



BLET Auxiliary News

Working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families.

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Becky Schneider, President • Sereena Hogan, Vice President/National Legislative Representative
Anita Caruso, Secretary • Helen Brand, Treasurer • Gina Forman, 1st Vice President • www.bletauxiliary.net

In Memory of Our Beloved Past Grand International President of the Grand International Auxiliary, now the BLET Auxiliary

Lillie Mae Parker, October 3, 1911 - June 30, 2010

*By Bettye Dollar, President, and Jewell Graben, Vice President and
Secretary-Treasurer, Auxiliary 189*

She exemplified her life in the beautiful principles of our order, in a manner which we will never forget. Her record of service will stand as a guiding light for those who remember.

*In our beautiful garden of memory,
You have planted a rose so fair,
A rose of such beauty and fragrance,
Its sweetness fills the air*

*Its fragrance will never be forgotten,
It beauty will stand apart,
We'll cherish your memory always,
And hold it pressed close to our hearts.*

Poem by Sister Emily Denny, for whom Auxiliary 189 is named. This poem was recited at the Tenth Triennial Convention of the GIA to the BLE, held in the Cleveland Hotel, March 24-29, 1947.

Past International President, Sister Lillie Mae Parker, Birmingham, Alabama, passed away on June 30, 2010, at the age of 98. She was a very active member in all of the activities of Emily Denny Auxiliary No. 189, which she founded in 1951. She lived her life to the fullest, and one of her proudest moments was when she was elected as International President of the GIA in 1981. She served in that position until August 1991. Those members who knew her personally used to say that she had GIA blood running through her veins.

Lillie Mae taught school in Union Grove, Alabama, until her marriage to Hobart Parker, an Engineer on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, in 1934. She later became a loving mother to her daughter Jane.

Lillie Mae had a wonderful host of friends and she brought laughter and joy to all the people around her. She was loved and respected by the GIA sisters and the BLE engineers, especially in the Southeast. She was the backbone of the Southeastern Meeting Association Auxiliary for years and was always available when and where she was needed. Her sisters will miss her greatly.

Please remember her daughter, Jane Smith, of Huntsville, Alabama, and her family in your thoughts and prayers.



Lillie Mae Parker - 69 Years' Service

Engineer Hobart runs the train, clickity clack
Wheels turning, flying down the track
Going home to see his mate
Lillie's not there; she scouting for the GIA.

Wheels turning round and round
Not the trains; it's Lillie's, a GIA she's found
Maybe, maybe she says she will be
Another GIA - LIKE ME.

Phones ringing, calls she's made
Can you come tomorrow? she'd say
Meeting begins, we have work to do
Can we, uh, uh, uh, count on you?

Division 189 just wasn't enough
Cause Lillie Mae was hot stuff
To the top she would go
To be Grand President; let the good times roll!

69 years of service, Lillie you gave,
Love, hard work, the GIA road you paved
Dependable, lived and breathed

Auxiliary Helpmate BLE you never shirked
We salute you and honor you for all your work

Doris McKellar, June 14, 2001



From the President:

As the end of my term fast approaches, I would like to take a moment to thank all of you who have made it so successful and rewarding. I appreciate all of the friends I've made at the Regional Conventions, State Legislative Board meetings, and Division meetings. To the National Officers, even though we are not the same group we started out with, I believe we have done a great job in not only doing what was in the best interest of the Auxiliary, but also in promoting the "good of the order."

To the Executive Council, I offer the following thanks: To Sereena, thank you for your counsel, your hard work, your work at various venues promoting the Auxiliary, and your incredible newsletter that put us "on the map." To Anita, thank you for also being there for counsel, for doing your job as National Secretary well, and for stepping up whenever and wherever needed. To Helen, thank you for doing your job as National Treasurer doing your best in handling the Auxiliary finances and bringing us into the 21st Century. To Gina, thank you taking the new position of National Outreach Coordinator, keeping in touch with auxiliaries and those who are interested in moving forward. The entire Executive Council has worked very hard on behalf of the Auxiliary interests and they should be given the accolades they deserve.

While I always try to recognize our National Officers' husbands at every convention, they deserve a great big thank you as well, especially my husband, Larry. Without their support (both literally and figuratively), we would not be able to do our jobs. Before I even ran in 2006, Larry and I made a deal – I would quit my job for my term and would devote myself to Auxiliary work. That would about coincide with his eligibility for retirement. Now that my term is ending, I will go back to the working world because, after all, I need to work on my retirement too. God bless all those spouses out there who put up with the Auxiliary business interrupting their lives on behalf of the National Auxiliary.

To update you on the Auxiliary front, we recently organized a new auxiliary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Because of a flight snafu that delayed me by a day, Sereena filled in and organized our newest Auxiliary, Three Rivers Auxiliary 335, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania immediately prior to the EUMA Convention held there this year. We still have a couple of others in the wings – Pocatello, Idaho; and Ennis, Tennessee; and interest from Bakersfield, California.

As I write this update, our final regional convention of the season will occur in a couple of weeks in San Antonio, Texas. Following the convention, the Auxiliary will be represented by Sereena and I at the Quadrennial Convention of the Illinois State Legislative Board in Chicago, then it's off to Reno to prepare for our 1st Quadrennial Convention.

For those who are elected delegates to the convention, or members interested in obtaining information about the convention, including our agenda and resolutions submitted for proposed changes to the bylaws, please visit our website. A number of areas have been updated since the convention section of the website was created, and we will continue to update it as needed all the way up to the convention, so check back often. Delegates, please be sure to bring with you to the convention the resolutions mailed to you by our National Secretary, Anita Caruso. National officers need to be sure they email their reports to me no later than September 22, 2010.

A last note of thanks to the Western Region General Chairmen's Association for their decision to fund two \$1,000 scholarships for the benefit of the children of the IWC and SWCM convention regions.

We are still in the process of selling our new cookbook, *Main Line Cooking II* at the regional conventions and will have them available for sale at the National Convention. If you have not yet ordered your copy, please use the order form in this newsletter, or you can go online and print an order form from our website. If your auxiliary would like to request cookbooks to sell on behalf of the National Auxiliary, please call or e-mail either Anita Caruso or myself. We also have a limited number of copies of the first edition, *Main Line Cooking*, which is already a collectors item. Both make great Christmas gifts for a very reasonable price, and the proceeds go to support the efforts of the Auxiliary in our mission to support the BLET.

Again, thank you all for a wonderful experience as a national officer, allowing me to meet so many of our great brothers and sisters and help in our efforts to make a difference. Please keep Lillie Mae's family and all railroaders in your prayers, allowing for them to return home safely, and for our military and their families as they continue to fight for our freedoms.

In Sisterhood,

Becky Schneider, National President. BLET Auxiliary
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Welcome Three Rivers Auxiliary No. 335 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Three Rivers Auxiliary 335 was organized on Sunday, August 8, 2010, in a brief ceremony held at the Sheraton Union Square in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, just prior to the Eastern Union Meeting Association Meeting. Due to President Becky Schneider's airline delays, Vice President Sereena Hogan led the organizational meeting and installed Tricia Sabatula as the President, and Connie Wichelman as the Secretary of the new auxiliary. The other officers will be installed at a later date by President Sabatula. This auxiliary has received donations from various sources and is already planning to organize a picnic in their area for BLET members and their families.

We wish them all the best in building their membership and getting their auxiliary established.



President Becky Schneider pinned the Auxiliary Pin on Tricia Sabatula, President of Auxiliary 335, at the EUMA on August 11, 2010, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Winslow, AZ Auxiliary 134: Small but Motivated

By Lynne Sawyer, Auxiliary 134 President

Auxiliary 134, organized in Winslow, Arizona, in October 2009 by several highly motivated women has already seen much success. We decided to develop a local scholarship to be awarded to a qualified high school senior. Because we were just getting off our feet, we needed the help of the community. Our Vice President, Heather Carrell, hit the pavement and got donations from several local businesses. We set up a raffle and, once again, the kind people in our community opened their hearts and wallets to donate to our cause. In conjunction with BNSF and BLET Division 134, we held an Employee Appreciation day on April 10, 2010. We set up a locomotive engine and allowed railroaders and their families tours of the engine. We served hot dogs and soda and auxiliary members donated baked goodies for everyone who attended. Several people were kind enough to donate towards our scholarship fund.



We were able to award two scholarships valued at \$250 dollars each to help with college expenses for Rachel Morehead, daughter of Bill (Div. 134) and Charlie Morehead, who will attend Arizona State University, and Levi Smith, son of Shawn (Div. 134) and Ruth Smith, who will attend Phoenix College.



We have high hopes that our upcoming year will be as successful as our inaugural year. We hope to increase our membership, continue with our scholarship fund, and, as always, continue to work closely together with the members of BLET Div. 134 to maintain and improve the quality of life for our engineers and their families.

Photos - Above top: Beth Baca, Devon and Lynne Sawyer, and son Brennan; bottom: Beth Baca, Lynne Sawyer, Heather Carrell, Becky Barris; Right top: Rhett Carrell and family; middle: Heather Carrell and family; bottom: Preston and Lynnissa DeSpain and sons.



Tidbits from YOUR Secretary, Anita J. Caruso



First Quadrennial Convention

All delegates and National Officers should have received their second packet from me by now. This packet contains all the proposed resolutions submitted by the Executive Council and auxiliaries. Please remember to bring all the documents pertaining to the Convention that you have received with you to Reno as we will not have extra copies. If you have not

received your packet by the time you get this newsletter, please contact me and I will see that you get one immediately.

Auxiliary News

I would like to welcome the newest Auxiliary to our organization. At the recent Eastern Union Meeting (EUMA) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, our National Vice President/National Legislative Representative Sereena Hogan organized them on Sunday, August 8, 2010. Auxiliary 335, Three Rivers Auxiliary, has Tricia Sabatula as their new president and we wish them good luck and extend a big welcome from the Auxiliary! If you need help with anything to get your group up and running, please don't hesitate to ask!

I'd also like to welcome these new members who were added to the rosters of our existing Auxiliaries: Welcome to Barbara Parks, newest member of Auxiliary 37 in Little Rock, Arkansas; Patricia Rhodes, newest member to Auxiliary 189 of Birmingham, Alabama; Deborah Cash, Deena Shifflett, Heather Wiest, and Cathy Bagley, newest members to join Auxiliary 6 in Boone, Iowa; and Cammi Lynch who recently joined Auxiliary 591 in El Paso.

Member-at-Large News

A number of new members-at-large (MALs) have recently joined the Auxiliary. Barbie Lynch transferred from Auxiliary 446, Thoreau, New Mexico; Janet Schultz (Associate MAL), transferred from Auxiliary 6, Boone, Iowa; Naomi Muscha transferred from Auxiliary 671, Enderlin, North Dakota. Others who joined as MALs include James F. Wilmesher (Associate MAL) and Kay L. Wilmesher from Centennial, Colorado; Jo Anne Anderson from Parma, Ohio; and Rebecca Cain from Nacogdoches, Texas. We welcome those who are new members and thank those who chose to rejoin the Auxiliary!

In Memoriam

On June 30, 2010, former Grand President Lillie Mae Parker passed away at the age of 98. Sister Parker was a long time member of Auxiliary 189 in Birmingham, Alabama. Please refer to the article on the front page of this issue for more about Lillie Mae. I never had the pleasure of meeting Sister Parker, but from what I've learned from former International Treasurer

Bettye Dollar, she was quite an innovative lady with a lot of passion regarding the Auxiliary. Whoever was lucky enough to have known her was much better for it.

This 'n' That...

We've done quite a bit of traveling this year. Sam and I attended the Southeast Meeting Association (SMA) meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, in June; the International Western Convention (IWC) in Bismarck, North Dakota, in July; and in August we attended the Eastern Union Meeting Associate (EUMA) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. All of these regional conventions were very well attended and a lot of fun. We have one more regional to attend in September—the Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) in San Antonio, Texas. Our last convention trip for this year will be to Reno, Nevada, to attend the first BLET Auxiliary National Quadrennial Convention in early October.

This will be the last article I will be writing as National Secretary. I officially took over this position in December 2001, although I began my duties immediately following the Eighth Quadrennial Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, in September of 2001. This position will be turned over to a new National Secretary on December 1, 2010.

This position has afforded me the opportunity to meet many of the wonderful BLET brothers and sisters who work this special and unique job of locomotive engineer. This is certainly not your typical job, but a job that requires the patience, fortitude, and cooperation of the entire family to make it work properly. I have enjoyed immensely the opportunity to travel around the country meeting the members of the BLET Auxiliary and getting to know the BLET National Officers.

I have been a member of the BLET Auxiliary since 1980. After eight years of belonging to Helen Gould Auxiliary 235 in Osawatomie, Kansas, we moved to Omaha, Nebraska. And then, after seven years of gentle prodding by my husband Sam, I started the process of getting an auxiliary up and running in the Omaha, Nebraska/Council Bluffs, Iowa area. We were organized in September 1995 and have continued to meet monthly for the past 15 years. As you can see, I am a true believer of the benefits of belonging to this organization. The support and camaraderie we've experienced since meeting each other has been invaluable to me and I keep our Auxiliary members updated on all that I learn from attending regional meetings.

It has been my honor and privilege to have served as your National Secretary for the past nine years. At times, things have been rather hectic, and without the support and help from my husband Sam, I would not have been able to do it. He has been and always will be "my rock." I've often told him that if it was not for him and my belief in the Auxiliary, I wouldn't be working so hard to secure a bright future for the organization.

I would like to thank the members of the Executive Council for their hard work and support these past four years. It has been a sincere pleasure working with each of you during my tenure as National Secretary.

A special thanks goes to our National Treasurer, Helen Brand, for all the new technology that she brought to her position and for making my job so much easier in terms of dealing with the finances. Also, a very big debt of gratitude goes to President Schneider for her tremendous work ethic, tenacity, and diligence in keeping this Auxiliary thriving and flourishing toward a great future!

I look forward to seeing my friends in San Antonio, Texas, in mid-September and everyone who will be in Reno, Nevada, in early October. I wish you a beautiful fall season with family and friends.

Happy Thanksgiving, everyone!



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WHOLE BODY VIBRATION INJURIES

by John F. Collins, BLET Designated Legal Counsel

An engineer's cab is his work station where he spends 8 to 12 hours per day when operating a locomotive. During those long hours, the engineer is continuously exposed to lateral motion and whole body vibrations that impact the spine. In addition, engineers engaged in switching operations and other tasks often find themselves in awkward and stressful body postures. These vibrational forces and continuous lateral motion are often made worse by locomotive seating that is not maintained and not designed to handle the rugged environment of a locomotive cab.

Occupational medical studies, including those conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), have established that locomotive engineers experience a higher rate of spine deterioration and spinal injuries than those of a control group of civil engineers who work similar hours over a similar number of years.

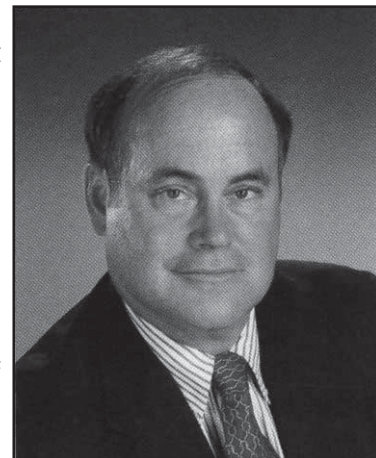
Questionnaires filled out by BLET locomotive engineers in a union-sponsored study established that neck pain, back pain, and other spinal problems are common complaints. In many cases, these injuries are causally related to the type of seats on the locomotive, as well as track conditions, substandard accommodations away from home, and adverse whole body vibration on the locomotive.

The Code of Federal Regulations promulgated under the Federal Rail Safety Act and codified at 49 CFR §229 Locomotive Safety Standards clearly sets forth prohibitions against the railroads from using unsafe locomotives in active rail service. 49 CFR §229.7 and §229.45 specifically prohibit the railroads from using any locomotive that "creates an unnecessary risk of personal injury" to the engineer or his crew. 49 CFR §229.119(a) specifically provides that locomotive cab seats must be securely

mounted and braced. Loose, wobbly seats that offer no spinal protection are not acceptable under the safety code and create a health risk.

As Designated BLET Legal Counsel, I have been in the forefront of holding railroads accountable for the ride quality of their locomotives, the condition of their seats, and unacceptable track conditions. In fact, our firm had one of the first verdicts in the country in a case that alleged an occupational spinal injury due to whole body vibration and defective locomotive seats. To this day, we continue to hold the railroads accountable for failing to maintain their locomotives and provide adequate seating.

If you have any questions concerning spinal injuries that you attribute to unsafe locomotives and inadequate seating, please get to a reputable doctor and please feel free to call my office, Collins, Collins & Donoghue, P.C., at 1-800-933-8195. We also specialize in all types of railroad trauma cases. If we can be of service, we hope you will call. Your family's future may depend on it.



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Legislative Update

By Sereena Hogan, National Legislative Representative



If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.

—Maya Angelou

With our country facing numerous serious issues that require thoughtful, vibrant leadership, our Congress is in deep trouble. We need a Congress that will enact effective and transformative legislation. Instead we have a Congress that is gridlocked. Both Republicans and Democrats need help reaching across the aisle to engage in meaningful debate and turn important bills into sound laws. Perhaps, as suggested in a June 18 article from the *Washington Post* by L. Michael Hager, President Emeritus of the Education for Employment Foundation, when senators or representatives find themselves locked into irreconcilable positions on issues of national importance, we need some form of third-party mediation to help overcome the stalemate. It's definitely something to think about.

HOUSE PASSES FY 2011 TRANSPORTATION-HUD APPROPRIATIONS BILL

On July 29, the House passed the FY 2011 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Bill, H.R. 5850, by a vote of 251-167. The bill provides \$1.4 billion, \$400 million above the request, to expand and improve intercity passenger rail and develop a robust national high speed rail system that will create jobs and reinvigorate our manufacturing base. With regard to Amtrak, the bill provides \$1.77 billion, \$201.9 million above 2010 and \$151.5 million above the request, to make capital investments, including improvements to Amtrak's fleet. The increase of \$201.9 million above 2010 will create 1,130 additional jobs. The bill also provides \$11.3 billion, \$500 million above 2010 and \$575 million above the President's request, to support bus and rail projects, including capital expenditures. The increased investment of \$500 million in public transportation

above 2010 in this bill will create 20,000 new jobs for transit workers around the country.

MOBILIZATION AT WORK FOR AMTRAK!

Many thanks to all of you who called your congressmen in late July to request that they refuse to support an amendment that would have removed over \$1 billion in operating capital from the amount included for Amtrak in the 2011 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Bill, H.R. 5850. Other connected amendments introduced by Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-TX), Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX), and Rep. Michelle Bachman (R-MN), would have prohibited any funds from being used to subsidize sleeper class service on any long-distance Amtrak routes; targeted funding for loan and debt repayment, which would eventually dismantle and destroy major train routes; and reduced Amtrak's operating grants by \$120 million. The amendments were combined into one specific amendment introduced by Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AZ), which was defeated 129-293 in a late night session of the House of Representatives on July 29.

We are grateful to Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Congresswoman Corrine Brown (D-FL) who spoke out in support of Amtrak, as well as to all of you who called your Representatives urging their support for HR 5850 and against measures designed to kill Amtrak. This was a great demonstration of our mobilization networks (both the BLET and BLET Auxiliary) in action!

For a complete list of those 129 representatives who voted in favor the amendment, go to: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2010/roll494.xml>. You might want to be aware of who they are and how they stand on these important issues should they ask for your support in the near future.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

On August 8, I sent a legislative alert to all on my e-mail list regarding a proposed amendment to the Family Medical Leave

Act (FMLA). House Resolution 5944. This measure was introduced in the House of Representatives on July 29 to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act to clarify eligibility requirements for railroad workers. The FMLA currently does not address the unique working conditions of railroad operating employees. Rail workers may not always meet the minimum criteria of 1,250 hours worked in the previous 12-month period prior to applying for leave, as set forth in the current FMLA regulations. Under the proposed changes to the FMLA, the time that railroad operating crews are required to **be available** for work will be included in the total hours worked per year, thus making them more likely to meet the FMLA eligibility criteria.

BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman is asking for information about any BLET members who have been denied FMLA leave for the reason mentioned above. Please either send any information you may have directly to the BLET Legislative Office in Washington, D.C., by e-mail at tolman@ble-t.org or by regular mail to Mr. Tolman at the National Legislative Office, 25 Louisiana Ave. NW, Washington, D.C., 20001.

Many thanks to those of you have already responded to this request and provided us with your personal experiences regarding the denial of FMLA due to the lack of hours actually worked in order to qualify. These personal accounts will help the BLET Legislative Department build its case in favor of the passage of this amendment.

HIGH SPEED RAIL

On July 1, the House Appropriations Subcommittee approved the FY 2011 appropriations bill, which contains \$1.4 billion for high speed and intercity passenger rail grants. This amount is \$400 million more than the President's request; however, it is much less than the \$2.5 billion provided last year.

The American High Speed Rail Alliance (AHSRA), whose board is chaired by former

Rep. Al Swift (D-Wash), who is known as the "Father of High Speed Rail," recently named a dozen prominent figures and leaders of the transportation industry to the board. Amongst those appointed to serve on this board is our own BLET Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman. The mission of AHSRA is to advocate for the development and implementation of a high speed passenger rail network in the United States. Vice President Tolman will serve as a persuasive advocate for the interests of the BLET and all of rail labor. One of the goals of the group is to ensure that workforce development initiatives identify, train, and support American workers to design, build, operate, and maintain America's high speed and regional passenger network. Additionally, the Alliance will leverage its resources and relationships to:

- Support the proposed \$50 billion authorization for High Speed Rail in the SAFETEA-LU re-authorization legislation, and work with Congress to identify a dedicated source of funding to appropriate towards this authorization;
- Modify existing federal funding and financing programs such as RRIF, TIFIA, and Build America Bonds to ensure eligibility for High Speed Rail investments;
- Promote innovative tools that incentivize private sector participation in High Speed Rail financing including public/private partnerships and the development of a national infrastructure investment bank;
- Support enactment of freight rail investment tax credits that benefit the development of High Speed Rail;
- Advocate for a \$4 billion annual appropriation from the Transportation Appropriations account for High Speed Rail development;
- Develop a dedicated, and predictable funding source for High Speed Rail to allow effective long-term planning and develop a sustainable market for High Speed Rail vendors and service providers;
- Support full funding of Amtrak; and
- Be a partner in industry efforts to sensibly and cost-effectively implement safety regulations, such as Positive Train Control (PTC), while advocating for funding to meet these mandates

and transparency in the development of critical technology.

FRA Funding Applications: As part of the implementation of the National Rail Plan, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has received 77 applications from 25 states, totaling more than \$8.5 billion, for the most recent round of High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) grant funding. The application requests will be considered for funding from the more than \$2.3 billion appropriated in FY 2010. Twenty applications from 10 states, totaling 7.8 billion for high-speed rail corridor development, were also received by the FRA, as well as 57 applications from 18 states, totaling \$700 million for smaller, individual projects within rail corridors that are ready to begin construction. The Department will evaluate the applications to identify which projects will deliver the greatest public benefits and yield the highest return on their investment.

Total funding for the HSIPR program comes from:

- American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009: \$8 billion
- FY 2009 appropriations and remaining funds from a related FY 2008 appropriations funded program: \$95 million
- FY 2010 appropriations: \$2.125 billion (HSIPR service development projects),

245 million (HSIPR individual projects), and \$50 million (HSIPR planning and multi-state proposal activities)

So far, the FRA has awarded more than \$583 million to states for HSIPR.

We must stay vigilant as the National Rail Plan is implemented to ensure that Amtrak plays the central role in the delivery of the rail passenger services envisioned under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and that the recipients of the grants issued under the plan will further ensure that those who build, maintain, and operate these railways are covered under the Railway Labor Act and the Railroad Retirement Act, and that the "Buy America" requirements are applied and enforced consistent with the law.

High Speed Rail Under Attack in Wisconsin: Not everyone is in favor of the high-speed rail projects. Scott Walker, the opposition candidate for Governor in Wisconsin has launched a major attack against passenger rail expansion in that state. Wisconsin was awarded Recovery Act funds to extend the Amtrak Hiawatha from Milwaukee to Madison, and Walker has promised to stop construction if he is elected. He even has a special website for his anti-train rally; however, the Midwest High Speed Rail Association has set up

Political Action Campaign (PAC)

It is critically important that we increase our BLET PAC membership and donations at this time in order to continue to fight for our issues, especially with the recent Supreme Court decision allowing corporate donations to political candidates. The railroads have, in the last year, asked for our support on some of their issues, but we refuse to help them because they won't budge on ours. They lobbied for single-man operations, a 25% tax credit that would not protect workers rights, and against the costs of implementing positive train control. At the same time, the BLET has been working to protect health care benefits, expand FMLA coverage for railroad workers, ensure our employees are protected in high speed rail plans, and fully fund Amtrak.

Currently, about one-third of our BLET membership contributes the PAC, and the PAC takes in about \$33,433 per month, on average. The average dollar per member amount is 88¢ per month. The Legislative Department would like to increase this to an average of \$2.50 per member.

If you are not already donating to the PAC fund through payroll deduction and you can find a way to budget just \$5.00 per month, please encourage your spouse to contact the Division Legislative Representative or Secretary/Treasurer for a PAC application. It's easy, it's painless, and every little bit helps!

an action page for Wisconsin residents to show their support of the rail expansion project at <http://www.midwesthsr.org/Wisconsin>. If you live in Wisconsin, please sign on and send the gubernatorial candidates a message asking them to support high speed passenger rail.

Uniform Technical Standards for High-Speed Rail Cars: As required by the Passenger Railroad Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, a team of experts from the FRA, Amtrak, and state Departments of Transportation, has released the first-ever uniform technical standards for the manufacture of high-speed intercity passenger rail cars. This development will enhance the ability of U.S. manufacturers to more effectively compete in what is expected to rapidly become a promising new industry.

Thank you David Cameron, Assistant to the Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference, for helping to keep us all informed about the progress and pitfalls with the high speed rail initiative in this country.

ZAP THE CAP: RAILROAD LIABILITY CAP AND METROLINK ACCIDENT

In 1997, Congress passed the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act (P.L. 105-134), which established a \$200 million liability cap for damage payouts to train crash victims. Last month, the Metrolink system and its former contractor Connex Railroad filed court papers accepting the maximum \$200 million in liability for the train crash that killed 25 people and injured more than 150 others, many seriously, in September 2008 in Chatsworth, California. According to Representative Elton Gallegly (R-CA) \$200 million is not enough to cover the losses and medical expenses of all the victims. A federal judge is expected to rule on the settlement in October.

Jeromy Ringler, a lead attorney for the victims, stated that the cap is being tested by the magnitude of the crash and the damages far exceed \$200 million. Challenging the constitutional grounds of the cap in court, however, would be difficult and he feels that legislative action would be a more expedient remedy.

Rep. Gallegly, who stated that the law can

be changed retroactively in civil cases, has conferred with California Senator Dianne Feinstein and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Jim Oberstar, urging them to form bipartisan support before introducing a bill before Congress this month to amend the Transportation Reauthorization Bill to clarify the law's original intent and exclude non-governmental entities from the liability cap.

A "Dear Colleague" letter from California Representative Grace Napolitano to Chairman Oberstar is currently circulating on Capitol hill. The letter addresses removing the liability cap for non-governmental rail carriers who have private insurance that would cover such catastrophic accidents. The Auxiliary has been asked to contact our Congressional representatives the first part of September, asking them to sign on to the "Dear Colleague" letter. Once the Chairman determines the best vehicle (bill) onto which to attach this amendment for moving through the House, we will advise our members.

FREIGHT RAIL INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS RECOGNIZED BY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

On July 27, the House passed a resolution submitted by Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL) intended to recognize the many contributions and accomplishments of the freight rail industry and its employees. Shipping goods by rail is one of the most efficient ways to transport freight and the investment of billions of dollars throughout the rail industry has led to decreased fuel consumption and a reduction in harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Freight railroads generate nearly \$265 billion in annual economic activity and support over 1.2 million jobs throughout the United States. Congressman Hare stated that he felt that the formal recognition by Congress of the rail industry and the vital role it continues to play in our country's growth, job creation, and economic recovery is long overdue.

FRA RULE TO STRENGTHEN RAILROAD BRIDGE SAFETY PROGRAMS

As required by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) passed a Final Rule that requires rail track owners to adopt and

follow specific procedures to protect the safety of their bridges and to strengthen federal oversight of bridge maintenance programs. The bridge management programs will include annual inspections of bridges, and the track owners will be required to know the safe capacity load of their bridges and to conduct special inspections if weather or other conditions warrant such additional inspections. Additionally, an inventory of all bridges will be required, bridges will be inspected by the FRA, and bridge management programs will be audited. Railroads will also be required to maintain the design documents of each bridge and to document all repairs, modifications, and inspections of each bridge subject to FRA review. The FRA will be authorized to levy fines of up to \$100,000.

NEW CHAIRMAN APPOINTED FOR NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD

Harry Hoglander has been appointed as the Chairman of the National Mediation Board, effective July 1, 2010. Mr. Hoglander has been a member of the Board since August 2002 and served as Chairman twice before (July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2005 and July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008). Chairman Hoglander, a former pilot for TWA, has an extensive background in the aviation industry and labor relations.

FINAL RULE REISSUED BY NMB REGARDING REPRESENTATION ELECTION PROCEDURE

Effective July 1, the National Mediation Board's voting procedure for representation was changed to add a "No" option and to provide that the majority of votes cast will determine the outcome of an election. The new procedure applies only to applications received on or after July 1, 2010. Previously, the NMB had published its final rule in the Federal Register regarding its Representation Election Procedure on May 11, 2010. However, due to litigation, the effective date of the rule change was changed to July 1.

ATTENTION MEDICARE SUBSCRIBERS!

Beware of fraudulent e-mail alerts: Many false and intentionally misleading e-mails are being circulated throughout

the senior networks, making false claims regarding the taxation of health care benefits. A provision in the health care reform law requires that W-2 forms will now have a category (box) into which employers must put the value of the worker's or retiree's health care, however, it will not be considered taxable income. These fraudulent e-mails started circulating at the end of the health care debate and most likely will continue until the fall elections are over, and then start up again.

Medicare Part D Subscribers: If you or someone you know is covered under Medicare's Part D Drug Plan, you do not have to do anything to receive the \$250 rebate check if you reach the gap (or doughnut hole) in prescription drug coverage costs. Many scams are being

perpetrated on unsuspecting seniors by asking for personal information such as Social Security or Medicare numbers... be aware!

Many thanks to the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc., (NARVRE), and particularly to their National Legislative Director Gary Faley, for helping to keep us informed as to issues that affect Railroad Retirement and Medicare.

Sereena Hogan can be reached by phone at (520) 297-0944; by mail at 8720 N. Myrtle Dr., Tucson, Arizona 85704, or by e-mail at vp3sereena@aol.com.

Summary of Legislative Issues Requiring Action:

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

- Please encourage your representatives to support the proposed amendment to the FMLA to allow the time that railroad operating crews are required to be available for work to be included in the total hours worked per year so that they are more likely to meet the FMLA eligibility criteria of 1,250 hours worked in a 12-month period. (See full story on page 6).

Zap the Cap: Please encourage your congressional representatives to encourage them to sign on to the "Dear Colleague" letter from California Rep. Grace Napolitano to address the removal of the liability cap for non-governmental rail carriers. (full story on page 8).

One Day at a Time

(submitted by Past President Onita Wayland)

- The most useless thing to do - Worry
- The greatest joy - Giving
- The greatest loss - Loss of self respect
- The most satisfying work - Helping others
- The ugliest personality trait - Selfishness
- The most endangered species - Dedicated leaders
- The greatest "shot in the arm" - Encouragement
- The greatest problem to overcome - Fear
- Most effective sleeping pill - Peace of mind
- The most crippling failure disease - Excuses
- The most powerful force in life - Love
- The most dangerous pariah - A gossip
- The world's most incredible computer - The brain
- The worst thing to be without - Hope
- The deadliest weapon - The tongue
- The two most power-filled words - "I can"
- The greatest asset - Faith
- The most worthless emotion - Self pity
- The most prized possession - Integrity
- The most beautiful attire - A smile
- The most powerful channel of communication - Prayer
- The most contagious spirit - Enthusiasm
- The most important thing in life - GOD
- Prayer - the perfect wireless connection*

HAVE A BLESSED DAY!



1st Quadrennial Convention of the BLET Auxiliary Agenda



(Subject to change a Final Agenda
will be provided to the Delegates upon arrival)

General Sessions will be held in Nevada 10 room

October 3, 2010

- 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Bylaws Committee Meeting
- 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – Registration
- 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. – Joint Welcome Reception

October 4, 2010

- 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – Late Registration
- 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – Joint Opening Ceremonies
- 10:45 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – General Session
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Lunch Break (Box Lunch)
 - o Finance Committee Meeting
- 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. – General Session
- 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – Regional Caucuses
- 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. – Committee Meetings

October 5, 2010

- 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – General Session
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Lunch Break (Box Lunch)
 - o Committee Meetings as necessary
- 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. – General Session
 - o Election of Officers

October 6, 2010

- 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – General Session
- 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Lunch Break (Box Lunch)
- 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. – General Session
 - o Installation of Officers
 - o Address by new National President
- 5:00 p.m. – (or when business concluded)
Adjournment of the 1st Quadrennial Convention of the National Auxiliary
- 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. - Banquet

Delegates: Once you arrive in Reno, please be sure to check-in and register with the National Auxiliary on Sunday afternoon in order to receive your credentials, updated Agenda, Journal of Proceedings and Bylaws, along with other information deemed necessary to enable you to do the business of the Auxiliary at the Convention.

National Officers: Please e-mail your reports to President Schneider no later than September 22, 2010.

For a more detailed agenda, please visit the Convention Section of our website www.bletauxiliary.net.

Order Mainline Cooking now!



The first and second editions of *Mainline Cooking* are both now available. Both cookbooks feature a variety of recipes submitted by BLET Auxiliary and BLET members across the country, as well as some amusing railroad trivia. Order forms are available on our website, www.bletauxiliary.net, or you may fill out the order blank here and mail with your check to:

Becky Schneider
515 W. Redd Road
El Paso, Texas 79932

Please send me _____ cookbooks.

Name _____

Address _____

No. of books: _____

x \$15.00 each = _____

+ Shipping & Handling _____

\$3.50 each for orders of 10 or more,
or \$5.00 each for orders less than 10

TOTAL: _____

Please enclose check or money order payable to BLET Auxiliary.

Greetings from your Editor, Sereena Hogan:

My favorite time of year is almost here. I love it when the summer heat begins to lift and the promise of fall is in the air. It's like a big relief... "okay we survived another summer in the desert!" I just can't imagine how people did it years ago before air conditioning! I've often thought of how exciting it would be to go back to that bygone era when people got all dressed up and traveled by train and ate and stayed in those Harvey House restaurants and hotels and so many of the depots were beautiful, huge, ornate buildings... and then I think about wearing all those clothes they wore back then and having no air conditioning. Suddenly the glamour of it all doesn't sound so appealing.

As the National Convention fast approaches, I reflect on how much has transpired in our Auxiliary in the last four years. When this term started, I was not part of the Executive Council. That happened in 2007 and 2008 when I moved up a couple of positions due to the resignations of some of our national officers. I am grateful that I was able to keep the position of the National Legislative Representative when I took on the Vice Presidency in 2008, as I was just beginning to get the hang of the legislative duties. I have to admit that I needed a lot of coaching from the previous National Legislative Rep., Becky Schneider, for which I am very grateful. I am also grateful to John Tolman, Kathleen Policy, and Tom Pontolillo for helping me along with the way to figure out and keep abreast of what is going in the legislative and regulatory arena with regard to the railroads.

As I write this, I am about to head out to a Labor Day celebration at a local park here in Tucson. Having lived most of my life in a right-to-work state and being fairly naive about the world of organized labor, I can remember a time that I really didn't understand what this holiday was all about. And now, after 21 years as a railroad spouse, I appreciate the role that organized labor has played in our country and the importance of having a strong, healthy union to represent our employees in the rail industry. I hope that all of you have taken, or will take, the time to read the inspiring newsflash that BLET President Dennis Pierce posted on the BLET website on September 3 with regard to Labor Day. And, on that note, I encourage all of you BLET spouses to please remind your husbands (or wives) to vote in upcoming National Division officer election, and that everyone reading this will do your part to cast your vote in the national, state, and local elections this fall. As President Pierce stated, it is the best way to honor those who fought for your right to vote! I look forward to seeing many of you at the National Convention in Reno next month and I thank all of you for this opportunity to serve the Auxiliary as a national officer!

In Memoriam

BLET Division 230 Member, Engineer **Darrell Amerson**, 42, was killed in the line of duty on July 2, 2010, following an accident in a Norfolk Southern yard in Meridian, Mississippi.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends.

Please send us your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., for our publication. You can e-mail them or snail-mail them to:

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The next issue will be published in December. Please have submissions to Sereena by November 30, 2010.

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