



# 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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Spring 2011

Anita J. Caruso, President • Sereena Hogan, Vice President/National Legislative Representative • Linda D. Maher, Secretary  
Helen Brand, Treasurer • Gina Forman, 1st Vice President /National Outreach Coordinator • [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net)

## BLET Auxiliary Executive Council to Convene at SMA in June

By Anita J. Caruso, National President

This year, the BLET Auxiliary Executive Council is trying something different for our annual meeting, which is usually held in the Spring just after Easter. We will instead convene during the Southeastern Meeting Association at the Doubletree Biltmore in Asheville, North Carolina. Our meeting will take place a day before the convention begins (June 12-16, 2011), and another day during the week. The entire executive council formally meets only once per year and this provides an opportunity for us to attend a regional convention together while still tending to auxiliary business.

The Executive Council consists of National President Anita J. Caruso, National Vice President/National Legislative Representative Sereena Hogan, National Secretary Linda D. Maher, National Treasurer Helen Brand, and National 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator Gina Forman. At our annual meeting, each officer gives a report of her activities for the preceding year, we review our financial portfolio and our Care and Assistance Program, administer our Scholarship Program, and review and discuss any other matters that arise.

A follow-up article will be published in the summer newsletter and we will let you know then if this new approach to our yearly Executive Council meeting worked out favorably.

**Scholarship applications and instructions are available on our website, [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net). Applications should be mailed to National Secretary Linda D. Maher and are due in her office no later than April 1!**



**Central California Auxiliary 865 Charter Members:** Claudia Grisedale, Debi Bensen, Karen Brewer, Kris Renick, Tracey Eldridge, Roya Eubanks, Leah Baldwin (behind Roya), Michele Bryant, Debbie Hosken, and Tracy Baca.

## New Auxiliary in Bakersfield, California

On December 15, 2010, National President Anita J. Caruso and Vice President/NLR Sereena Hogan traveled to Bakersfield, California, to organize Central California Auxiliary 865, which was spearheaded by Tracey Eldridge. The organizing meeting was held at the Mexicali Restaurant where the installation oath was administered to 10 charter members. We are pleased to welcome these new members who were in attendance at the meeting: Tracey Eldridge (President), Michele Bryant (Vice President/Mobilization Coordinator), Karen Brewer (Secretary/Treasurer), Kris Renick (Chaplain), Debi Benson, Roya Eubanks, Tracy Baca, Debbie Hosken, Claudia Grisedale, and Leah Baldwin. Karen Faulkner was unable to attend the meeting, but has also joined as a member of the auxiliary.

Many thanks to Mr. Bob Ricou, Field Representative for Hildebrand, McLeod & Nelson, LLP, who attended the meeting on behalf of BLET-designated attorney Ed Pfister of that law firm and provided dinner for us as well as some educational materials for BLET spouses.

Since the December meeting, Central California Auxiliary has met regularly and worked to recruit new members. The main focus of their monthly meetings is discussion around BNSF's proposed forced relocation of Bakersfield operating employees to Barstow, California, which would force employees in the Bakersfield area to leave their homes and move to Barstow, a move that they don't want to make for a myriad of valid reasons. Approximately 100 employees and their families would be impacted by the move. BNSF has stated that its intent is to consolidate employees from Bakersfield, Los Angeles, and Needles to its Barstow operation to improve efficiency and make sure there are enough train operating personnel at the Barstow hub.



## **From the President:**

I know this is our Spring newsletter, but nothing around me is indicating that spring is actually on the horizon. With temps around the country in the deep freeze zone, record amounts of snow, ice, blizzards, and numerous air travel disruptions, it's hard to think that in a month a new season will be upon us. Soon, I'll be complaining about the heat and humidity. Am I ever satisfied with the season? Probably, not!

On December 2, 2010, I traveled to the home of National Vice President Sereena Hogan in Tucson, Arizona, to get the new resolutions that were implemented at our recent National Convention incorporated into our Constitution & Bylaws. This was a long and tedious, yet very important task that I would have never been able to accomplish without Sister Hogan's help. I was invited to stay at her home and we were able to work uninterrupted until we got the job done. When we were finished with that project, we then went over the Journal of Proceedings to get it finalized for printing.

On December 15, 2010, Sereena and I traveled to Bakersfield, California, to organize Central California Auxiliary 865 (see cover story). We are pleased to welcome these new members and are certain that they will be a great addition to the Auxiliary. This is our second new auxiliary in California. Nor-Cal Auxiliary 39 in the area of Stockton, California, just celebrated their first anniversary. Congratulations on reaching this milestone and we wish you many more years with your auxiliary sisters and brothers!

We were asked by BLET Brothers Kent Confer and Larry James to help with the "Get Out the Vote Campaign" in November and December. We are always happy to be able to help the BLET and were honored to be asked for assistance. Gina Forman, our 1st VP/National Outreach Coordinator, was called into action and contacted all our auxiliary mobilization coordinators to give them the specifics on what we were asked to do, which was to encourage all BLET members to mail in their ballots in the election of national officers for the BLET. We are thrilled with Gina's performance with this task and for all the auxiliary members who helped make phone calls and sent e-mails with this important message.

Congratulations to newly elected BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce, as well as all the other BLET national officers who were re-elected to their positions or won by acclamation in December. We are very proud to be able to work with these new officers and look forward to a very productive collaboration with the new administration.

We are most grateful to the BLET National for printing our Journal of Proceedings from the First Quadrennial Convention, and our newly revised Constitution & Bylaws. Another big thanks goes out to National Vice President/NLR Sereena Hogan for putting the finishing touches on these documents to prepare them for printing, and to National Secretary Linda D. Maher for mailing them out to our delegates, officers, and auxiliaries. Three copies of the Constitution & Bylaws will be mailed to each local auxiliary secretary. If you are a member-at-large and are interested in obtaining a copy of our Constitution & Bylaws, you can access it on our website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net) and print a copy. If you do not have access to the internet and wish to have a copy of the Constitution & Bylaws, please call Linda at 440-944-6579, and she will mail a copy to you.

I hope you will enjoy our new column for retirees, the first of which appears on the opposite page. Thank you Phyllis Eberl for stepping forth to share your story about how you and Danny are enjoying your retirement years! If you would like to be the next to submit an article about how retirement has affected your life, please let me know. Articles are to be submitted to Editor/Publisher Sereena Hogan, and we do appreciate photos to go with your article.

Although during this next legislative session there will be numerous bills we will be closely following, we feel that H.R. 5944, which was introduced in 2010, is of particular interest to our members and their families. This bill makes improvements to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to enable many railroad workers who do not currently qualify for FMLA to become eligible to participate in this program. Under current FMLA law, an employee has to work 1250 hours per year to qualify. According to BLET National Vice President/National Legislative Representative John Tolman, 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.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Sister Becky Schneider for continuing to be our webmaster until we can find someone with the appropriate skills to take over this duty (see announcement on page 10). Becky has done a tremendous job of updating the website with the numerous changes that resulted from our National Convention, as well as keeping up with the monthly postings of legislative updates and other pertinent information. Sister Schneider, please know your continued work to up-keep the website is truly appreciated by me and all our members who continue to access the website to obtain the various types of important information that it contains.

Very soon it will be time to attend the four BLET regional conventions. These gatherings provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about different railroads, learn about how our Designated Legal Counsel can assist us when necessary, and learn what type of issues are of importance to our BLET brothers and sisters throughout the United States. Each region has their own unique concerns and we are able to see what is happening in other areas of the country. If you ever have the opportunity to attend one of these conventions, they are well worth your time. I look forward to meeting our members, seeing familiar faces, and being able to visit with the BLET national officers and all our brothers and sisters at the upcoming conventions.

Wishing you a great Spring with your family, your extended railroad family, and friends. Be safe in your travels and I hope to see many of you this year!

Anita J. Caruso, National President, BLET Auxiliary  
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## Retirement Rocks!

By Phyllis Eberl, River City Auxiliary 12

On behalf of the members of River City Auxiliary No. 12, with members from Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, we all extend our sincere congratulations to our new National President, Anita J. Caruso, and our new National Chaplain, Darla Fent, both of whom are also Auxiliary 12 members. We are very proud of both of these ladies for the work they are doing nationally, and we also appreciate them for the work they do for us on a local level.

My husband Danny served 35 years as an engineer with Union Pacific Railroad until his retirement in 2004. We have two sons who also work for Union Pacific, a daughter who works for Con Agra, and five grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

Thinking that becoming “snowbirds” was the “thing to do” in one’s retirement, we purchased a home in a retirement resort near Phoenix, Arizona, and took off to spend some time there in January of 2005. After about a month, we were anxious to return to Iowa as we missed our children, our grandchildren and their school activities, and our friends, but we stuck it out until April. Needless to say, we sold our home in Arizona and were very happy to be back home. We learned a valuable lesson—what is right for some is not always what is right for you! We did meet some special friends in Arizona with whom we still keep in touch.

After 35 years of working for the railroad and getting called at all hours of the day and night, it was hard for Danny to get used to doing nothing. About that time, a new business was opening in our town, and Danny thought it would be a good idea for both of us to submit our applications, thinking that if we were hired there we could both work the same hours and still have time to do things together. Well guess what—I was the one who was hired! It has been quite a joke between us. After a year and half, I quit. Danny has some health issues, and this was just not what we wanted for our retirement years.

After an adjustment period of about four years, Danny is now feeling more comfortable with his retirement lifestyle. He has



Danny and Phyllis Eberl

resumed his interest in wordworking and sometimes spends hours in his shop working on different projects. He also enjoys helping out with the dishes, cooking, cleaning, and washing, which I truly appreciate. I love having him at home and feel like I have a live-in maid!

We have done quite a bit of traveling and plan to do a lot more. In the summer, we spend a good deal of time on the water with our pontoon boat. We like fishing, golfing, family outings, and having the time to enjoy our family and friends without having to always be listening for the phone to ring. In the fall and winter, we stay pretty close to home as we enjoy going to all of our grandchildren’s sports and school activities.

I think the biggest shock for most retired couples is having to pay for supplemental health insurance. We stuck with Union Pacific Railroad Employee Health Systems (UPREHS) as we felt it had the most to offer. For a couple, the cost is \$440/month with no vision or dental coverage. This is something we should all work on to get changed.

Danny and I truly enjoy our retirement; being able to spend time with one another means so much to us. While he was working, we didn’t have much time to spend together, as you all know. We hope retirement will bring you as much enjoyment as it has to us. God bless!

## Tidbits from YOUR Secretary, Linda D. Maher



Happy New Year to all of our members! My how time has quickly passed... my husband and I celebrated my semi-retirement by taking a trip to Hawaii for the month of January, resulting in missing a lot of snow in Ohio... yeah! Upon returning home, I had a mail basket full of dues and correspondence from our members... thank you! If you have not received a new auxiliary pin,

please contact me as I will be checking the files, but in case I missed someone, please let me know. I have been very busy with updating records on my laptop.

I recently picked up the printed copies of our *Journal of Proceedings of the First Quadrennial Convention* from the BLET National Division Office in Cleveland and have mailed them out to the officers and delegates who were in attendance there. Our updated *Constitution & Bylaws* is posted on the website, [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net), so feel free to access and print if you wish to have a copy. If you are a member-at-large and do not have access to the internet, please call me and I will mail a copy to you.

We are extremely grateful to the BLET National Division for publishing our Journal of Proceedings and our revised Constitution and Bylaws. Thank you to BLET National President Dennis Pierce, 1st Vice President Lee Pruitt, and National Secretary-Treasurer Bill Walpert for approving our request. Thank you also to Vice President Pruitt's Executive Assistant Kelly Rowe for helping to coordinate the print job and the pickup, and Dennis Mertz from the BLET National Office Printing Department for printing and assembling the booklets, and also for loading them into my truck. All of this help is so greatly appreciated!

### ATTENTION AUXILIARY SECRETARIES!

To date, there are many of you who have not filed your annual report and paid your Auxiliary dues for 2010. You still have until March 31, 2011, to do so. Thank you in advance for taking care of this.

### Member-at-Large News

Welcome to our new members-at-large (MALs) who have recently joined the Auxiliary: Stan Haessig (Associate MAL) from West Point, Iowa; Marta Chenchar (MAL) from Cheyenne, Wyoming; and Patrick T. Maher (Associate MAL) from Willoughby Hills, Ohio. (Yes, my dear husband, I signed you up so that you can carry MY Auxiliary books to the meetings!)

**DUES, DUES, DUES...** just like taxes are due every year. MAL dues are due on March 1, 2011. Thank you to all of the members who have already sent in your dues for this year. If you happened to overlook the annual notice of dues that was mailed to you, there is still time to get them to me. If I have not received your dues by the due date, I will forward a SECOND NOTICE OF DUES, at which time

a grace period will be extended for you to send in payment. Dues received after March 31, 2011, are considered to be delinquent. If and when the additional time has passed and you still have not remitted your dues, we will have no choice other than to drop you from our files. I do hope that you choose to stay with us.

### In Memoriam

On December 9, 2010, Sister Amy Spoon passed away. She was a long time member of Generosity Auxiliary #37 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and her sisters will greatly miss her. We extend our sympathies to Amy's family and friends. Generosity Auxiliary made a contribution to the Scholarship Fund in her memory. Thank you for thinking of our students, as I know they appreciate your generosity.

### Scholarship Information

BLET Auxiliary scholarship applications can be obtained on our website at [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net), or through a link on the BLET website at [www.ble-t.org](http://www.ble-t.org) under "Departments," then "BLET Auxiliary." Scholarship applications for the 2011-2012 school year are due in my office by April 1, 2011. As always, no exceptions will be made for late applications.

### "Just Stuff"

We were all accustomed to reading our former National Secretary Anita J. Caruso's "This 'n' That" section in her "Tidbits from Your Secretary" article. I know I cannot fill her shoes, but maybe with the help of everyone I can try. If you have some pertinent information that you would like me to share in my article, please let me know.

It has been very enlightening for me as I take on this huge position. Before leaving for paradise (Hawaii), I hit the snow and ice to schlep cookbooks... yes those cookbooks! Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet could stop me, but my recent back surgery has definitely put an end to me hauling them around, at least for awhile. Anyone out there need any more???? We can still fill your orders by mail.

Many thanks to all of you who have sent cards and prayers as I recuperate. I spoke to President Caruso today and she keeps pleading with me to take it easy and heal! Okay, I will, but not until my work is done.....

I will be wandering around at Lakeland Community College in March for their train show as my husband and I are members of the Conrail Historical Society. I will have a supply of cookbooks there to sell, which will put the name of the BLET Auxiliary in front of people who have never heard of us. Who knows, maybe we will get a few MAL Associate members!

We are starting to prepare for attending the SMA meeting in Asheville, North Carolina. I am truly looking forward to jumping into meeting many of our current members and being able to put faces with the names of those on my membership lists. I also look forward to sharing information about the Auxiliary and recruiting new members at the conventions.

Remember, call or e-mail me with any interesting "stuff" that is happening. Until we meet again, stay healthy, happy, and remember to laugh out loud as it makes you younger and you will live longer by doing it every day for the rest of your life!

**Linda Maher can be reached by phone at 440-944-6579, by e-mail at [biddykaili@oal.com](mailto:biddykaili@oal.com), or [sissy62756@mac.com](mailto:sissy62756@mac.com) or by mail at 29215 West Miller Road, Willoughby Hills, Ohio 44092.**

## In Memoriam

BLET Brother Stanley L. Watts, 43, Secretary-Treasurer of Division 354, was killed in the line of duty of February 8, 2011, following a switching accident at a Norfolk Southern yard in Kankakee, Illinois.

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



## WEAR AND TEAR INJURIES UNDER FELA

by Alva A. Hollon, Jr., BLET Designated Legal Counsel

In 1908, Congress enacted the Federal Employers' Liability Act ("FELA") to enable railroad workers to recover damages for injuries resulting "in whole or in part" from the failure of a railroad to exercise due care in the workplace. There are various types of injuries for which railroad workers can seek recovery under FELA. One type of injury is a frequent source of time lost from work. Various studies have shown that wear and tear injuries account for a significant percentage of workplace injuries. These injuries are often referred to by various terms – cumulative trauma disorders, repetitive stress injuries, overuse injuries, or wear and tear injuries. The Federal Railroad Administration refers to this type of injury as musculoskeletal disorder. Basically, this type of injury occurs when there is a joint overload on cartilage, which serves as a cushion between bones. In some cases, it may take months or even years before a person realizes that he or she has suffered a wear and tear injury, which produces pain and stiffness in the joints.

There are various musculoskeletal risk factors present in the railroad industry. Some of these factors are excessive force, awkward postures, repetitive movements, vibration, and working outside during cold temperatures. This type of injury can affect the arms, hands, fingers, neck, back, wrists, knees, and shoulders. While there clearly is evidence of the presence of the risk factors for the development of this type of injury in the railroad industry, railroads typically deny that their work contributed in any way to the development of wear and tear injuries. Railroads usually point to non-work-related factors, such as obesity, diabetes, age, etc., as being the cause or contributing factor to wear and tear joint injuries.

While the railroad industry argues that wear and tear injuries affecting the joints do not occur on the job, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) disagrees with this assessment. A federal regulation provides examples of musculoskeletal disorders, or wear and tear injuries, as including carpal tunnel syndrome, trigger finger, low back pain, herniated spinal discs, etc. Indeed, the FRA has issued a guide for preparing accident/incident reports. This guideline issued to the railroad industry provides: "Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are treated like all other injuries or illnesses; they must be recorded if they result in days away, restricted work, transfer to another job, or medical treatment beyond first aid."

In order to succeed in court to recover damages for a wear and tear injury, there are two fundamental questions that must be answered

in favor of the railroad worker pursuing the lawsuit. The first question is whether or not a physician will give a professional opinion that the railroad worker's job duties contributed to the development of the wear and tear injury. This is what we refer to as causation. In other words, did the negligence of the railroad cause or contribute in any way to the development of the injury? By negligence, that simply means that the railroad either did something it should not have done or failed to do something that it should have done.

There have been many arguments about exactly how strong the physician's causation opinion must be. The doctor must give a professional opinion that the link between the wear and tear injury and the job practices were more than a mere possibility. While it is not necessary that the work for the railroad was the sole cause of the injury, it must be a contributing factor. The second fundamental question in a wear and tear injury that must be answered in favor of the plaintiff is whether or not the lawsuit was timely filed. Under the FELA, an individual has three years from the date of his or her injury in order to file a lawsuit in court. This is called a statute of limitations. If the claim is not filed within the statute of limitations, it is forever barred.

Sixty years ago, the United States Supreme Court ruled in a FELA case that for an injury that does not occur at an exact moment in time, the plaintiff must file the lawsuit within three years of the date he or she knew, or should have known, that the injury resulted from work for the railroad. Obviously, a wear and tear injury, which may take months or even years to develop, is such an injury. Typically, the three-year statute of limitations begins when the plaintiff's physician advises of the casual connection, but this is not always the case. There may be instances when the individual himself recognizes that the injury resulted from work on the railroad.

In conclusion, despite the railroad industry's hard line stand denying that wear and tear injuries result from work activities, the FRA and various courts have recognized these injuries as work-related. BLET designated legal counsel are available to discuss these injuries.

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# Legislative Update

By Sereena Hogan, National Legislative Representative

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*Every advance in this half-century: Social Security, civil rights, Medicare, aid to education... one after another — came with the support*

*and leadership of American Labor.*

— Jimmy Carter

## Lame Duck Session

The “Lame Duck Session” of Congress that began on November 15 following the mid-term elections and ended when lawmakers left Capitol Hill on December 22 for Christmas, has been called the most productive post-election period in decades. More pieces of major legislation were passed during the month of December than since March 2010 when the health reform bill was passed. Democrats moved forward aggressively on controversial legislation they had worked on all year, and were joined by a handful of moderate Republicans who saw this session as the last opportunity to move forward on key issues before the more fiscally and socially conservative Republican majority in the House and increased conservative minority in the Senate made such moves impossible.

Accomplishments on the Senate side included:

- The tax cut compromise extending the Bush tax cuts, creating new Obama tax cuts and extending unemployment insurance (12/15)
- The repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy (12/18)
- The food safety bill (12/19)
- The 9/11 First Responders Bill (12/22)
- New START ratification (12/22)

## Assault on Unions

The recent attack on the middle class that is taking place in Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey, and other states is making headlines around the nation and beyond.

On Saturday, February 26, an estimated 70,000 – 100,000 people converged in the Wisconsin State Capitol to demonstrate against the reform bill being pushed by Governor Scott Walker that would strip public sector unions of most collective bargaining rights in areas of healthcare coverage, pensions, and other benefits. Supporters of

organized labor and the working people of America are joining in rallies in other states across the nation to show solidarity with the workers in Wisconsin and to protest the assault on workers’ rights.

Walker has been called a “puppet for big-donor corporate sponsors” who are determined to depress the working classes. Democratic lawmakers have said they and union members would agree to financial concessions that Governor Walker wants in exchange for workers keeping their collective bargaining rights, but Walker said he wasn’t willing to budge, and he expected the bill to pass as is. He says he needs to eradicate collective-bargaining laws to balance the budget in Wisconsin, but some say that is a pretext to remove from the political scene the only organizations (unions) that can stand up to multinational corporations and wealthy right-wing groups to protect the rights and interests of the dwindling middle class and the rapidly growing lower class in our nation.

Walker has been accused of creating a false budget deficit by forcing through legislation in January that created \$140 million in new spending for special-interest groups. Then he announced a budget deficit of \$137 million and demanded concessions from public sector union employees to offset the cost of the deficit.

A number of BLET members in Wisconsin, including Wisconsin State Legislative Board Chairman Tony Dimond and 1st Vice Chairman Paul Aird, and Wisconsin Central General Chairman John Reynolds attended rallies in their state to protest the efforts of the Wisconsin statehouse to gut union workers’ rights.

In Topeka, Kansas, union members who showed up to protest House Bill 2130 were kicked out of the State House on February 24. House Bill 2130 would ban unions from making paycheck deductions for political activities and prohibit public employee unions from endorsing candidates. The bill was approved 75-46 with only Republican support and will now go to the Senate for consideration. Union leaders said the bill is an attack on the ability of workers to organize and participate as a group in the political process and it is said to be another example of how Republicans are trying to neutralize unions at the legislative level in various states, including Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce urged BLET members to join him at the “Rally for Ohio’s Middle Class” on Tuesday, March 1, in Columbus, Ohio, to protest the ongoing attacks against public sector unions and middle class Americans. IBT General President Hoffa also attended the rally organized by the Ohio Democratic Party to show opposition for Senate Bill 5, which would basically destroy public sector unions. Ohio Governor John Kasich cites budget crisis as a reason to pass the bill; however, even the bill’s sponsor Sen. Shannon Jones, admits that the bill is unlikely to have a significant effect on the deficit. Another rally in Ohio on February 22 to protest Senate Bill 5 was attended by President Pierce, Vice Presidents Pruitt and Tolman, Ohio State Legislative Board Chairman Tim Hanely and a number of other BLET members from Ohio.

As the gulf between the rich and the poor in this country grows wider every day, we are left wondering if we are moving from a democracy to an oligarchy. An oligarchy is a form of government in which the political power effectively rests with a small number of people, generally those who are the most powerful, either by wealth, military strength, ruthlessness, or political influence. It is a government by the rich for the rich. With the vastly increasing income disparities and the influence of unrestrained corporate money on elections as a result of the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in *Citizens United versus the Federal Election Commission*, could the U.S. be on a trajectory of oligarchy?

Some have called the Wisconsin situation tantamount to “class warfare,” with tax cuts for wealthy business owners while middle-class workers are taking pay and benefit cuts and facing the loss of labor rights. Let’s just hope, as one Minnesota teacher states, that the Wisconsin battle will become the “national rebirth of the labor movement” and that workers “will not allow this to turn into a nation where it’s everyone for themselves.”

## Hours of Service Interpretation on Interruption of Rest

The BLET has successfully secured an important clarification from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) concerning an interpretation of a key provision of an amendment to the Hours of Service (HOS) laws made by the

Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

The provision is contained in 49 U.S.C. Section 21103(e), which states that “a railroad carrier, and its officers and agents, shall not communicate with [a] train employee by telephone, by pager, or in any other manner that could reasonably be expected to disrupt the employee’s rest” during statutory off-duty periods of 10 or more consecutive hours and interim periods of release of 4 or more but less than 10 consecutive hours.

Interim interpretations issued by the FRA in the summer of 2009 stated that communications initiated by an employee do not constitute disruptions, and this interpretation was communicated to the BLET membership by numerous means. However, after receiving conflicting advice from a now retired official in the FRA’s national office, one region of the FRA advised a BLET general committee officer last summer that calls made by employees during their statutory off-duty period for the purpose of ascertaining when their next duty tour would begin constituted an “interruption” of the off-duty period, necessitating that it be restarted. The railroad involved then posted a notice to this effect and began refusing such calls.

Last November, after being unable to resolve this dispute informally, Vice President Steve Bruno, who was Director of Regulatory Affairs at the time, wrote the FRA to formally request that the agency affirm its prior interpretation. Bruno pointed out that the statutory language clearly did not include such a call from an employee as a disruption, reminded FRA that the BLET’s understanding of the law was uniformly shared by the Railroad Safety Advisory Committee Working Group that had revised the 49 C.F.R. Part 228 HOS recordkeeping requirements, and noted that someone’s “ability to manage rest is enhanced considerably by the predictability of knowing when they are scheduled to report for duty or when they should expect the assignment phone call.”

On January 12, FRA Associate Administrator for Railroad Safety and Chief Safety Officer Jo Strang acknowledged that the “interim interpretations are silent on whether there are any limits to the matters that may be discussed [during an employee-initiated communication], and do not specifically address whether ... an employee is permitted to contact the railroad carrier to establish a report-for-duty time [during a statutory off-duty period or period of interim release].” FRA also

stated that further clarification of this subject is being considered as FRA moves toward adopting final interpretations, and that no enforcement action would be taken against railroads that accept and respond to such inquiries from their operating employees.

(Source: BLET Newsflash Service, <http://www.ble.org/pr/news/newsflash.asp?id=5067>)

### **Risk Reduction Program**

On February 6, the BLET and six other rail unions submitted comments to the FRA regarding implementation of a Risk Reduction Program (RRP) that was mandated under Section 103 of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. The unions stressed that it was the intent of Congress to include labor organizations in the creation of the RRP; however, the FRA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on December 8, 2010, that allows railroads to unilaterally submit their own plans without the input of labor.

In their comments, the unions pointed out that railroads have been allowed to police their own safety and to operate with a punitive system for employees for far too long. They went on to state that RRP’s must require labor-management consensus, which was what Congress intended in their mandate, and that the RRP’s should be scientifically based and data driven.

The employees are the best source of information regarding safety and they must be able to report safety concerns without fear of repercussions. BLET National President Dennis Pierce stressed that “both good faith challenges and strong whistleblower protections must be part of the regulations.”

With regard to fatigue, which is probably the most critical safety factor for operating employees, the labor organizations urged the FRA to require 10 hours of prior notification as part of the RRP. President Pierce stated that: “FRA acknowledges that knowing with certainty when you will next go to work is the strongest fatigue mitigation tool available and will virtually eliminate acute fatigue as a safety issue for operating employees.”

Improved training for all rail workers in order to keep up with rapid changes in technology was also called for by the unions.

### **Passenger Rail/High Speed Rail**

The continuing rise in ridership on current passenger rail lines in the last 15 months demonstrates a growing demand for passenger rail service and the need for a national intercity

passenger rail system. However, financial support for existing rail systems, as well as the proposed development of High Speed Rail (HSR) in our nation, has become a highly politicized issue with Republicans, Democrats, and Independents expressing varying levels of support. A continuing resolution (i.e., a means of funding the government until a full budget is passed) that was introduced by the House Appropriations Committee on February 11, proposes major spending cuts in discretionary spending, including railway-impacted cuts of \$18 million for Clean Coal Technology, \$1 billion for High-Speed Rail, and \$224 million for Amtrak.

In the wee hours of the morning on February 17, an amendment to the continuing resolution was offered by Representative Pete Sessions (R-TX), which would have reduced Amtrak’s capital funding by \$446.9 million. Our BLET Training and Education Department was conducting a legislative workshop in Washington, D.C., that week and, at the conclusion of the training class on Wednesday, class attendees (including the BLET Auxiliary’s Iowa State Legislative Representative Rachael Grimes) and other BLET officers and members were scheduled to lobby on Capitol Hill on Thursday, February 17. Thanks in part to the early morning actions of our BLET and Auxiliary members, the amendment failed in a 250-176 vote taken at 11:14 a.m. BLET President Dennis Pierce praised these members, stating: “This kind of action shows how effective our legislative department can be and also that we can make our voices heard in Congress if we work together.”

Just days before the Continuing Resolution was introduced, Vice President Joe Biden announced that the Obama Administration is calling for a \$53 billion spending plan over the next six years on rail infrastructure projects. House Transportation Committee Chairman John Mica (R-FL) and Railroads Subcommittee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) have been highly critical with regard to the plan; however, they have both said that they will push the Administration’s initiative to give 80 percent of Americans access to high speed rail in the next 25 years, allowing travelers to go places in half the time it takes to travel by car.

In spite of their criticisms, Representative Shuster recently pledged to fight for the northeast corridor project, saying he believes it is good for the country, could be profitable, and its success will encourage all of America in the various corridors around the country to follow suit; and Representative

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Mica has asked for “robust” funding targets for rail projects in the federal highway bill. Both congressmen, however, have warned the Obama Administration to seek more private investments to help pay for the projects.

Following the first \$10.5 billion in Administration rail grants, Shuster and Mica have criticized the way the grants were handled, stating that the Federal Railroad Administration is not a capable grant agency and should not be involved in the selection of high speed rail projects. They have accused the Administration of squandering limited taxpayer dollars on marginal projects rather than focusing on the Northeast Corridor, and they plan to investigate how the funding decisions were made.

In Florida, Governor Rick Scott has joined Ohio’s Governor John Kasich and Wisconsin’s Governor Scott Walker in rejecting federal incentives for high speed rail in his state. Kasich and Walker both killed the high speed rail projects in their states that would have created 30,000 new jobs. Although they thought they would be able to keep the funds to use as they saw fit, both states were forced to return all of the \$1.9 billion in federal grant money and the Federal Railroad Administration will dispense the dollars to other rail projects across 13 states.

On February 16, Florida’s Governor Scott rejected the Obama Administration’s \$2.4 billion in HSR funding to construct an 84-mile line to connect Tampa and Orlando, stating that Florida taxpayers would be “on the hook” for possible construction cost overruns, that ridership and revenue projections are overly optimistic, and that the state would have to repay the federal government all of the \$24 billion if the project fails. Following Governor Scott’s announcement, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood met with him to discuss the project and gave the Governor an additional week to review the agreement with those who crafted it and to consult with his staff and Department of Transportation officials. Scott, however, remains unconvinced that there is no risk to taxpayers.

Florida’s GOP-led state legislature has spent the last two years working to secure the federal funding and many in the state of Florida are calling Scott’s decision a huge mistake. There have been some rumblings that Scott may face a possible lawsuit contending that he has overstepped his authority in this situation and arguing that a law passed by the

legislature during a special session in 2009 compels Scott to pursue the high speed rail project. Meanwhile, states across the north-east including Connecticut, New York, Rhode Island, and Maryland have sent letters to Secretary LaHood asking for the rejected funding to go to rail projects in their states.

On the opposite side of the country, Roelof van Ark, CEO of the California High-Speed Rail Authority, has stated that “Californians are already doing their part to invest in and develop a fast, clean, and low-cost transportation system, and we are pleased to have the partnership of our federal government.” Construction on California’s high speed rail system is scheduled to begin in 2012 and will create nearly 100,000 jobs over five years with the federal funding already awarded.

In an online Harris Poll conducted among 2,566 adults in January 2011, only 35 percent of those living in one of the proposed high-speed rail corridors said they are aware of a high speed rail project in their state, with approximately 45 percent unsure. When asked if they would consider using high-speed rail, 66 percent said they would consider using it for pleasure, but only 33 percent for business. Location of train stations, overall trip time, and safety were the primary factors those polled would consider before choosing to utilize HSR. With regard to funding for HSR, 64 percent say they support using state funding, and 62 percent support using federal funds. With gas prices on the rise again and airline travel becoming more complicated and time consuming due to security issues, American consumers may be looking for travel alternatives.

#### **Positive Train Control**

On February 8, 2011, Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduced legislation (S. 301) to reduce the number of miles over which PTC must be implemented. Hutchison states that because traffic patterns for shipping toxic materials are being revised, at least 10,000 route miles that were used to move hazardous materials in 2008 are no longer expected to be used for that purpose in 2015. This comes following a meeting in January 2011 in which railroad CEOs met with Obama Administration officials to discuss how railroads are concentrating movements of toxic inhalation hazard materials on fewer miles of track and why the PTC mandate should be revised to address traffic patterns projected for 2015 rather than those that existed when the rail safety act was enacted in 2008.

#### **Cross-Border Trucking Proposal Unveiled**

Remember when the Cross-Border Trucking issue was top priority with the Teamsters back in 2007? (See *Legislative Update in Autumn 2007 issue of BLET Auxiliary News.*) This issue has always been a concern for train employees as well as truckers, given that cross-border trucking could possibly lead to cross-border trains at some point.

On January 6, 2011, after meeting with members of Congress, Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood released an “initial concept document” for a program to allow Mexico-based truckers long-haul access to the United States. Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa, as well as leaders of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA), have expressed strong opposition to this proposal, stating that it would threaten U.S. truck drivers’ and warehouse workers’ jobs at a time when unemployment is already high, threaten the traveling public in the U.S., and open our southern border to increased drug trafficking. Although the DOT proposal will raise the bar on safety for Mexican trucks, President Hoffa states that stricter standards are not enough and come at a cost to U.S. taxpayers. The administration proposes that Mexican trucks be checked for U.S. EPA emissions standards and that drug testing take place in U.S. labs.

Additionally, the trade agreements benefit Mexico, but not the U.S., according to Hoffa, who states: “Given the drug violence, there’s no way a U.S. company would want to haul valuable goods into the Mexican interior.” A formal proposal is expected to follow the “initial concept document” in the coming months.

#### **Railroad Retirement Tax Reduced for 2011**

The Internal Revenue Service has revised the income tax withholding rates and tables used to calculate federal income taxes for U.S. citizens based on provisions of the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010, which was signed into law by President Obama on December 17. The provision that reduces the employee Social Security tax rate from 6.2% to 4.2% for 2011 earnings subject to the tax, also affects Railroad Retirement Tier 1 taxes, which are based on Social Security. The Tier 1 tax rate for railroad workers will be cut accordingly, meaning that take-home pay will be increased by 2% of gross earnings in 2011, up to the cap.

Because the shortfall in funding for Tier 1 benefits created by this tax cut will be made up from general federal revenues, BLET National President Dennis Pierce has expressed some concerns that the enactment of this law will break the independence that Railroad Retirement funds have had from Congressional actions because, historically, all monies paid into the fund have been from railroad employers and employees only, with no non-railroad taxpayer monies involved.

President Pierce stated: "There are powerful forces who would like nothing better than to destroy Railroad Retirement and Social Security, and I am concerned that this 'tax cut' may make their goal easier to achieve."

**How this affects annuitants:** The following is an excerpt from an e-mail alert issued on February 4, 2011, by Tom Dwyer, President, National Association of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees (NARVRE).

*The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) implemented the new tax tables beginning with monthly payments received in February 2011 and those tax tables will remain in effect for the remainder of 2011, affecting over 140,000 beneficiaries. The new rates apply to withholding from the non-social equivalent benefit (NSSEB) portion of Tier 1, Tier 2, vested dual benefits, and supplemental annuity payments.*

*In the absence of a request not to withhold*

*Federal income tax or to withhold tax at specific amounts, the RRB will withhold taxes as if the annuitant were married and claiming 3 allowances. The annual threshold amount for 2011 is \$1,587.99. The threshold amount for 2010 was \$2,063.51.*

*Form RRB W-4P, Withholding Certificate for Railroad Retirement Payments, is used by U.S. citizens or legal residents for U.S. tax purposes. Annuitants can use Form RRB W-4P to request:*

- *No Federal taxes be withheld from their railroad retirement payments.*
- *Federal taxes be withheld based on marital status and the number of allowances they want to claim.*
- *An additional amount be withheld from their railroad retirement payments.*
- *Annuitants who wish to adjust withholding from their NSSEB and Tier 2 benefits, vested dual benefits, and supplemental annuity payments must complete Form RRB W-4P and send it to the RRB. An annuitant is not required to file Form RRB W-4P. Copies of the form are available by visiting the RRB's website at [www.rrb.gov](http://www.rrb.gov), clicking on "Benefit Forms and Publications," and then clicking on "Income Tax."*

*Annuitants who have questions regarding their tax liability should contact the nearest office of the IRS or visit their website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). You also may contact your tax preparer or accountant for further information.*

*(Source: U.S. Railroad Retirement Board)*

### Protecting Seniors Access to Doctors Act

S. 3965, the Protecting Seniors Access to Doctors Act, a \$15 billion bill to amend the Social Security Act to ensure continued access to Medicare for seniors and people with disabilities was passed on December 8. This legislation blocks the impending 25 percent reduction in reimbursement rates for doctors treating Medicare patients and will continue current doctors' reimbursement rates through all of 2011. The cut was scheduled to take effect January 1, 2011.

What the bill does not do is fix the sustainable growth rate problem and, unless Congress figures out a long-term solution, doctors will be subject to a more than 25 percent cut in the Medicare payment rate in 2012.

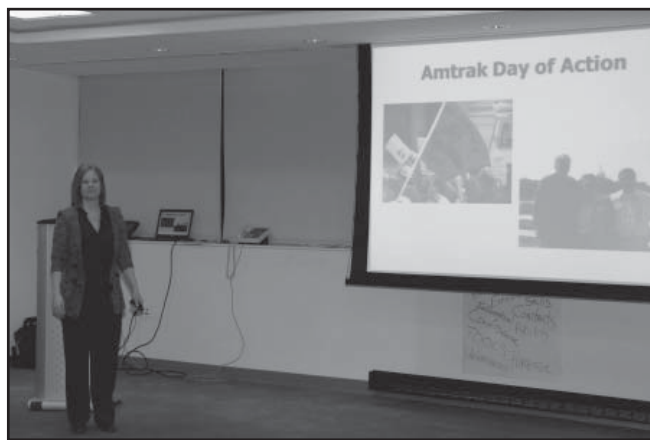
President Obama stated: "This agreement is an important step forward to stabilize Medicare, but our work is far from finished. For too long, we have confronted this reoccurring problem with temporary fixes and stop-gap measures. It's time for a permanent solution that seniors and their doctors can depend on and I look forward to working with Congress to address this matter once and for all in the coming year."

**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](mailto:vp3sereena@aol.com).**

## Auxiliary Members Out and About Spreading the Word!



In December, Amanda Sattig, President of Auxiliary 457 in Columbus, Ohio, traveled to Cleveland, where a Secretary/Treasurer's Training Class was being conducted. Amanda gave a presentation to inform the attendees about the Auxiliary... who we are and what we do. She also brought Mainline I and II cookbooks and was able to sell a number of them to those in attendance.



In February, Rachael Grimes, who is Secretary/Treasurer of RAILS Auxiliary No. 6, in Boone, Iowa, and also serves as the Iowa State Legislative Board Representative, attended the Legislative Representative Training in Washington, D.C. She showed the Auxiliary PowerPoint presentation to the class members to inform them about the Auxiliary, and was able to sign up some new associate members.

***Thank you Amanda and Rachael... We appreciate your efforts!!***

## Local Auxiliary News:

### **Pride of the 548, Auxiliary 48, Peru, Indiana**

**By Gina Forman, President**

Greetings from Auxiliary #48 in Peru, Indiana! As we have always done since our auxiliary began, we held our Holiday Fundraiser in December to benefit a local charity. This year, we chose our local Salvation Army Food Bank. The law firm of Schlichter, Bogard, and Denton, Designated Legal Counsel from St. Louis, Missouri, was kind enough to sponsor our dinner at The Siding Restaurant again this year. For three years, they have given us gracious support in our efforts. Our members and members of Division 548 were requested to bring donations of non-perishable food items and receive a great dinner in exchange. This year, we collected over 700 pounds of food, which is almost double what we collected last year! Many thanks to all of you who gave so generously and supported those in need.

We are planning a summer cookout, and looking forward to another great year! From all of us here in Peru, Indiana, we wish you all Spring Blessings!

### **NorCal Auxiliary 39, Stockton, California**

**By Susie Burrola, President**

We are approaching our one year anniversary. We have made great progress in our first year, but still have a lot more work to do. Since our first meeting in February at Marie Callendar's, we have accomplished much. After organizing our charter, we invited a representative from the Railroad Retirement Board to come and speak to us. She was able to help some of the active and retired members and their spouses clear up and correct many misunderstandings about railroad retirement. She was also able to provide us with current, up-to-date facts that everyone in this industry should know about railroad retirement.

In June, we had a family day at the Sonoma Train Town that was sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. R. B. Frank, BLET Div. 839 Legislative Rep., and Mr. & Mrs. Tim Smith, California State Legislative Board Chairman. The turnout was great and the families enjoyed the rides and pizza party after the meeting.

In October, we attended our first BLET National convention in Reno, Nevada. We were able to talk with members of other auxiliaries from across the country and get ideas and contact information so we can stay in touch and share ideas. We also were able to attend some motivational speeches with the BLET members that were enjoyable and helped build a greater sense of unity. The convention included much work for all the delegates as we went over the bylaws and revised them to keep up with the changing times.

We wrapped up our first year with a Christmas party and potluck in December, sponsored by BLET Div. 839. Disk Jockey Ray

Acosta provided the music, and Janice Luzzo provided us with a beautiful three tier cake. Our thanks go out to both of them and their families for donating their time and service to help make this event successful. A special thanks goes out to all the auxiliary members and BLET members and families for helping make this event a fun time for all. It was a blast to see everyone having a good time eating, and dancing, and getting to know one another.

Our mission is to support, educate, and assist in any way possible the railroaders and their families. We would like to invite all in our area who are not involved to *please get involved!* I know everyone is busy with their families, but if you really think about it, who better to interact with than people who understand the crazy lifestyles of our railroaders? Take a couple of hours a month out of your schedule to come and join us. We encourage you to bring the kids to our meetings; we can find activities to keep them busy. We have a lot of fun family activities planned for 2011. United we stand! Two thousand eleven, here we come!

### **YOUR AUXILIARY NEEDS YOU!**

#### **Webmaster Help, Please!**

**By Anita J. Caruso, National President**

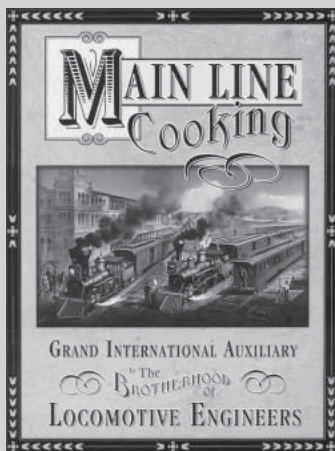
Sister Becky Schneider, who originally created the BLET Auxiliary website, [www.bletauxiliary.net](http://www.bletauxiliary.net), has continued to be our webmaster since leaving Reno, Nevada, following the National Convention held there last October. After the convention, she updated the entire website with all of our new officer information, and has uploaded our newly revised Constitution and Bylaws, as well as other recurring monthly and quarterly updates (see description below). Without Sister Schneider's help, our website would have fallen by the wayside. I am eternally grateful for all of her assistance in maintaining the site, but it is time to relieve her of this duty.

The BLET Auxiliary is looking for someone with knowledge of websites who would be willing to take over this duty. According to Sister Schneider, once established, maintaining the website does not take up a great deal of time. The legislative update, provided to the webmaster by National Vice President/National Legislative Representative Sereena Hogan, gets posted the first week of each month. Other duties include uploading the quarterly newsletter, an annual scholarship program due date reminder, a holiday greeting once a year, and any other pertinent information that may need to be added throughout the year.

If you can help us out with this project, please give me a call at 402-330-6348. If you need more information on the software program that is currently being used, or have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me and I will fill you in as best I can.

**YOUR AUXILIARY NEEDS YOU!** Please consider this request for help. Thank you so much!

## 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](http://www.bletauxiliary.net), or you may fill out the order blank here and mail with your check to:

Anita J. Caruso  
3341 S. 112th Street  
Omaha, NE 68144

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.

## From the 1st VP/National Outreach Coordinator

Spring Greetings to all of you! I can hardly believe that it is March already! Another year is just flying by! My involvement in the "Get out the Vote" campaign gave me the opportunity to connect with many of you and I really enjoyed catching up with so many folks following our Quadrennial Convention.

Our efforts were a success, and the campaign went well.



I have been working hard to get new auxiliaries opened up in various locations. There has been an increased interest since our convention, and I hope to report that we have some new auxiliaries ready to get organized by the time we convene for the SMA in June. It is so exciting talking to new members and seeing our National Auxiliary grow. I will have an update on these locations in the next newsletter.

I am looking forward to attending the SMA in Asheville, North Carolina, this year, where we will hold our annual Executive Committee Meeting. There is always a lot of great information shared at the regional conventions, and plenty of fellowship with other members.

As we make the transition into Spring, I think it is safe to say the warmer weather will be welcomed by many of us who have had enough of the cold and rough weather this year. I encourage you all to plan at least one event with your local auxiliaries this Spring. The more we get our members involved, the stronger our membership will become. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments.

**Gina Forman**  
National 1st Vice President/National Outreach Coordinator  
63 S. Hood Street  
Peru, Indiana 46970  
765-475-9902  
[tweetys95@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tweetys95@sbcglobal.net)

## Greetings from your Editor, Sereena Hogan:

This year had a rather tumultuous start and it feels a little like we're on some sort of wild ride with all the crazy things happening around the country and the world. The tragic events of January 8 that occurred here in Tucson hit **very** close to home for us. We live in the district that Gabrielle Giffords serves, and I had, for several years back in the late 80s, worked as secretary to John Roll, the federal judge who was shot and killed. Had Ken and I been in town that day, we very well may have been at that event that was being held right in our neighborhood.

And now, with all of the attacks on unions taking place across our nation, our eyes are on those states that are most affected at this time. What happens there will undoubtedly affect unions and middle class working people in every state of the country. I seriously believe that many in our nation have totally forgotten, or maybe never even knew, how many of the benefits and rights that workers today enjoy are the result of the blood, sweat, and tears of our union brothers and sisters who went before us. If nothing else, these recent events have at least brought a new sense of unity and solidarity to working people across our nation, whether they belong to a labor union or not.

As the plants and flower come back to life in these next few weeks and months, may the beauty of Spring bring a sense of renewal and the hope of new beginnings to you and your families!

**Please send us your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., for our publication to:**

**Sereena Hogan, Editor & Publisher**  
BLET Auxiliary News  
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The next issue will be published in June. Please have submissions to Sereena by May 31, 2011.

# Mark Your Calendars Now for the 2011 Regional Conventions!

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**June 12-17, 2011**

**84th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association  
Asheville, N.C.**

Hosted by Brother Dewey Brown at the DoubleTree  
Biltmore, Asheville, NC. For details, e-mail Brother Brown:  
[drbtownblet26@yahoo.com](mailto:drbtownblet26@yahoo.com).

**August 2-7, 2011**

**73rd Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association  
Long Island, N.Y.**

Hosted by the members of BLET Division 269 at the  
Hyatt Regency Long Island, Hauppauge, N.Y. For details,  
e-mail Jim Brown: [loco542@optonline.net](mailto:loco542@optonline.net) or visit [www.euma2011.org](http://www.euma2011.org).

**August 21-27, 2011**

**71st Annual International Western Convention  
San Luis Obispo, CA**

Hosted by Brother Mike Galvani and the members of BLET  
Division 664 at the Embassy Suites Hotel-San Luis Obispo. For  
details, e-mail Brother Galvani:  
[sloble664@wildblue.net](mailto:sloble664@wildblue.net) or call (805) 927-2967.

**September 18-22, 2011**

**76th annual Southwestern Convention Meeting  
El Paso, Texas**

Hosted by Larry & Becky Schneider and the members of BLET  
Division 192 at the Camino Real Hotel. For details, e-mail  
Brother Schneider: [lschneider7@earthlink.net](mailto:lschneider7@earthlink.net) or visit the SWCM  
website, [bletswcm.org/index2.html](http://bletswcm.org/index2.html).

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