelerated benefits, a claimant must have 14 or more consecutive days of unemployment or sickness; not have voluntarily retired or, if claiming unemployment benefits, quit work without good cause; and, when claiming sickness benefits, be under age 65.

2. What is the daily benefit rate payable in the new benefit year beginning July 1, 2023?

Almost all employees will qualify for the maximum daily benefit rate of \$87. Benefits are generally payable for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in 14-day claim periods, which yields \$870 for each two full weeks of unemployment or sickness. Sickness benefits payable for the first 6 months after the month the employee last worked are subject to tier I railroad retirement payroll taxes, unless benefits are being paid for an on-the-job injury.

Under provisions of the Budget Control Act of 2011, and a subsequent sequestration order to implement mandated cuts, railroad unemployment and sickness benefits were reduced by 5.7 percent for days after September 30, 2020, and before January 3, 2021. Beginning January 3, 2021, pandemic-related legislation suspended sequestration until 30 days after the end of the Presidential decla-

ration of a national emergency concerning COVID-19.

On April 10, 2023, President Biden signed legislation declaring an immediate end to the national emergency. Consequently, on **May 10, 2023, sequestration resumed** when the RRB began reducing railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 5.7 percent. This reduction percentage will remain in effect through September 30, 2031.

By applying the sequestration reduction of 5.7 percent, the maximum benefit in a 2-week period decreases from \$870 to \$820.41. As sickness benefits paid to an employee within six months from the date last worked for a reason other than an on-the-job injury are subject to regular tier I railroad retirement taxes, a further reduction of 7.65 percent is applied to those benefits. The maximum amount payable for sickness benefits subject to tier I payroll taxes will be \$757.65 over two weeks.

3. How long are these benefits payable?

Normal unemployment or sickness benefits are each payable for up to 130 days (26 weeks) in a benefit year. The total amount of each kind of benefit which may be paid in the new benefit year cannot exceed the employee's railroad earnings in calendar year 2022, counting earnings up to \$2,267 per month.

If normal benefits are exhausted, extended benefits are payable for up to 65 days (during 7 consecutive 14-day claim periods) to employees with at least 10 years of service (120 or more cumulative service months).

4. What is the waiting period requirement for unemployment and sickness benefits?

There is a 7-day waiting period requirement, prior to any benefits becoming payable under the RUIA. During the first 14-day claim period, benefits are payable for every day claimed in excess of seven days. Subsequent claims are paid for the number of days of unemployment or sickness over four in each 14-day registration period. Initial sickness claims must also begin with four consecutive days of sickness. If an employee has at least five days of unemployment or five days of sickness in a 14-day period, he or she should still file for benefits to satisfy the waiting period for the current benefit year. Separate waiting periods are required for unemployment and sickness benefits. However, only one seven-day waiting period is generally required during any period of continuing unemployment or sickness, even if that period continues into a subsequent benefit year.

5. Are there special waiting period requirements if unemployment is due to a strike?

If a worker is unemployed because of a strike conducted in accordance with the Railway Labor Act, benefits are not payable for days of unemployment during the first 14 days of the strike, but benefits are payable during subsequent 14-day periods.

If a strike is in violation of the Railway Labor Act, unemployment benefits are not payable to employees participating in the strike. However, employees not among those participating in such an illegal strike, but who are unemployed on account of the strike, may receive benefits after the first two weeks of the strike.

While a benefit year waiting period cannot count toward a strike waiting period, the 14-day strike waiting period may count as the benefit year waiting period if a worker subsequently becomes unemployed for reasons other than a strike later in the benefit year.

6. Can employees in train and engine service receive unemployment benefits for days when they are standing by or laying over between scheduled runs?

No, not if they are standing by or laying over between regularly assigned trips or they missed a turn in pool service.

7. Can extra-board employees receive unemployment benefits between jobs?

Yes, but only if the miles and/or hours they actually worked were less than the equivalent of normal full-time work in their class of service during the 14-day claim period. Entitlement to benefits would also depend on the employee's earnings.

8. How would an employee's earnings in a claim period affect his or her eligibility for unemployment benefits?

If a claimant's earnings for days worked, and/or days of vacation, paid leave, or other leave in a 14-day registration period are more than a certain indexed amount, no benefits are payable for **any** days of unemployment in that period. That registration period, however, can be used to satisfy the waiting period.

Earnings include pay from railroad and non-railroad work, as well as part-time work and self-employment. Earnings also include pay that an employee would have

earned except for failure to mark up or report for duty on time, or because he or she missed a turn in pool service or was otherwise not ready or willing to work. For the benefit year that begins July 2023, earnings of \$1,755 or more in a claim period will disqualify a claim for unemployment benefits, even if there are more than 4 days of unemployment claimed. This amount corresponds to the base year monthly compensation amount used in determining eligibility for benefits in each year. Also, even if an earnings test applies on the first claim in a benefit year, this will not prevent the first claim from satisfying the waiting period in a benefit year.

Earnings of \$15 or less per day from work which is substantially less than full-time and not inconsistent with the holding of normal full-time employment may be considered subsidiary remuneration and may not prevent payment of any days in a claim. However, a claimant must report all full and part-time work on each claim, regardless of the amount of earnings, so the RRB can determine if the work affects benefits.

9. How does a person apply for and claim unemployment benefits?

Employees can apply for and claim unemployment benefits online or by mail. (Limited in-person service by appointment is also available.) Individuals who have a **myRRB** account at **RRB.gov** can file their applications and biweekly claims online. Employees can create a myRRB account at **RRB.gov/myRRB** by clicking on the button labeled **Sign in with login.gov**. Establishing an account while working will expedite the filing process for future unemployment benefits, and provide ready access to other online services.

To apply by mail, employees must obtain an *Application for Unemployment Benefits* (Form UI-1) from RRB.gov, their labor organization, or railroad employer. The completed application should be mailed to their local RRB field office as soon as possible and must be filed within 30 days from the date the employee became unemployed, or the first day for which he or she wishes to claim benefits. Benefits may be lost if the application is filed late. Employees filing a late unemployment application (or claim) should include a signed statement explaining why they cannot meet the required time frame.

Persons can find the address of the RRB office serving their area by visiting **RRB.gov** and clicking on **Field Office Locator**, or by calling the agency toll-free at

1-877-772-5772 and selecting the appropriate option from the automated menu.

The local RRB field office reviews the completed application, whether it was submitted online or by mail, and notifies the applicant's current railroad employer and base-year employer, if different. The employer has the right to provide information about the benefit application.

After processing the application and confirming benefit eligibility, biweekly claim forms are provided to the claimant for as long as he or she remains unemployed and eligible for benefits. If a claimant filed an online application, claim forms are *only* made available online. If a claimant filed a paper application, his or her *first* claim form is both available online and mailed to him or her. If the claimant returns the paper claim, future claims will be mailed to him or her. If the claimant files the claim online, all subsequent claim forms will *only* be made available online, and will no longer be mailed. Claimants **must not** file both an online and a paper claim form for the same period(s). Claim forms should be signed and submitted (online or by mail) on or after the last day of the claim. The completed claim must be received by the RRB within 15 days of the end of the claim period, or within 15 days of the date the claim form was made available online or mailed to the claimant, whichever is later.

Only *one application* needs to be filed during a benefit year, even if a claimant becomes unemployed more than once. However, in the case of multiple claim periods, a claimant must request a claim form from the RRB within 30 days of the first day for which he or she wants to resume claiming benefits. These claim forms may then be filed online or by mail.

10. How does a person apply for and claim sickness benefits?

An *Application for Sickness Benefits* (Form SI-1a) can be obtained from **RRB.gov**, a railroad labor organization, or a railroad employer. Applications for sickness benefits **must** be submitted to the agency by mail, or by fax to 713-405-2078. However, subsequent claims may be mailed, or completed online by employees who have established a **myRRB** account at **RRB.gov**.

An application including a doctor's *Statement of Sickness* (Form SI-1b) is required at the beginning of **each** period of continuing sickness for which benefits are claimed.

Claimants should make a special effort to have the doctor's statement of sickness completed promptly since claims cannot be paid without it.

The RRB suggests that employees keep an application for sickness benefits on hand, and that family members know where the form is kept and how to use it. If an employee becomes unable to work because of sickness or injury, the employee should complete the application and have his or her doctor complete the attached statement of sickness. If a claimant receives sickness benefits for an injury or illness for which he or she is paid damages, it is important to be aware that the RRB is entitled to reimbursement of either the amount of the benefits paid for the injury or illness or the net amount of the settlement, after deducting the claimant's gross medical, hospital, and legal expenses, whichever is less.

If the employee is too sick to complete the application, someone else may complete it for him or her. In such cases, the individual signing for the employee should also complete a *Statement of Authority to Act for Employee* (Form SI-10), which accompanies the statement of sickness.

After completion, the forms should be faxed or mailed to the RRB within 10 days from when the employee became sick or injured. However, applications received after 10 days but within 30 days of the first day for which an employee wishes to claim benefits are generally considered timely filed if there is a good reason for the delay. (Employees cannot currently file their sickness *applications* online.) Upon receipt, the RRB will process the application and determine if the employee is eligible for sickness benefits.

After processing the application and statement of sickness, the RRB makes the *first* biweekly claim form available online (for employees with myRRB accounts) **and** mails a paper form to the employee as long as he or she is eligible for benefits and remains unable to work due to illness or injury. Those choosing to file the paper claim received by mail should return the completed form to RRB headquarters for processing. If the claimant returns the paper claim, future claims will be mailed to him or her. If the claimant files the claim online, all subsequent claim forms will *only* be made available online, and will no longer be mailed. Claimants must **not** file both online and paper claim forms for the same claim period(s). Employees who need to create a myRRB account should visit RRB.

gov/myRRB and click on the button labeled **Sign in with login.gov**.

Completed claim forms must be received at the RRB within 30 days of the last day of the claim period, or within 30 days of the date the claim form was made available online or mailed to the claimant, whichever is later. Benefits may be lost if an application or claim form is filed late. Claimants filing a late sickness application or claim form should include a signed statement explaining why they were unable to meet the required time frame.

Claimants are reminded that while claim forms for sickness benefits can be submitted online, applications for sickness benefits must be mailed or faxed to the RRB at 713-405-2078. Statements of sickness may be included with the completed sickness application, or submitted separately by mail or fax. Also, to prevent a delay in processing applications or claims, employees are advised against sending any sickness benefit forms to the RRB in Chicago via certified mail.

11. Is a claimant's employer notified each time a biweekly claim for unemployment or sickness benefits is filed?

Yes. The RUIA requires the RRB to notify the claimant's base-year employer each time a claim for benefits is filed. That employer has the right to submit information relevant to the claim before the RRB makes an initial determination on the claim. Benefits may not be paid at this time but the employee will receive a notice and have the right to appeal. In addition, if a claimant's base-year employer is not his or her current employer, the claimant's current employer is also notified. The RRB must also notify the claimant's base-year employer each time benefits are paid to a claimant. While the base-year employer may protest the decision to pay benefits, such a protest does not prevent the timely payment of benefits. However, a claimant may be required to repay benefits if the employer's protest is ultimately successful. The employer also has the right to appeal an unfavorable decision to the RRB's Bureau of Hearings and Appeals.

In addition, the RRB checks with other Federal agencies and all 50 States, as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, to detect fraudulent benefit claims, and with physicians to verify the accuracy of medical statements supporting sickness benefit claims.

continued on page 19



MIKE EFAW
*National
Legislative Director*

- Rail Safety • Sequestration of Benefits
- Sick Days • Supply Chain & PSR
- Appropriations Bill

Rail safety bills in both the United States Senate and House of Representatives seem to have lost any traction they had after the catastrophic derailment in East Palestine, Ohio,

and the rash of news-worthy derailments following it earlier this year. It is a shame how these derailments have been so quickly forgotten even though they continue to happen daily. Hopefully, there will not be another horrific derailment before meaningful safety legislation is adopted and signed into law.

S.576/H.R.1674 — Railway Safety Act of 2023: Initially, S.576 aimed to prevent more disasters like East Palestine and other derailments that have been occurring in recent years. This bill started out as a step in the right direction for securing the safety of our industry in the future. However, this piece of legislation does not seem to be able to reach the 60-vote threshold to get it passed out of the Senate. H.R.1674 is out there but no further progress has been made.

It is rare for rail labor and rail management to be on the same page and agreeable over anything. That is why the REEF Act should be an easy lift for any member of Congress to vote in favor of the legislation.

S.1274/H.R.2785 — Railroad Employee Equity and Fairness Act (REEF Act): The REEF Act would eliminate sequester cuts to railroad unemployment and sickness benefits that have stripped sick and unemployed railroad workers and their families of essential financial support for over a decade. A call to your Senator's and Representative's offices could help push this important legislation across the finish line and put it on the President's desk to sign into law.

While agreements on most railroads have been made to get Signalmen sick days for when they need them, we

still have brothers and sisters working without any way to take time off for illness. Most sick day agreements have been made with little to no concessions. The BRS is having issues on some lines of road to secure sick days without being asked for concessions. In one instance, a railroad is asking for at least one major concession that our brothers and sisters do not deserve to be asked to give up for the same or similar sick day agreement on other railroads where there were no such requests for concessions.

While we are pleased that sick day agreements have been obtained for some Signalmen, we are supporting legislation that will guarantee at least seven sick days for all railroad employees.

S.1664/H.R.3409 — Healthy Families Act: Signalmen lacking access to sick leave are forced to make untenable choices between getting a paycheck and keeping their jobs on the one hand, and caring for their own and their family's health on the other. This bill, if passed, will allow workers in businesses with 15 or more employees to earn up to seven job-protected paid sick days each year to be used to recover from their own illnesses, access preventive care, provide care to a sick family member, or attend school meetings related to a child's health condition or disability.

The bill includes a simple method for calculating accrued sick time. Workers would earn a minimum of one hour of paid sick time for every 30 hours worked, up to 56 hours per year, unless the employer selects a higher limit. The bill also allows employers to require certification if an employee uses more than three paid sick days in a row. For victims of domestic violence, the certification may be from a law enforcement officer, victim advocate, or a court order. Additionally, the bill allows for employers to use their existing policies if they meet the minimums set forth for time, types of use and method of use, and gives employers flexibility as to how they define a "year" for the purposes of sick time accrual.

The Healthy Families Act goes further than the Agreements we have been forced to make. We will continue to fight until every BRS member has at least seven sick days.

After the recent breakdown of the supply chain that spurred Agency and Congressional hearings, Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Roger Marshall (R-KS) are trying to tackle issues found in the hearing testimony and in stakeholder comments that are hampering the supply chain. They are working together by introducing legislation to help strengthen the supply chain and help keep any breakdowns of it from happening again.

S.2071 — Reliable Rail Service Act: This bill would amend Section 11101 of Title 49, United States Code, to ensure that rail carriers provide transportation or service in a manner that fulfills the shipper's reasonable service requirements.

We are hoping this bill will help with the frustration Signalmen have experienced with Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) as it tackles service issues in the Rail Industry.

Finally, what can I say about the appropriations bills that affect us most as railroad employees? They are not worth the paper on which they are printed. The bills from the Transportation Housing and Urban Development (THUD) and Labor Health and Human Services Subcommittees are not just simply an undeserved and humiliating slap on the face, but an outright attack on railroaders across the U.S.

Amtrak — The THUD Subcommittee bill, if passed by the House Floor, would be a 67% decrease in funding from FY23 levels. This can lead to furloughs and or separations of up to 10,000 employees according to Amtrak's initial estimates. It will additionally affect long-distance train service, ridership, capitol projects, and the economy, not to mention the negative effect it would have on the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) Trust Fund losing so many employees now paying into the system.

Speaking about Railroad Retirement, the Labor Health and Human Services (LHHS) Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over the RRB, passed its bill out of Committee with a \$25 million dollar reduction in funding for the RRB from FY23 levels. \$25 million dollars does not seem like much in the grand scheme of things;

however, according to RRB estimates, there would be a reduction of approximately 167 full-time employees. If this bill passes out of the House, it will send a message that the Representatives who vote for this legislation want railroaders to endure longer call response times, with RRB estimating its customers (us) having to wait double the wait times they already endure due to the already shorthanded staffing. Processing and wait times for retirement, disability, and sickness benefits would increase drastically affecting those who need the help most. It will also hamstring the RRB's efforts in their IT modernization.

What is most worrisome if this bill passes the House, is it will set precedent for future bills, and be used to pass future THUD and LHHS bills aimed at attacking railroad workers.

If these bills stand, we will have to fight against funding cuts the same, or similar to, these in the future. I am currently scheduling meetings to get this bill out of our way so we can pass good bills from THUD and LHHS that help railroaders, not try to destroy us. It would be helpful for you to call your Senators and Representatives to voice your displeasure and concerns over the attacks on railroad workers and lack of funding for transportation.

The BRS will continue to track legislation that is important and impactful to Signalmen through the 118th Congress. The best interest of our members is at the forefront of all our efforts on Capitol Hill. Remember to visit our website and follow us on Facebook. ■

DID YOU KNOW?

TITLE 49: TRANSPORTATION

§236.1 PLANS, WHERE KEPT

As required for maintenance, plans shall be kept at all interlockings, automatic signals and controlled points. Plans shall be legible and correct. ■

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES



President Mike Baldwin speaks at the press conference for the introduction of the Healthy Families Act (S.1664/H.R.3409).



CSXTN General Chairman Dan Jacopino poses with Senate Majority Leader Schumer at the press conference for the Healthy Families Act (S.1664/H.R.3409).



President Baldwin greets BRS General Chairmen Carlton Everett (SJGC) and Dan Jacopino (CSXTN), and BRS member Nick Lopes from NYSW—(LL-240) who came to Washington, D.C. to take part in the press conference for the Healthy Families Act (S.1664/H.R.3409), and also to take part in the democratic process and join in meetings with members of Congress to explain the state of safety on the railroads for Rail Labor’s Safety Day on the Hill. BRS members should be pleased that General Chairmen Everett and Jacopino, and Member Nick Lopes made the trip to participate in the event.

We would like to thank all the General Chairmen who got information out to their members regarding this event. We are hopeful more members will join us next year if we are able to get another event like this off the ground.



BRS Officers and Representatives, along with General Chairmen Carlton Everett and Dan Jacopino, and Member Nick Lopes gather with other Organizations at the press conference for the introduction of the Healthy Families Act (S.1664/H.R.3409).



Rail Labor's Rail Safety Day on the Hill gave rail labor the opportunity to come to Washington, D.C. and tell members of Congress the status of rail safety from labor's perspective, and not just hear from the railroads and their lobbyists about how great safety is on the tracks. Here, VP-West Cory Claypool, VP-East Doug VanderJagt, and Grand Lodge Rep. Justin Pier visit Senator Ted Cruz and staff at one of the meetings.



VP-West Cory Claypool, VP-East Doug VanderJagt, and Grand Lodge Rep. Justin Pier stop between meetings to get a selfie in front of the Senate side of the U.S. Capitol between meetings at the Rail Labor Safety Day on the Hill.



BRS VP-East Doug VanderJagt speaks at a press conference at the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held by U.S. Senators Mike Braun (R-IN) and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to promote seven days paid sick leave for railroaders.



VP-West Cory Claypool brought his son Jimmy to the Rail Safety Day on the Hill. Jimmy wanted to let Congress know how important it is for railroaders to have a safe work environment and paid time off to spend time with their families.



LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES



Congressman Sean Casten (D-IL-06) listens intently to Brother Paul Ostrowski as he explains how retarders work in rail car humping operations.



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) having some laughs with Congressman Marc Molinaro (R-NY-19) at a reception held by the Republican Main Street Partnership.



During a recent visit to the Belt Railway of Chicago, Congressman Sean Casten (D-IL-06) met with Local 194 President Paul Ostrowski to discuss hump yard operations. As part of his effort to learn more about rail in his district, Congressman Casten specifically requested to hear from BRS Signalmen.



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) getting a picture with Congressman Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY-04) at a fundraiser reception for the Congressman.



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) talking with Congressman Andrew Garbarino (R-NY-02) about various issues concerning the LIRR at a reception held by the Republican Main Street Partnership.



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) speaking with Congressman Nick LaLota (R-NY-01) regarding concerns BRS members are facing on the LIRR at a reception held by the Republican Main Street Partnership.



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) having a conversation with Congressman Andrew Garbarino (R-NY-02) at a fundraiser reception for Representative D'Esposito (R-NY-04).



BRS General Chairman Mike Sullivan (LIRR) explaining BRS members' issues with Congressman Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY-04) at a fundraiser reception for the Congressman.



National Legislative Director Mike Efaw poses for a quick shot with Senior Advisor to the President of the United States, Mitch Landriau, after a meeting on rail infrastructure specifically the Brightline West High-Speed Rail Project. Landriau's role is coordinating implementation of the historic bipartisan infrastructure law. In this role, he will oversee the most significant and comprehensive investments for infrastructure in generations, and BRS is ensuring our voice is heard and the Advisor does not leave rail at the thin end on these investments.



Grand Lodge Representative Jeremy Farr, Congressman Sean Casten (D-IL-06), Local 194 President Paul Ostrowski, and National Legislative Director Mike Efaw pose with Congressman Casten at the BRC. The BRS would like to thank the BRC for hosting Representative Casten, the BRS, and the other Rail Labor Unions for this tour and opportunity to inform the Congressman about some of the work Signalmen perform.



On a hot and humid day in Washington, D.C., National Legislative Director Mike Efaw engaged in a conversation with Congressman Greg Casar (D-TX-35) amidst the Congressman's "Thirst Strike" on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. The strike, which occurred on July 25, 2023, aimed to raise awareness about the urgent need for a federal workplace heat standard that includes provisions for rest and water breaks. Currently, there are no federal regulations that protect workers from extreme heat conditions.

Notably, Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed House Bill 2127 on June 7, 2023, which some have dubbed the "Death Star" law.

OBITUARIES

RODNEY “SHANE” S. COLE—active member of **LOCAL 162**. Brother Cole had 19 years of service with the Canadian National Railway. Brother Cole was a Signal Inspector at Fulton, Kentucky, at the time of his passing. Brother Cole served as Local President.

ROBERT “BOB” H. DIEHL, SR.—retired member of **LOCAL 130**. Brother Diehl retired in 2005 after 14 years of service with the Chicago & North Western Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Diehl was a Signaller at the time of his retirement. Brother Diehl is a U.S. Navy Veteran.

JAMES G. GLOWACKI—retired member of **LOCAL 225**. Brother Glowacki retired in 2006 after 49 years of service with the New York Central Railroad and CSX Transportation. Brother Glowacki was a Signal Maintainer at Buffalo, New York, at the time of his retirement. Brother Glowacki served as Local Chairman and Local President.

RONALD R. HAMEL—retired member of **LOCAL 188**. Brother Hamel retired in 2010 after 14 years of service with the BNSF Railway Company. Brother Hamel was a Signal Maintainer at Wolf Prairie, Montana, at the time of his retirement.

CHESTER W. HAMPTON—retired member of **LOCAL 34**. Brother Hampton retired in 1992 after 28 years of service with the Southern Pacific Railroad. Brother Hampton was a Signal Maintainer at Dunsuir, California, at the time of his retirement.

JOHN “VANCE” V. HIGGINS—retired member of **LOCAL 71**. Brother Higgins retired in 2008 after 30 years of service with the Louisville & Nashville Railroad and CSX Transportation. Brother Higgins was a Signal Foreman at the time of his retirement.

MARK Q. IVES—retired member of **LOCAL 72**. Brother Ives retired in 2019 after 43 years of service with the Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Brother Ives was an Electronic Tech Inspector at Centertown, Missouri, at the time of his retirement.

FRANK E. JONES—retired member of **LOCAL 225**. Brother Jones retired in 2015 after 40 years of service with Conrail and CSX Transportation. Brother Jones was a Maintainer Testman at Buffalo, New York, at the time of his retirement. Brother Jones served as Vice General Chairman, Local President, Local Chairman, and Recording-Financial Secretary.

RONNY KING—retired member of **LOCAL 49**. Brother King retired in 2007 after 38 years of service with the Central of Georgia and Norfolk Southern Railways. Brother King was a Signal Maintainer at Columbus, Georgia, at the time of his retirement. Brother King served as Local President, Local Chairman, and General Committee Trustee. Brother King is a U.S. Army Veteran.

P.E. KIRKPATRICK—retired member of **LOCAL 178**. Brother Kirkpatrick retired in 1985 after 37 years of service with the Louisville & Nashville and Seaboard Systems Railroads. Brother Kirkpatrick was a System Signal Construction Foreman at Birmingham, Alabama, at the time of his retirement. Brother Kirkpatrick served as a Chaplain.

JOHN “BRAD” B. PARKER—retired member of **LOCAL 141**. Brother Parker retired in 2020 after 38 years of service with the Missouri Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Brother Parker was a Maintenance Foreman at the time of his retirement.

ADAM A. ROGOSKI, III—retired member of **LOCAL 141**. Brother Rogoski retired in 2009 after 36 years of service with the Texas and Pacific Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Rogoski was a System Signal Inspector at Ranger, Texas, at the time of his retirement. Brother Rogoski served as Local Chairman and Local Trustee. Brother Rogoski is a U.S. Navy Veteran.

WILBERT “BILL” N. SECREST—retired member of **LOCAL 21**. Brother Secrest retired in 1990 after 40 years of service with the Kansas City Terminal Railway. Brother Secrest was a Signal Maintainer at Kansas City, Missouri, at the time of his retirement. Brother Secrest served as Recording-Financial Secretary. Brother Secrest is a U.S. Navy Veteran.

MARKUS A. SMITH—active member of **LOCAL 16**. Brother Smith had 16 years of service with CSX Transportation. Brother Smith was a Signal Maintainer at Union City, Georgia, at the time of his passing.

ROBERT “BOB” SMITH—retired member of **LOCAL 19**. Brother Smith retired in 2006 after 35 years of service with the Southern Pacific and Union Pacific Railroads. Brother Smith was a Signal Maintainer at Bloomington, California, at the time of his retirement.

OBITUARIES

JAMES “JIM” H. SPIEGEL—retired member of **LOCAL 98**. Brother Spiegel retired in 2007 after 41 years of service with the Chicago Great Western and Chicago & North Western Railways, and the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Spiegel was a Signal Maintainer at Fort Dodge, Iowa, at the time of his retirement. Brother Spiegel served as Local Trustee and on the Grievance Committee.

DAVID W. WERMAGER—retired member of **LOCAL 98**. Brother Wermager retired in 2014 after 35 years of service with the Chicago & North Western Railway and the Union Pacific Railroad. Brother Wermager was a Signal Inspector at Des Moines, Iowa, at the time of his retirement. Brother Wermager served as First Vice President.

JEFFREY “JEFF” A. ZIMMERMAN—retired member of **LOCAL 94**. Brother Zimmerman retired in 2019 after 9 years of service with CSX Transportation. Brother Zimmerman was a Signal Maintainer at Ottawa, Ohio, at the time of his retirement. Brother Zimmerman is a U.S. Navy Veteran.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Please notify Grand Lodge of the passing of BRS members.

email: membership@brs.org

RAILROAD RETIREMENT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

continued from page 11

12. How long does it take to receive payment?

Under the RRB’s Customer Service Plan, if an employee files an application for unemployment or sickness benefits, the RRB will release a claim form or a denial letter within 10 days of receiving his or her application. If a claim for subsequent biweekly unemployment or sickness benefits is filed, the RRB will certify a payment or release a denial letter within 10 days of the date the RRB receives the claim form. Claimants who are entitled to benefits will generally be paid within one week of that decision.

However, some benefit claims may take longer to handle than others, especially if they are more complex, or if an RRB office requires information from other people or organizations to make a decision. If a claimant does not receive a decision notice or payment within the specified time period, he or she may expect an explanation for the delay and an estimate of the time required to make a decision.

Claimants who think an RRB office made the wrong decision about their benefits have the right to ask for review and to appeal. They will be notified of these rights each time an unfavorable decision is made on their claims.

13. How are payments made?

Railroad unemployment and sickness benefits are paid by direct deposit to an employee’s bank, savings and loan, credit union, or other financial institution. First-time applicants for unemployment and sickness benefits will be asked to provide information needed for direct deposit enrollment.

More information is available by visiting RRB.gov, clicking on **FAQ**, and then selecting **Unemployment and Sickness Benefits**, or by calling an RRB office toll-free at 1-877-772-5772. ■

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:

45 YEARS OF SERVICE

Carlton Everett _____ 110
David Feaster _____ 1

40 YEARS OF SERVICE

Mitch Jolly _____ 206

35 YEARS OF SERVICE

Jerry Price _____ 183
Joe Wurzauf _____ 188
Lonnie Burns _____ 126
Mike Ogrin _____ 188
Steven Fisher _____ 229
Thomas Joyce _____ 5
Tom Fonden _____ 60
Tom Fontaine _____ 87

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

Bill Carter, Jr. _____ 55
Brad Boyett _____ 141
Brad Hughes _____ 72
Brian Crosier _____ 55
Brian Watson _____ 71
Charles Brasher _____ 71
Charles Moyers _____ 20
Cole Clemens _____ 141
Eddie Heller _____ 110
Glenn Jones _____ 31
Jackson Smith _____ 137
John Leimann _____ 121

30 YEARS OF SERVICE

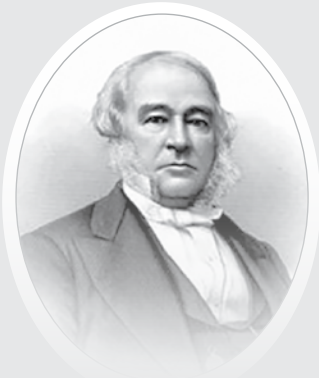
JR Welsh _____ 173
Keith Harris _____ 31
Keith Thornton _____ 141
Kevin Walker _____ 20
Kostas Sarris _____ 84
Larry Estell _____ 49
Leroy Anderson _____ 161
Matthew McGee _____ 208
Michael Burks _____ 13
Michael Efav _____ 31
Michael Griffin _____ 55
Patrick Burns _____ 226
Peter Buchholz _____ 154
Randy Wilkes _____ 16
Richard Pugh _____ 141
Richard Saltsman _____ 2
Rodney Sullivan _____ 172
Steve Marlow _____ 208
Tony Przewoznik _____ 194
Tracey Tompkins _____ 157
Travis Henderson _____ 141
Travis Watring _____ 72
Trevor Ratzlaff _____ 33

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Anthony Bueno _____ 92
Billy Belcher _____ 141
Bob Rogers _____ 194
Brandon Simpson _____ 129
Brian Burnell _____ 138
Brien Isom _____ 120

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Bryan Spaulding _____ 188
Byron Alexander _____ 106
Carmen LaFalce _____ 225
Charles Douglas _____ 136
Christopher Davis _____ 49
Dennis Crews _____ 198
Dino Pellegrino _____ 120
Donald Westbrook _____ 138
Douglas Dygert _____ 206
Douglas Sellards _____ 2
Edmond Comeaux _____ 156
Eduardo Cenicerros, Jr. _____ 182
Edward Legg _____ 56
Eric McDonald _____ 91
Eric Selby _____ 156
Frank Riley _____ 161
Garland Smith _____ 129
George Riley, Jr. _____ 62
Glenn Arrington _____ 183
Gordon Gribble _____ 16
Grant Pearson _____ 141
Herbert Bree, III _____ 56
James Andreas _____ 161
James Exum _____ 141
Jason Shelton _____ 136
Jeff Laws _____ 19
Jim Moore _____ 77
Jim Ward _____ 53
John Craven _____ 111
John Hendershot _____ 31
Josh Floyd _____ 136
Keith Ferry _____ 183



The Thomson Foundation

Financial Assistance for Daughters of Deceased Railroad Employees

John Edgar Thomson was the third president of the Pennsylvania Railroad and led the company from 1852 to 1874. Although John

Thomson never had children of his own, he often pondered on the difficulties of orphaned girls. In that era, a fatherless boy could usually get a trade school education or find employment; a girl had little opportunity for either.

In his will, Mr. Thomson dedicated a portion of his estate in the form of a trust fund for the education and maintenance of female orphans of railway employees whose fathers may have died while in the discharge of their duties. After his death in 1874, the trust fund was established for the daughters of men killed in railroad service. Subsequently, The John Edgar Thomson Foundation was founded when Mrs. Thomson opened a girl's boarding school in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in December of 1882.

Today, the Foundation continues its objective by providing aid to a substantial number of girls throughout the United States in the form of financial assistance and healthcare benefits. To be eligible, the employee must

have been actively employed by any United States railroad at the time of his or her death; the cause does not need to be work related. Eligibility is also dependent on the daughter and the surviving parent remaining unmarried. Family income and expenses are also considered when determining eligibility.

The monthly allowance made under the grant may cover the period from infancy to high school graduation, and in some circumstances to age 24, to assist the grantees that are pursuing a higher education. The Foundation also offers special healthcare benefits.

Funding for the work of the Foundation is completely independent of any railroad. It neither solicits nor receives funds from the public. ■

Further information and applications may be obtained by writing to:

The John Edgar Thomson Foundation

201 S. 18th Street, Suite 318

Philadelphia, PA 19103

Telephone: (215) 545-6083

Fax: (215) 545-5102 • Toll free: (800) 888-1278

Email: sjethomson@aol.com

Website: www.jethomsonfoundation.com

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Kevin Berthelsen-Leon _____	56
L Byers _____	94
Lee Malphus _____	16
Lezlye Bowman _____	84
Marc Landry _____	86
Mark Bitoni _____	185
Matthew Kowalski _____	123
Matthew Smith _____	19
Michael Macias _____	92
Michael Wilson _____	129

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Patrick Gallegos _____	24
Patrick Hennessy _____	5
Perry Reeves _____	84
Philip Delfino, Jr. _____	5
Richard Groleau _____	123
Richard Haugen _____	2
Robert Blair _____	20
Sam Lopez _____	173
Scott Byrd _____	188
Scott Chrzanowski _____	62
Shane Behnk _____	8

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

Stacy Blood _____	141
Steve Schnell _____	119
Steven Maday _____	183
Thomas Freeman _____	53
Todd Conrad _____	8
Tony Arellano _____	8
Vincent Brown _____	16
Vinh Luc _____	241
William Gelmi, Jr. _____	84
William Lambert, III _____	158
William Marzano _____	20

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.

ALABAMA

W.C. Tucker, Jr.
Maples, Tucker & Jacobs, LLC
2001 Park Place North
Suite 1325
Birmingham, AL 35203
Tel. (205) 322-2333
(855) 617-9333
www.mtandj.com

F. Tucker Burge
Burge & Burge, PC
2001 Park Place
Suite 1350
Birmingham, AL 35203
Tel. (205) 251-9000
(800) 633-3733
www.burge-law.com

ARIZONA

Lloyd L. Rabb, III
Rabb & Rabb, PLLC
7442 N. LA Cholla Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85741
Tel. (520) 888-6740
(800) 354-3352
www.1stinjurylaw.com

ARKANSAS

Chris Christy
Christy • Ferguson
201 W. Broadway Street
Suite G12
North Little Rock, AR 72114
Tel. (501) 758-0278

CALIFORNIA

Jay A. Kaplan
Kaplan Law Corporation
1901 Avenue of the Stars
19th Floor
Century City, CA 90067
(800) 552-7526
www.kaplanlawcorp.com

Anthony S. Petru
Hildebrand, McLeod & Nelson
5335 College Avenue
Suite 5A
Oakland, CA 94618
(800) 447-7500
www.bmnlaw.com

COLORADO

Jeffrey Chod
Chod Law Office
P.O. Box 17727
Denver, CO 80217
Tel. (314) 541-5862
www.chodlawfirm.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Larry Mann
Alper & Mann, PC
9205 Redwood Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20817
Tel. (202) 298-9191
(800) 747-6266

FLORIDA

Howard A. Spier
Rossman, Baumberger,
Reboso, & Spier, P.A.
9155 S. Dadeland Boulevard
Suite 1200
Miami, FL 33156
Tel. (305) 900-5493
www.rbrlaw.com

ILLINOIS

F. Daniel Petro
Petro & Harrington, LLC
150 S. Wacker Drive
Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60606
Tel. (312) 332-9596
(800) 472-5729
www.petrofelalaw.com

Daniel J. Downes
Cavanagh Law Group
161 N. Clark Street
Suite 2070
Chicago, IL 60601
Tel. (312) 425-1900
www.cavanaghlawgroup.com

MARYLAND

P. Matthew Darby
Darby Law Group, LLC
201 International Circle
Suite 200
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
Tel. (833) 601-3473
www.darby-lawgroup.com

MASSACHUSETTS

Robert T. Naumes
Naumes Law Group
2 Granite Avenue
Suite 425
Milton, MA 02186
Tel. (617) 227-8444
(844) 826-8445
www.naumeslaw.com

MICHIGAN

Arvin J. Pearlman
Sommers Swartz, PC
1 Towne Square
Suite 1700
Southfield, MI 48076
Tel. (248) 355-0300
(800) 783-0989
www.sommerspc.com

MINNESOTA

Randal W. LeNeave
Hunegs, LeNeave
& Kvas
1000 Twelve Oaks
Center Drive, Suite 101
Wayzata, MN 55391
Tel. (612) 339-4511
(800) 328-4340
www.hklklaw.com

MISSOURI

Gene C. Napier
Hunegs, LeNeave & Kvas
1712 Main Street
Suite 266
Kansas City, MO 64108
Tel. (913) 484-3884

Drew C. Baebler

The Baebler Firm, LLC
11878 Gravois Road
St. Louis, MO 63127
Tel. (314) 270-9900
www.raillaw.com

NEW YORK

Marc Wietzke
Flynn & Wietzke, PC
1205 Franklin Avenue
Garden City, NY 11530
Tel. (516) 877-1234
www.felaattorney.com

OHIO

Andrew J. Thompson, Esquire
Shapero | Roloff Co., L.P.A.
1111 Superior Avenue East
Suite 1310
Cleveland, OH 44114
Tel. (216) 781-1700
(800) 321-9199
www.shaperoroloff.com

PENNSYLVANIA

Michael J. Olley
Coffey, Kaye, Myers & Olley
Two Bala Plaza
Suite 718
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
Tel. (610) 668-9800
(800) 334-2500
www.ckmo.com

Don P. Palermo
Palermo Law Offices
111 North Olive Street
Media, PA 19063
Tel. (215) 499-2957
www.palermolaw.org

TEXAS

Weldon Granger
Jones Granger

Robert M. Tramuto
Jones Granger
10000 Memorial Drive
Suite 888
Houston, TX 77210
Tel. (713) 668-0230
(800) 231-3359
www.jonesgranger.com

VIRGINIA

Willard J. Moody, Jr.
The Moody Law Firm
500 Crawford Street
Suite 200
Portsmouth, VA 23704
Tel. (757) 393-4093
(800) 368-1033
www.moodyrllaw.com

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:

*Michael S. Baldwin, President
Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen
917 Shenandoah Shores Road
Front Royal, VA 22630-6418*

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.

BENEFITS DIRECTORY

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

Your Track to Health

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 only applies to employees under National Handling.)

HEALTH & WELFARE PLANS

National Health & Welfare Plan — GA-23000

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

United Healthcare

1-800-842-9905

www.myuhc.com

Retiree Claims — GA-46000

UnitedHealthcare

1-800-842-5252

Retiree Supplemental — GA-23111

UnitedHealthcare

1-800-842-5252

Aetna

1-800-842-4044

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

Railroad Dedicated Unit

1-866-267-3320

www.bcbs.com

LIFE INSURANCE

MetLife

1-800-310-7770

www.metlife.com

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE ABUSE BENEFITS

United Behavioral Health

For treatment, claims or inquiries call:

1-866-850-6212

www.liveandworkwell.com

ACCESS CODE: Railroad

SUPPLEMENTAL SICKNESS BENEFITS

The Hartford

1-800-205-7651

<https://abilityadvantage.thehartford.com>

VISION BENEFITS

EyeMed

Member Support

1-855-212-6003

www.eyemedvisioncare.com/railroad

DENTAL BENEFITS

Aetna

1-877-277-3368

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

RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD

Automated Help Line

1-877-772-5772

www.rrb.gov

UNION PLUS

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

www.unionplus.org



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
Service T-Shirt (burgundy)								18.00	
Service T-Shirt (grey)								15.00	
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

SIGNALMAN'S STORE



BURGUNDY



GRAY



BLUE



WHITE



GRAY

SERVICE & SOLIDARITY T-SHIRT

Graphic Shown Imprinted on Back of Shirt. BRS Logo on Front of Shirt.

OXFORD SHIRTS



BROWN CANVAS COAT



BLACK WOOL & LEATHER COAT



NAVY SOFT SHELL JACKET



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

MEETING PHOTOS



Local 84 Meeting • • • • • Woodbridge, New Jersey



Local 14 Meeting • • • • • Durand, Michigan



MEETING PHOTOS



Local 110 Meeting

Tuscumbia, Alabama



Local 161 Meeting

Ute Lake, New Mexico



MEETING PHOTOS



Local 232 Meeting • • • • •

Greenfield, Massachusetts



Local 141 Meeting • • • • •

Weatherford, Texas



Local 198 Meeting • • • • •

Unicoi, Tennessee



MEETING PHOTOS



Local 183 Meeting • • • • •

Chicago, Illinois



MEMBER PHOTOS

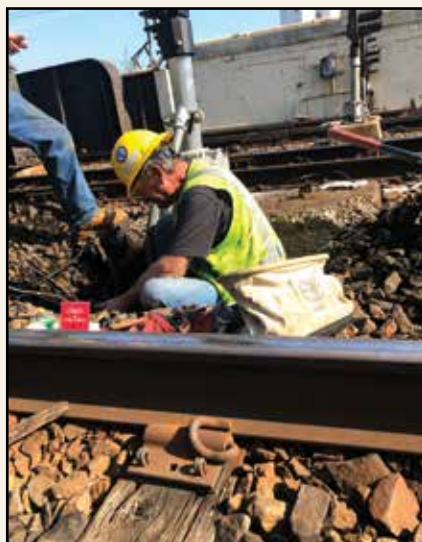


Local 16 Meeting • • • • •

Charleston, South Carolina



Brother Dalessandro Retirement • • • • •



Louis Dalessandro, Jr. began his career in 1976, working for both Conrail and SEPTA during his tenure. Brother Dalessandro retired on July 31, 2023, after 47 years of service. During his career Brother Dalessandro worked as a Test Maintainer, Signal Maintainer 1st Class, and a Construction Gang Signman. We thank Brother Dalessandro for his many years of dedicated service to our Organization.

TRAINING PHOTOS



Local Chairman's Training • • • • • Front Royal, Virginia — June 2023



TRAINING PHOTOS

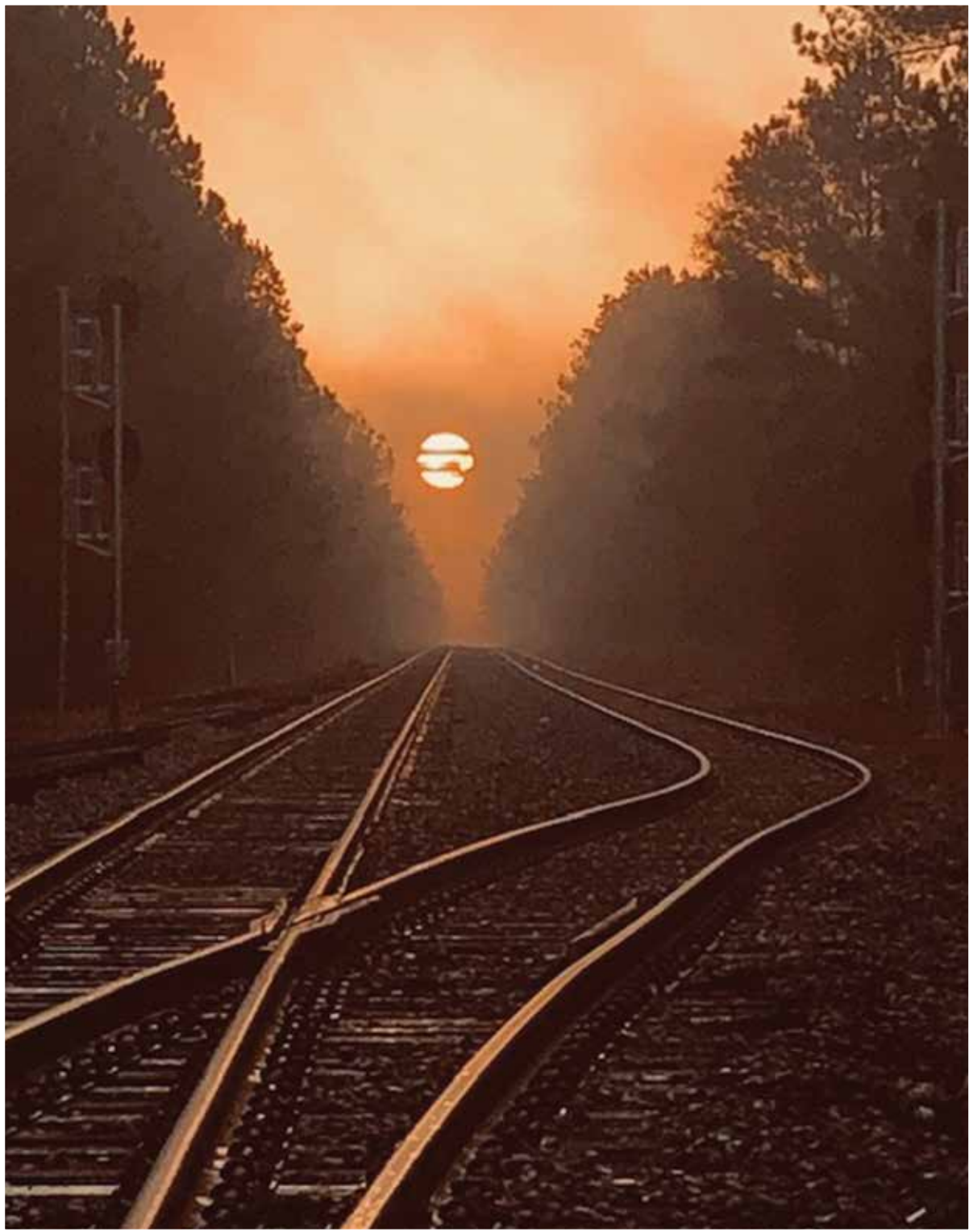


Financial Secretary Training • • • • • Front Royal, Virginia — March 2023



PHOTO CONTEST

WINNER FOR 3RD QUARTER 2023



Sunrise on the Augusta Subdivision, AK 462.6 N.E. Robbins, CSXT.

Photo submitted by Local 16 Member Michael McNiven.

For Members Only

Program eligibility is contingent upon union participation.

PROGRAM	INFORMATION
Accidental Death Insurance	800-393-0864, unionplus.org/accidentinsurance
AT&T Discounts	unionplus.org/att , use discount code 3508840
Auto Buying Service	unionplus.org/autobuying
Auto Insurance	855-666-5797, discount code DJ7 unionplus.org/autoinsurance
Budget Truck Rental	800-561-1157, use discount # 56000127763, unionplus.org/budgettruck
Car Rental Discounts	unionplus.org/carrental
Avis	800-698-5685, use discount # B723700
Budget	800-455-2848, use discount # V816100
Dollar	800-800-4000, use discount # 3042236
Hertz	800-654-2200, use discount # 205666
Payless	800-729-5377, use discount # A071900
Thrifty	800-847-4389, use discount # 3042238
Cash Back Shopping	unionplus.org/cashback
Credit Cards	800-522-4000 (to apply), theunioncard.com
Credit Counseling	877-833-1745, unionplus.org/creditcounseling
Debt Settlement	800-230-2541, unionplus.org/debtsettlement
Everyday Discounts	unionplus.org/discounts
Flower & Gift Discounts	888-667-7779, unionplus.org/flowers
Health Savings	unionplus.org/healthsavings
Vision	unionplus.org/vision
Hearing	unionplus.org/hearing
Dental	unionplus.org/dental
Prescriptions	unionplus.org/prescriptions
Homeowners Insurance	855-666-5797, discount code DJ7 unionplus.org/homeinsurance
Legal Services	unionplus.org/legal
Life Insurance	800-393-0864, unionplus.org/lifeinsurance
Medical Bill Negotiating Service	unionplus.org/billnegotiator
Mortgage Program	unionplus.org/mortgage
Moving Discounts	unionplus.org/movingvans
North American	888-813-9595
Pet Insurance	unionplus.org/pets
Personal Loans	unionplus.org/loans
Real Estate Rewards	800-284-9756, unionplus.org/realestate
Renters Insurance	855-666-5797, discount code DJ7 unionplus.org/rentersinsurance
Save My Home Hotline	866-490-5361, unionplus.org/savemyhome
Scholarship	unionplus.org/scholarships
Senior Term Life	800-393-0864, unionplus.org/lifeinsurance
Vacation Tours	844-868-2685, unionplus.org/tours

