Negotiations update
To keep current on national rail negotiations between the UTU and the National Carriers’ Conference Committee, go to www.utu.org and click on the “Rail Contract Negotiations” link toward the bottom right-hand side of the page.

Dues hike sought to rejoin AFL-CIO, defend attacks
As the UTU prepares to re-enter the AFL-CIO, and simultaneously fend off anti-union attacks by the Bush administration, conservatives in Congress and employers – plus raiding of our members by the BLET and the Teamsters – the UTU is seeking a $5 per month dues increase effective Jan. 1.

Delegates will be asked to approve the dues increase.

“We are being challenged as never before,” said UTU International President Paul C. Thompson. “We haven’t raised International dues since 1999,” Thompson said, “and while we have taken every possible measure to control costs, the price of everything we do on behalf of members has risen substantially. Protecting jobs continues to be the number-one objective of this organization, and our return to the AFL-CIO will be of tremendous benefit to our membership.”

The question each of us must ask ourselves,” Thompson said, “is: Are we willing to invest less than the price of two gallons of gasoline per month to return to the AFL-CIO and win – more grievances than most organizations?”

“The International’s employees deserve fair wages and adequate health-care insurance,” Thompson said. “The UTU continues to file – and win – more grievances than most organizations.”

Continued on page 10

Local 23 members strike
SANTA CRUZ, Calif. – UTU-represented bus operators here went on strike Sept. 26 after the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District Board rejected an agreement that would have stayed off a work stoppage.

The UTU and transit negotiators had earlier agreed on several temporary cuts in other benefits to fund a reduction in monthly health insurance premiums.

But the transit district’s board rejected what its own negotiators agreed to, and voted to impose new work rules that the board’s negotiators had agreed were too harsh. The UTU responded with a walkout. Some 145 UTU-represented bus operators are on strike.

“In one of the wealthiest communities in America, where bus operators struggle to support their families, the transit board thumbed its nose at these loyal employees and then drove home in their SUVs,” said UTU Local 23 Chairperson Bonnie Mör.

To get the latest news, go to www.utu.org and click on the “Bus” tab at the top.

The Voice of Transportation Labor
“Our employers, emboldened by the administration’s attacks on labor, are adopting vicious anti-union policies that include an increased number of discipline cases and court actions against us.”

“The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, as well as the Teamsters, are raiding our rail and bus properties.

In addition to defending our union and defending our jobs as never before, we are fighting for improved training, fighting to preserve Amtrak, and fighting every day at the bargaining table to protect jobs, improve wages, improve our health-care plans, and ensure safety is not compromised by employers who put profits first.

All of these challenges are being met successfully, but the costs are significant.

“The International’s employees deserve fair wages and adequate health-care insurance,” Thompson said. “The UTU continues to file – and win – more grievances than most organizations.”

Continued on page 10

Bargain at table, not in the media
UTU International President Paul C. Thompson is warning union officers and members to negotiate at the bargaining table, not in the media.

The warning came after two incidents where UTU officers aired grievances in the local media, and not through proper channels.

In one instance, a well-meaning officer in America, where bus operators struggle to support their families, the transit board thumbed its nose at these loyal employees and then drove home in their SUVs,” said UTU Local 23 Chairperson Bonnie Mör.

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Continued on page 10

FRA echoes UTU remote concerns
WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Federal Railroad Administration has put the nation’s carriers on notice that UTU safety concerns about remote control operations and remote control operator training are valid and must be addressed promptly.

Responding to a Senate Commerce Committee study made at the request of the UTU, the FRA told the nation’s railroads it shares the UTU’s safety concerns as they “relate to the use of remote control locomotive (RCL) technology in main line movements.”

More specifically, those shared UTU/FRA concerns relate to the suitability of RCL technology in non-incidental main line train movements and the adequacy of training being provided remote control operators (RCOs).

The UTU was the first to alert Congress and
Local 161, Seattle, Wash.
Members of this local working as bus operators for Everett Trails recently began a fundraising drive to assist the Northwest Children’s Home. "We are always looking for donations and in its efforts, said Local Chairperson Brian Donald. "More about the effort can be read on the local’s website at www.utulocal161.org. Also, members recently honored former longtime General Chairperson Dan Bentley for his services and dedication to the local.

Local 202, Denver, Colo.
Best wishes go to J.P. “Pat” Fondy, who recently retired from the BNSF Railway after working 46 years in engine service. Brother Fondy served as vice local chairperson and local chairperson for many years.

Local 226, Moberly, Mo.
This Norfolk Southern local, in conjunction with the Wahab Hospital Association, will be hosting a tax clinic on Nov. 21, said Secretary & Treasurer Richard Duley. Shirts will be given at the Best Western Moberly Inn from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. The service is free to members of the hospital association. For information, call Duley at (660) 263-4916.

Local 262, Boston, Mass.
Secretary & Treasurer Marty Murphy will be inducted into the International Veterans Boxing Association (IVBA) Hall of Fame on Oct. 30, said Treasurer Dave Bowe of Local 1462 in Boston. Murphy is being recognized for a lifetime of boxing development, as well as, during which he served as sparring partner for five world champions. He also serves as chairman of the IVBA Scholarship Fund, which he helped develop, and is currently the boxing commissioner for Massachusetts.

Locals 200 & 286, N. Platte, Neb.
Members of these two Union Pacific locals recently presented a charity with donations while challenging other UTU locals to step up to the plate. To support the Lincoln Connection, a homeless shelter, Local 200 President Mack Condon and Local 286 President Mark Olejnik handed the charity’s representative $500, while Local President Steve Coleman and Secretary-Treasurer John Hasenauer of Local 286 handed over $1,000. Local 286 Chairperson Paul Fitz-Patrick, who helped spearhead the effort, said his local’s donation included 10 individual gifts of $50 each.

Local 343, Hamilton, Ont.
This Canadian National Railways and RailAmerica local recently passed a motion to donate $500 to the UTU’s Hurricane Relief Fund and challenged those locals with 35 or more members to meet or beat their donation, said Local President Scott Montani. Along with Mark Olejnik, Montani is now handling Discipline Income Protection Plan requests and sales for the local.

Local 471, Eugene, Ore.
Former Union Pacific conductor Mark Kroeger, 59, recently succumbed to cancer at Veterans’ Hospice in Vancouver, Wash., said Local Chairperson Greg Boom.

Local 1241, Richmond, Calif.
Members of this BNSF Railway local are mourning the death of former Local Chairperson Richard “Dick” Bendor. He passed away on Sept. 9, said Local Chairperson C.M. Schultz.

Local 1313, Amarillo, Texas
A pair of special seminars set for Oct. 10 and 11 for members and their spouses has been canceled, Local President Joe Romo said. The events, Know Your Rights Under the Federal Land Transportation Act and a Landowner’s Guide to the Federal Land Policy, were rescheduled for a later date when negotiating conflicts can be reconciled. For information, contact Romo at (806) 622-2265.

Local 1558, Bergenfield, N.J.
Nineteen members of this Rockland Coaches local volunteered last month to head to the Gulf Coast and operate buses in the evacuation of Hurricane Katrina victims, said General Chairperson Rich Deiser, who also serves as alternate vice president-business, while none were assigned to go, their offers to help remain in effect.

Local 1697, Lubbock, Texas
Nine bus operators from this Texas, New Mexico & Oklahoma (Panhandle Trailways) local last month participated in the evacuation of Hurricane Katrina victims from New Orleans, taking them to Mesquite, Texas, said Local President Richard Kritselis and General Chairperson Leon B. Davis Jr. Three of the nine were members of the bargaining unit, but management would not supply their names as this issue reached deadline.

Local 1741, San Francisco, Calif.
Members of this local are working to build “brand recognition” for the UTU through a “marketing committee” that will network, participate in community events and make more available to the public, UTU and UTU apparel and other items to increase awareness of the union and its value, said Local President Anthony Allen. Also, newly appointed Vice Local Chairperson Nellie Morales recently has assumed her duties with the local.

Local 1765, Grand Rapids, Mich.
Members of this CSX local are mourning the death of John T. ‘Rupp Jr., said Local Chairperson Steven Kaufman. The 33-year-old conductor from Lowell, Mich., a railroad employee since 1995, succumbed to a heart attack on Sept. 13.

Local 1785, Santa Monica, Calif.
Local Chairperson Adhi Reddy enjoyed a special 45th-birthday present on Sept. 16: His local ratified a new three-year contract with the Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines. (See story on Page 11.)

Local 1778, N. Vancouver, B.C.
The fall issue of the joint newsletter, The Meeting Point, issued by this local and Local 1923 in Prince George, B.C., is now available on the website shared by these two CN Railway locals, said Secretary-Treasurer David Moorhouse of Local 1778. Visit the website and take a look at www.utbc.com.

Local 1823, St. Louis, Mo.
At its September meeting, this Union Pacific local honored conductor Jerry Riggin, who recently retired after 34 years with the Missouri Pacific and the UP, said State Legislative Director Larry Foster. Among those at the event were Foster, UTUIA Field Supervisor Joe Cunningham, UTUIA Assistant Field Supervisor Jed Enert, Secretary & Treasurer Tom Fitzgerald, Legislative Rep. Stan Adams, conductors Charles Woodley, Jake Biermann and John Ramirez and retired conductor Norbert Shacklett.

Local 1951, Albany, N.Y.
Five yardmasters from District 1, all working in Massachusetts, retired during the summer, according to Local Chairperson M. E. Dowdell, who passed on his death, said General Chairperson Bryan Collett. Brian Lampson, H. Butch Cross, Joe Fernandes and R. Rusty Haymer.

Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority conductor Joseph “Jay” Marsden (left), a fourth-generation railroader, recently retired just as his daughter Lisa began her career as a conductor. Both are members of Local 98 in Boston, Mass.

Passengers honor retiring conductor
One day last June, with his 36-year rail career drawing to an end and his train making the last stop of the run, conductor Joseph “Jay” Marsden discovered it was payback time.

“For once, instead of me being in charge,” Marsden said, “the passengers took over!”

During his 17 years on the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority’s (MBTA) Lowell Line, Brother Marsden had built a reputation for himself by wearing a leprechaun’s hat on St. Patrick’s Day, dressing as a werewolf on Halloween, leading sing-a-longs and learning enough about each passenger to make the ride a personal experience.

The man who assured a safe and secure commute and offered a sympathetic ear suddenly found himself surrounded by regular riders, past and present, who had secretly conspired to take him to dinner and celebrate his career.

For Marsden, now 62 and a member of Local 98 in Boston, Mass., time spent on the Lowell Line wasn’t just a job. “Every day, I’d see the same people, and it became like a family on wheels,” he said.

Marsden began his rail career at age 24 after spending five years selling insurance. When the insurance company was hit by a strike, his father suggested Marsden might want to join him on the Boston & Maine.

Marsden joined the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen and jumped back and forth between freight and passenger runs on the same property where his father, an uncle and his brother worked. “I’m a fourth-generation railroader,” he said. “My great-grandfather and my grandfather also were conductors, and my daughter Lisa is a fifth-generation conductor and a proud member of Local 9898.”

Retirement feels strange, Marsden said, but he’s ready. “I spent some of my finest hours in a caboose, looking out over the Mohawk Valley at a full moon,” he said, “but I look forward to sitting on a little lake in New Hampshire, doing some fishing and reading and taking a couple day trips.”

Local Chairperson C.M. Schultz

“Mack McConahay handed over $500, while Local President Murphy is being recognized for a lifetime of boxing development, as well as, during which he served as sparring partner for five world champions. He also serves as chairman of the IVBA Scholarship Fund, which he helped develop, and is currently the boxing commissioner for Massachusetts.”

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Local President Joe Romo
UTU Gear for your holiday shopping list

It's not too early to begin your holiday shopping and the UTU website is just the place to start, without ever leaving your home or going to a busy shopping mall. Just visit the UTU website at www.utu.org and click on the UTU Gear button.

All of the UTU items featured there are sold through American Products and are either union-made or are made in America.

All items carry a 100 percent quality guarantee against defects in materials and workmanship and volume discounts on customized orders are available to UTU locals. Watches and clocks carry a two-year manufacturer's warranty against defects.

All of the featured items can be ordered by credit card directly through the company's secure website, or by calling the company's toll-free telephone number: (800) 272-5120.

UTU members may also download and print a custom order form that can be mailed to UTU Merchandise.com, 1600 North Clinton Ave., Rochester, NY 14621.

All orders will be processed within days of receipt.

Prices are shown in U.S. dollars. Canadian members should make payment by check in U.S. funds. When using credit cards, transactions will automatically be billed in U.S. funds.

In maintaining the UTU’s commitment to unionism, all of the warehouse staff employed by American Products are proud members of International Association of Machinists Local 1868.

Apparel prices may vary depending on size. Visit the UTU online store for complete details about prices and available sizes.

These are just some of the items you can purchase when you visit the UTU online store or call (800) 272-5120.

Happy Holidays from UTU!
Five dollars can buy you a better job, security

You can’t buy much for five bucks these days.

Five bucks won’t get you even two gallons of gasoline, and only a couple of beers if it’s happy hour.

But what if you could make your employment more secure with five bucks?

Sounds like a pretty good investment.

With President Bush and conservatives in Congress doing all they are able to cripple labor unions, with employers fighting us with every tool at their disposal, and with the BLET and Teamsters raiding our members in an attempt to gain control of our contracts, we are under attack as never before.

It’s our jobs they are after – our livelihoods.

That five bucks will help in this fight to keep our union strong and effective.

It will also allow the UTU to return to the AFL-CIO.

It’s been six years since the UTU International raised dues.

Five bucks more per month seems a pretty reasonable investment to return to the House of Labor, keep our defenses strong and advance our progressive agenda of improving wages, working conditions, job safety and job security.

Taxes, union dues pay for what we need

When we see a train wreck about to happen, we do all we can to stop it.

It appears that our nation is headed for a fiscal train wreck.

Bill Clinton was called many things – one of which was a tax-and-spend liberal. But when the moving vans left the White House in 2001, it marked the first time in almost 30 years that our federal budget was balanced and we were on a glide path to reducing our enormous national debt which then was $5 trillion.

In this second Bush administration, the national debt continues its drive to lower taxes – too often mostly for the benefit of the wealthy – then the bill will be paid by cutting other government programs such as eliminating Medicare benefits.

Remember: There are no free lunches.

Do we really want, for example, a nation where senior citizens must choose between food on the table and medical care – or health care and energy prices and other bills they may not be able to pay.

If predictions hold for a colder-than-normal winter, on the horizon is more suffering for the poor and middle class, who will be faced with higher health care, energy prices and other bills they may not be able to pay.

A ferocious fiscal storm is approaching.

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If predictions hold for a colder-than-normal winter, heating bills over most of the Midwest and Northeast are going to force millions of Americans to choose between food and heat.

Seniors and others on fixed incomes especially will suffer.

How much longer can we continue to believe that which is not true – that we can lower taxes while increasing spending?

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A ferocious fiscal storm is approaching. Who is going to stop this train wreck?
International, general committee and local officers and members recently attended an annual picnic sponsored by UTU Local 376 (CSX, Louisville). Attendants included International President Paul Thompson and Vice President Roy Bolding. The event featured a presentation honoring retiring Kentucky State Legislative Director Bobby Marshall. Above, State Legislative Director David Miracle, left, presents Marshall with a plaque of appreciation from the UTU National Association of State Legislative Directors for his years of service to the organization.

David Brickey, former state director and chairperson of the UTU National Association of State Legislative Directors, retired Oct. 1 after a lengthy career that spanned more than 44 years in the rail industry.

In 1961, after serving in the U.S. Army, including service in Korea, Brickey hired out on the Wabash Railroad (now Norfolk Southern) and soon became involved in union activities. In 1966 he was elected vice president of Local 454 of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. He continuously held elected offices including local president, local chairperson, legislative representative, delegate and secretary of the general grievance committee. In 1980 he was elected full time assistant state legislative director and in 1981 succeeded to the position of Michigan state legislative director and served in that capacity until his retirement.

In addition to recommending U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine for governor, the New Jersey State Legislative Board recommends to all New Jersey UTU members the following candidates for election to the General Assembly:

- Frank Blee (R-2nd); Joseph Roberts (D-2nd); Herb Conaway (D-11th); jack Connors (D-7th); Christopher Connors (R-15th); Samuel D. Thompson (R-11th); Linda Greenstein (D-14th); Reed Gusciora (D-15th); Bonnie Watson-Coleman (D-15th); Joseph Egan (D-17th); Upendra Chivukula (D-17th); John Wisniewski (D-17th); Joseph Vas (D-19th); Linda Stender (D-22nd); Joseph R. Malone (R-30th) and Kevin O’Toole (R-49th).

The Maryland State Legislative Board held its annual fund raiser for the James E. Major Jr. Memorial Scholarship recently. Major, a member of Local 610 in Baltimore, was killed seven years ago in the head-on crash of an Amtrak train with a MARC, commuter train at Silver Spring, winning the golf tournament were Malcolm "T-Bone" Morrison and his wife Sybil. "The event was a success in obtaining the funds necessary to continue the scholarship," State Legislative Director Larry Kanevask said. "Earning the scholarship for 2005 was Alicia Anderson, a student at West Virginia University and the daughter of Michael Anderson, a member of Local 600 in Cumberland."

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Donations pour into UTU’s Hurricane Relief Fund

As cash contributions from UTU members, their locals and general committees continue to pour into the UTU Hurricane Relief Fund, the International is in the process of creating equitable and timely procedures for the distribution of those contributions to affected rail workers in need—regardless of craft or union representation.

Because the purpose of this fund is not immediate disaster relief as is being provided by the Red Cross and other organizations,” said UTU International President Paul Thompson. “This fund is intended to help affected railroaders rebuild their lives.”

The amount of assistance provided to each railroader will depend upon the number of those affected and the total amount donated. Clearly, the needs are great and the UTU continues to encourage its members, locals and general committees to contribute all they are able.

As soon as formal procedures are developed for those affected to apply for assistance, those procedures will be posted on the UTU website and provided to general chairpersons and local officers, Thompson said.

“So many of these guys will be able to hold regular jobs and get regular paychecks. That is why donations to the Hurricane Relief Fund are so important.”

Bob Snow, Mississippi state legislative director

Checks should be made out to the “UTU Hurricane Relief Fund” and mailed to:

UTU Hurricane Relief Fund
ATTN: Cheryl Sneed
United Transportation Union
14600 Detroit Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44107

Yes, I want to help!

I want to contribute to the UTU Hurricane Relief Fund to aid my brothers and sisters in their time of need.

Name

Address

City/State/ZIP

Amount enclosed $

Mail to UTU Hurricane Relief Fund, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250. (Contributions are tax deductible.)
By V.M. “Butch” Speakman, Jr.

The financial condition of the Railroad Retirement system, as recently reported to Congress, is “generally favorable” for the next 25 years. Projecting the system’s income and outgo under optimistic, moderate and pessimistic employment assumptions, the report concludes that, barring a sudden, unanticipated, large decrease in railroad employment or substantial investment losses, the system will experience no cash-flow problems through the year 2029.

This is an improved report over the one submitted in 2004, which indicated cash-flow problems as early as 2026 under the pessimistic employment assumption — but not under the optimistic and moderate employment assumptions.

Also, the Railroad Retirement system’s projected account balances are higher than in last year’s report. This is due largely to investment results and stepped-up hiring by the railroads.

There are some $26 billion in the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund. The 2005 report does not recommend any Railroad Retirement financing changes. However, the report makes clear that, under the current financing structure, actual levels of railroad employment and investment revenue over the coming years will largely determine whether corrective action is necessary.

The RRB’s 2005 Railroad Unemployment Insurance financial report was also generally favorable.

The Railroad Retirement Board’s 2005 financial reports are available on the board’s website at www.rrb.gov.

V.M. “Butch” Speakman, Jr. serves as labor member of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board.
Protection for your loved ones  Peace of mind for you

The answer is life insurance. Life insurance – especially term insurance – is very expensive at young ages and, while you’re young and insured, you stand the best chance of getting the best rate possible.

We can provide the peace of mind you’re looking for. Contact us toll-free at 1-800-558-8842.

Health and welfare plans bend to storm relief

UTU-represented rail employees and their families covered by certain health and welfare plans and affected by Hurricane Katrina can now access a toll-free, 24-hour crisis hotline serving their health and welfare needs, and the coverage plans these members and their families rely on have announced special provisions to ease the difficulties many may be facing.

Hotline for H&W and NRC/UTU Plans

To support the health, emotional, financial, and legal concerns of members in the affected areas, a toll-free, 24-hour crisis hotline can be reached at (866) 615-8700.

This hotline is available to members and their families who participate in the Managed Medical Care Program (MMCP) and the Basic Health Care Benefit (BHCB) plans available through the Railroad Employees National Health and Welfare (H&W) Plan and the National Railway Carriers and United Transportation Union Health and Welfare (NRC/UTU) Plan.

Customer-care professionals staffing the hotline are assisting individuals in locating network doctors and hospitals when members have been able to call for support.

However, some members have needed immediate access to care from the closest doctor or hospital offering services, while others have been displaced or have no access to a telephone.

As a result, claims for services rendered to UnitedHealthcare enrollees from the FEMA-designated disaster areas will be reimbursed using the enrollees’ network benefit differential level regardless of the physicians’ or facilities’ affiliation with UnitedHealthcare. For example, if an enrollee’s network co-insurance amount is 10 percent, that co-insurance percentage will be used even on out-of-network claims.

This change will include dates of service from Aug. 27, 2005, through Sept. 30, 2005.

Plans adapt to circumstances

Meanwhile, the H&W and NRC/UTU plans have adopted the following four arrangements to help participants who, on Aug. 7, resided in any part of Louisiana, Mississippi, or Alabama and ordered to evacuate. The company said it is prepared to assist these people in any way possible.

Eligible dependents

The plans will treat as eligible dependents an employee’s unmarried children between 19 and 25 who were registered students in regular full-time school attendance during the spring or summer of 2005 but who will not be registered full-time students during the fall of 2005 due to the damage and disruption wrought by Katrina. Please bear in mind, however, that to be eligible dependents, these children must be dependent for care and support mainly upon you and wholly, in the aggregate, upon themselves, you, your spouse, and scholarships and the like, and have their legal residence with you.

Benefits paid at in-network level

The Managed Medical Care Program (MMCP) under each plan will pay benefits at the in-network benefit level whether or not covered health services are obtained from an in-network provider. This means that the yearly deductibles and out-of-pocket maximum that apply to out-of-network services won’t apply to covered health services obtained from out-of-network providers and that the plans will pay 100 percent of eligible expenses after any applicable co-payment is made.

Mental health and substance abuse benefits

Each plan’s Mental Health and Substance Abuse Benefit will pay benefits at the in-network benefit level whether or not covered health services are obtained from a ValueOptions provider or a non-ValueOptions provider. This means that the yearly deductibles and out-of-pocket maximum that apply to out-of-network services won’t apply to covered health services obtained from a non-ValueOptions provider and that the plan will pay 100 percent of in-patient benefits and, except for a $15 co-payment for each office visit, 100 percent of outpatient benefits. The outpatient benefits will be payable as long as the provider is a licensed or certified psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric social worker or other licensed or certified mental health practitioner. No certification by ValueOptions will be needed for the first 10 outpatient visits. ValueOptions’ certification will still be needed for inpatient or alternative levels of care.

Prescription drug benefit

The mail order prescription drug program under the Managed Pharmacy Services Benefit of each plan will hold shipment of temperature-sensitive medications pending contact from you, and will replace lost or damaged prescriptions without any requirement that you pay a co-pay or shipping cost for the replacement prescription upon confirmation by the plans’ vendor, Medco, that the order was lost or damaged. Further, mail orders can be shipped to a temporary alternate address by calling Medco’s customer service at (800) 942-0770 and making the request. This will apply to new orders, refills or existing prescriptions on file with Medco and, in some instances, orders already placed.

If you are unable to receive your order by mail, Medco can transfer your prescription to a retail pharmacy for dispensing. If you are out of medications and have placed a mail order with Medco and its system indicates that the medication has been shipped, Medco will process up to a seven-day supply of medications through a retail pharmacy, at no cost to you.

If for some reason this can’t be done but you are able to obtain your medication from a retail pharmacy, whether it is an in-network pharmacy or an out-of-network pharmacy, you will be reimbursed for that one-time transaction.

As Hurricane Rita pushed across Texas and Louisiana, Medco reviewed the current eligibility files for all railroad members living in areas that were ordered to evacuate. It identified some 17,000-plus members and dependents across all railroad populations (National Plan, NRC/TCU, Retirees, ERMA, and Labor Executives) that reside in areas that were ordered to evacuate. The company said it is prepared to assist these people in any way possible and will keep them advised of any changes in protocol that are made as they develop.

www.utuia.org www.utu.org

Young families have very little discretionary cash. In fact, most young families rely on the income of both spouses to make ends meet.

You’ve thought about how your family would carry on if something happened to you. But you put the thought out of your mind because, after all, you’re young. Nothing’s going to happen to you. Right!

What if something were to happen to you? Would there be enough money to provide for even the barest of necessities, especially if it takes both incomes to make ends meet?

If you could protect the financial well-being of your loved ones for just a few dollars a month, wouldn’t you do whatever it takes to set aside those few dollars to ensure the financial well-being of your family? Of course you would!
Dues increase

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with the anti-labor White House and Congress, emboldened employers, and our internal cost increases.”

Thompson noted that under the UTU Constitution, international dues could be raised by $2 monthly without a vote of delegates.

“If this $5 increase is approved, I promise two things,” Thompson said. “One is that the international will not place another $2 dues increase into effect. The other is that I will present for the delegates’ consideration at the 2007 UTU convention additional proposals to streamline our union with additional cost-saving items. With our continued austerity, the $5 monthly dues increase will enable us to have available funds to fight the terrific battles that we are facing from the White House, from conservatives in Congress, from anti-union bias and rail carriers, and from the BLE and the Teamsters,” Thompson said.

“This dues increase,” Thompson said, “is essential to our returning to the AFL-CIO and ensures the financial stability of our organization and our ability to do the job you expect us to accomplish.”

Remote concerns

Continued from page 1

the FRA that railroads were using RCL outside yards in main line operation – something the FRA said it was “surprised” to learn as the carriers had never notified the FRA they intended to expand use of that technology beyond its tested limitations.

Although the FRA said incidental main line track operations (such as using a main line for so-called rail roll when switching within a yard) are “generally safe,” the agency said “nonincidental movements over main line track by RCLs can pose an unacceptable safety risk and should be severely limited.” Further, it appears that remote control operator training provided to date is not sufficient to support non-incidental main line operations.

“The primary problem with the current state of the RCL technology,” the FRA said, “is that it is inadequate to control in-train forces during heavy-haul operations; similarly, we are concerned that the way to operate the RCL over the main track, and its variously graded conditions, without pulling the train apart, may require manipulating the remote control device in a way that is counter-intuitive to the way it was designed to be used.”

With regard to remote control operator training, the FRA said, “we have concluded that the typical 80 hours of remote control operator training that is specified in each railroad’s locomotive engineer certification program is inadequate to prepare a remote control operator for operating an RCL over main line track.”

The FRA said it agreed with the UTU that the “speed control feature on the remote control transmitter (beltpack) was originally designed for yard switching operations. When used for switching, such as limited number of cars on a yard-switching lead track with limited horsepower, the system works well,” the FRA said.

When this system is used to haul trains, however, the speed control feature must be circumvented at times to control in-train forces,” the FRA stated. “The computer is not programmed or designed to make train-handling decisions, such as taking into account the number of cars and tonnage that are in the train being moved or the topography of the track over which the train is operating.”

The FRA also agreed with UTU concerns about the RCL braking system, which the agency is “primarily designed for yard switching movements….” FRA does not believe that further modification of RCL technology could overcome these limitations while providing a level of safety equal to that of conventional operations on the main line.”

While the FRA found that training of “experienced” conductors to operate RCL “adequate,” it found inadequacies in the training of less-experienced conductors. The UTU advocates significant additional training for new and less-experienced employees to ensure they are completely familiar with the physical plant, understand RCL operating procedures, and are otherwise qualified to operate the equipment.

More specifically, the FRA said:

• Remote control operators should be required to have the same or the equivalent level of class room training as that provided for conventional train service engineers on each railroad when RCL equipment is used for main line operations.

• Each remote control operator should have a minimum of 125 hours of actual hands-on operating experience, and training programs should “remain flexible and provide more than the minimum ‘on-the-job training’” to be determined on a “case-by-case basis” depending, for example, upon track profile and environment.

Restrictions on main line operations

The FRA recommended that where railroads do “choose to conduct RCL operations outside of yard switching operations,” they:

• Establish standard operating procedures that limit RCL movements outside of yard switching operations;

• Limit those operations to locomotive consists not exceeding 3,000 horsepower, utilizing no more than eight axles;

• Limit train length to no more than 1,000 feet (approximately 20 car lengths);

• Limit train speeds to no more than 15 mph;

• Prohibit operations on any grade of 0.5 percent or greater that extends for more than one-quarter mile.

UTU International President Paul Thompson said the FRA letter to carriers “validates what the UTU has been telling Congress, the FRA and railroads since the inception of RCL operations. In fact, these issues have been the subject of extensive discussion during recent mediated negotiations in response to the railroads’ Section 6 notices,” Thompson said.

Bargain at table

Continued from page 1

The UTU and Canadian National were already in the process of setting up a meeting of top union officers and carrier officers to address those safety issues, Thompson said.

“The purpose of a labor union is to gain for its members and workmen improved wages, benefits and working conditions,” he said. “Most often, those objectives are achieved at the bargaining table, or through direct contact with carrier officials right up to the office of the carrier CEO. Sometimes, we involve government regulators or labor boards.”

“Only as a last resort do we take unilateral action – such as through legislative or court action or a work stoppage, or by contacting the media.”

“When we take these issues first to the media – or take them to the media before allowing the International to become involved – we risk a situation where the carrier digs in its heels out of pride; or where the carrier, out of anger, reacts against the individual(s) who contacted the media, such as through a lawsuit or termination of employment.

“Arbitrary attacking the carrier through the media also could result in adverse consequences at the bargaining table, where wages, benefits and work rules – not safety issues – are being negotiated.

“A better solution is first to permit each level of the organization to solve the problem directly with the carrier, beginning with local officers and extending up to the International. When both parties voluntarily buy into a solution that is reached through negotiation, there is a far greater probability that the carrier will honor the agreement. If they fail to do so, then UTU will be forced to take further action, but not through the media.”

“When individuals take it upon themselves to contact the media, they risk being misunderstood, being misquoted, or seeing our good intentions turned against us by savvy carrier officials.”

“UTU has recognized that the individual did not have available.

“This is why it is the policy of the UTU that public and media comments are cleared through the International president,” he said.
Bus members on ‘Big Blue’ approve contract

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – UTU-represented bus operators working on the Santa Monica municipal Bus line overwhelmingly approved a three-year contract last month.

In a 151-to-9 vote, members of Local 1785 in Santa Monica embraced a three-year contract that replaces the old contract that expired last month. “Our members did a great job,” Stoner said. “A lot of our success is due to the work done by Reddy, Vice Local Chairperson Martin Guerrero and Treasurer Jabryan Donald. Their effort and ability to communicate their progress to the rest of the local played a major role in our success. Kenneth Johnson, an employee for 37 years who leads the seniority list, said this is the best contract he’s ever seen.”

LACMTA’s Orange Line to roll

LOS ANGELES – The $330-million Orange Line will open Oct. 29, with a weekend of free rides and community events to welcome riders to the San Fernando Valley buway, MTA officials announced last month.

The 14-mile long buway, the first of its kind in Southern California, has been championed by supporters as a model for bringing low-cost, congestion-busting mass transit to the region.

The line had initially been slated to open over Labor Day, but that debut was hampered by the winter rains, an omen for which the residents were stricken of a residents’ lawsuit that halted work for nearly a month.

Free rides will be offered Oct. 29-30, and community events are sched-
This month’s winning photo:

This month’s winning photograph was taken by Patrick Douglas, a retired locomotive engineer from Local 1626, Anchorage. It shows a Grand Canyon Railway engine in Arizona.

UTU works to amend CDL law and improve bus driver jobs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At the request of the UTU, Rep. Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii) has introduced legislation, H.R. 3725, to correct an unintended consequence of the Motor Carrier Safety Act of 1999 that exposes bus operators to loss of their livelihood for various traffic offenses committed in their private automobiles.

The law it would amend eliminated an option for those holding a commercial driver’s license to attend traffic violator school while maintaining their commercial driving privileges.

The DOT’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) crafted new regulations that could result in bus operators losing their jobs for non-job-related traffic offenses in any state.

Thus, bus operators on vacation and caught, for example, in a speed trap, or wrongly accused of a traffic offense hundreds of miles from home, are at significant economic risk.

The inequity is that a holder of a commercial driver’s license stands to lose that license as well as their job for a traffic violation committed in their private automobile; but private vehicle operators face no such loss of license when they commit similar traffic offenses.

States also are barred by the current law from issuing a provisional license permitting the holder of a commercial driver’s license to continue working while receiving remedial training.

“The purpose of the 1999 law was to improve highway safety through enhancing the methods of dealing with commercial drivers who receive certain moving violations,” said UTU International President Paul Thompson. “The intent was not to eliminate the re-education and re-training of commercial drivers, and that is what the UTU and Rep. Abercrombie are seeking to correct.”

The UTU has been alone in this fight on behalf of bus operators. Previously, UTU officials met with Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta and the head of the FMCSA. Although Mineta recommended the regulations be changed, the FMCSA declined to do so, citing its interpretation of the 1999 law.

UTU members can assist by urging their congressional representatives to support H.R. 3725. Holders of a commercial driver’s license should not be singled out for special punishment that strips them of their license and their job.

“They should have the same treatment as the general public,” said Mike Anderson, assistant California state legislative director. “The UTU’s commitment to continue the fight on behalf of its bus operators demonstrates the will of our locals, general committees, legislative boards and the International.”

Inside this issue of the UTU News:

One Marsden out, another Marsden in. See Page 2.

It’s not too early to think about holiday shopping. See page 3.

Please help UTU hurricane victims. See pages 6 and 7.

Former Vice President Cliff Bryant dead at 73. See Page 8.

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This issue’s winning photo: