The Voice of Transportation Labor

“I have instructed our national legislative director to intensify his urging of lawmakers to pass a new rail safety bill that includes effective measures to improve worker training and eliminate employee fatigue.” – UTU International President Paul Thompson

Inspections would head south under UP scheme

On the deadly streets of a lawless Mexican border town, there is being hatched a plot that could bring death and destruction to any number of American towns and cities. Labor-union opposition may be all that will stop it.

Union Pacific Railroad wants to shift from U.S. soil to Mexico the mechanical safety inspection of freight cars headed north. Instead of U.S.-trained and -regulated Carmen performing these safety inspections, UP wants them performed south of the border in Nuevo Laredo by Mexican employees of Kansas City Southern de Mexico.

Then, the trains would pass into the U.S. and not have to be inspected again, under FRA regulations, for another 1,500 miles.

That would allow trains originating in Mexico to pass into the U.S. without a further mechanical safety inspection until they reach Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Little Rock, St. Louis or San Antonio.

As for Nuevo Laredo, where UP wants the mechanical safety inspections performed, neither FRA nor UP officials will visit the proposed facility to assess its capabilities. That is because to enter Nuevo Laredo is to risk being kidnapped or murdered.

Nuevo Laredo is so dangerous that the local Mexican media call it their version of Baghdad, Iraq. Just last month, two Mexican Army officers were shot in an ambush by drug gangs, whom the FBI says are the real law in town.

The FRA has scheduled a hearing on UP’s request for early February (check www.utu.org to keep up to date on this and other issues). “It is as if 9/11 never occurred and public safety and national security must take a back seat to increased profits and bigger executive bonuses,” said UTU International President Paul Thompson.

Union Pacific, in pursuit of a higher stock price, shamelessly continues to thumb its nose at public safety and national security.

The FRA rejected a similar request from UP two years ago, saying that the railroad “failed to demonstrate that granting the petition would be consistent with safety at this time.”

In the year after that decision, 110 people were murdered in Nuevo Laredo, including 15 policemen and the police chief, and kidnappings occurred almost daily, according to the BBC World Wide News Service. One local radio station regularly plays the sound of machine-gun fire, with a voice saying, cheerfully, “We’ll be back in a bullet.”

Continued on page 10

FRA deals new yard safety advice

New safety recommendations affecting all yard showing and pushing operations, including conventional and remote control, have been issued by the Federal Railroad Administration in the wake of a Dec. 14 fatality in a CSX yard near Syracuse, N.Y.

Included in the recommendations are that railroads amend their point-protection rules for remote control operations “to clarify that the person protecting the point visually determines, for the duration of the showing or pushing movement, that the track is clear either within the person’s range of vision or for the complete distance the equipment is to be shoved or pushed.”

The fatality, said the FRA, occurred in CSX’s DeWitt yard when a carman backing a pickup truck over a crossing was struck by a...
Around the UTU

Local 30, Jacksonville, Fla.

Members of this Amtrak local offer best wishes to William R. “Roberta” Ward Jr. and James A. “Jimmy” Newman on their retirements after 42 years of rail service, said Secretary and Treasurer L. S. Seegmiller.

Locals 78 & 265, Pocatello, Idaho

These Union Pacific locals, along with the Pocatello chapters of the UTU Auxiliary and UTU for Life, enjoyed a Christmas party featuring great food, fun and music on Dec. 16, said State Legislative Director George Millward. More than 275 attended, with Legislative Rep. Todd Clement serving as master of ceremonies and organizer. Helping plan the evening were Millward and his wife LaRae, Clement and his wife Tareas; Matthew and Melanie Millward; Ralph and Ruth Fuller; Scott and Michelle Paul; Paul Francis and Thelma McCarty. Representing UTUIA, Matthew Millward hosted a raffle that raised $1,590 for the Idaho Food Bank.

Local 240, Los Angeles, Calif.

Member of this Pacific local are mourning the death last month of retired conductor Robert W. Conser, who had served UTU members for more than 30 years as vice general chairman and local chairman, according to Fred G. Comeau.

Local 286, N. Platte, Neb.

Members of this Union Pacific local in December spurred the community into action, contributing $920 to the Salvation Army and sponsoring a series of radio ads to challenge other organizations to meet or beat their donation, said Local President Steve Coleman and Secretary and Treasurer John Hasenauer. Meanwhile, retired member Thomas E. Fennell said his daughter Madaline was the state’s teacher of the year and serves as vice president of her school district’s teachers’ union.

Local 590, Portage, Wis.

This Canadian Pacific local invites all of its active and retired members, as well as those from Local 281 in Milwaukee, Wis., and from the local BLET division, to a Valentine’s Day party on Feb. 24 at The Blankenship’s Restaurant in Portage. A social hour begins at 5:30 p.m., with dinner served at 7 p.m. For information, contact James at (608) 742-8054.

Local 982, Chester, N.Y.

Following a kidney transplant and a return to health, Dave Murphy has been re-elected as local chairman and delegate for this local, which represents CSXT employees.

Local 1067, Virginia, Minn.

Sixteen members of this Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific/CN local, which has a 98 percent UTU PAC Gold Club participation rate ($100 per year), recently increased their stake to Diamond Club status ($600 or more per year), said State Legislative Director P. J. Quady. “Many thanks to Ron Bedell and Jim Busker, Patrick Etter and the local’s members for their outstanding effort on behalf of UTU PAC,” Quady said. “I pit this local against any other.”

Local 1168, Clovis, N.M.

Members of this RNSF Railway local now have a Web site boasting meeting dates, con- tract information and other useful links, according to Lee Zierschen. Travis Mahan. Take a look at www.utu1168.com.

Local 1373, Philadelphia, Pa.

About 40 active and retired members of this CSX local in December enjoyed a birthday party at the St. John’s Club in South Philadelphia, said Secretary and Treasurer Greg Brecker. Among those attending were State Legislative Director Don Dunlevy and UTUIA Field Supervisor Art Rayner. Thanks to the local’s sponsor and President Local Tony Mirarchi and Scotty Carlile for arranging the festivities.

Local 1403, Kansas City, Mo.

Members of this Union Pacific local working in the yard and looking for lid sheets, maps, information about hub boards, medical insurance or even the weather need no further than the local’s new Web site, said Brian Leu. Check it out at http://utu1403.com.

Local 1567, Corbin, Ky.

The members of this CSX local are offering their best wishes to Local Chairman Dennis L. Fox and Richard E. Stevens on their recent retirements, said Secretary, Legislative Rep. and Delegate Donna Head.

Local 1760, Detroit, Mich.

A large turnout of active and retired CSX employees enjoyed the annual Christmas party, where Richard K. Allen was honored in advance of his February retirement, said Secretary and Treasurer Jer D’Orentiio. During his more than 30 years as a member of the local, Allen held numerous posts, including president, local chairperson, vice local chairperson and trustee. He was presented with a clock, a brass lantern and letters of appreciation from UTU Interna- tional President Paul Thompson and Gener- al Chairperson John Lesniowski.

Local 1778, N. Vancouver, B.C.

The winter issue of the joint newsletter, The Meeting Point, issued by this local and Local 1923 in Prince George, B.C., is now avail- able on the Web site shared by these two CN Railway locals, said Secretary and Treasurer David Moorhouse of Local 1778. Take a look at www.utu1923.com.

Local 1816, Toledo, Ohio

Members of this CSX local find information about meetings, pay rates or agreements can now access that, and much more, 24 hours a day on the local’s new Web site at www.utu1816.org, thanks to retired con- ductor Howard J. Weith Jr.
Disabled railroaders get hike in earnings cap

Not only is it now low, but it became effective immediately on Friday afternoon, Jan. 12, when President Bush signed the Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act, which raises from $500 to $1,500 monthly the cap on outside earnings for recipients of Railroad Retirement disability benefits.

The new law means disabled rail workers can earn up to $700 monthly without suffering a reduction in their Railroad Retirement disability payments. In future years, the cap will be increased by a formula based on changes in the federal disability cost-of-living index.

Those receiving the disability can be afflicted with bad hearts, high blood pressure, failing vision, and a variety of other conditions that limited their outside earnings to $400 monthly. They are eligible to keep a roof over their family’s head, pay for prescription medication, buy groceries and clothing, and purchase medical care, “said UTU International President Paul Thompson.

“With assistance from the other rail organizations, and thousands of phone calls and e-mails to lawmakers from UTU members and retirees, we achieved passage of the bill this year,” National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer said.

The measure takes into consideration the likelihood that a rail accident or greater consequences will occur as a result of failing to comply with a particular section of the regulations. At the low end of the scale, the guideline penalty amount would be $1,500. At the high end of the scale where a violation is extremely likely to result in an accident or incident, the guideline penalty amount would be $85,000. Willful violations would range from $2,500 to $11,000. The current statutory maximum of $27,000 for grossly negligent violations or for patterns of repeated violations that have caused an imminent hazard of death or injury, have caused death or injury to individuals, would remain unchanged.

Examples of some of the increased fines the FRA is proposing include: operating a train above the track speed limit (from $2,500 to $5,000); not providing a timely response to a report of malfunctioning highway/rail grade crossing equipment (from $2,500 to $5,000); and not performing a pre-departure inspection of a freight car (from $2,000 to $5,000).

Under the proposal, most fines would increase, but in some instances the amounts would remain unchanged or be reduced where data and experience have shown that a failure to comply with a specific regulatory provision poses less of a safety risk.

The proposal also supports the National Rail Safety Action Plan, a broad effort that focuses on reducing the highest-risk causes of train accidents, Boardman said.

Members on Metra approve new contract

CHICAGO – Conductors and assistant conductors working on Metra have overwhelmingly approved a new seven-year contract, said General Chairperson Kevin King (GO-721).

“We mailed out our ballots, and 228 were returned,” King said. “Of those returned, 195 voted in favor of the package, and 33 were against. That’s almost dead-on 85-percent approval.”

Those affected by the pact are employed on Metra’s Fox Lake/Antioch, Elgin, Western Avenue, Heritage Corridor, SouthWest Service, Rock Island and Electric districts.

The pact runs through Dec. 31, 2011.

The package, which includes a retroactive component, was described by King as “a lucrative wage and benefit package with enhancements to work rules.” Among items secured is a daily guarantee on the conductors’ board and a 401(k) contribution from the carrier.

“We set our goals in November 2004 when we began negotiations, and we achieved passage of the bill this year,” National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer said. “It was the right thing for Congress to do. And it was the right thing for the president to sign the bill into law.”

Especially helpful in gaining passage of the bill were House members Jim Oberstar (D-Minn.), Corrine Brown (D-Fla.), Don Young (R-Alaska) and Steve Lauterette (R-Ohio), and senators Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.).

Allowing the disabled higher outside earnings while retaining their full disability benefits will not create a financial burden for the Railroad Retirement system, Brunkenhoefer said. Currently, the Railroad Retirement Trust Fund totals some $27 billion. The estimated cost of this new law to the trust fund will be about $400,000 annually.

FRA seeking higher fines for rail-safety violations

The civil penalty guideline amounts assessed against railroads for violating numerous federal rail safety regulations would be substantially increased under a proposal announced in December by the FRA.

“Higher fines across all categories of federal regulations will encourage railroads to focus on safety compliance and improve the rail industry’s overall performance,” FRA Administrator Joe Boardman stated, noting that the proposed statements of agency policy would double the current guideline civil penalty amounts for most violations.

The measure takes into consideration the likelihood that a rail accident or greater consequences will occur as a result of failing to comply with a particular section of the regulations. At the low end of the scale, the guideline penalty amount would be $1,500. At the high end of the scale where a violation is extremely likely to result in an accident or incident, the guideline penalty amount would be $85,000. Willful violations would range from $2,500 to $11,000. The current statutory maximum of $27,000 for grossly negligent violations or for patterns of repeated violations that have caused an imminent hazard of death or injury, have caused death or injury to individuals, would remain unchanged.

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The proposal also supports the National Rail Safety Action Plan, a broad effort that focuses on reducing the highest-risk causes of train accidents, Boardman said.

STB turns down rails’ anti-labor proposal

The U.S. Surface Transportation Board has slammed shut the door on a proposal by 65 regional and short-line railroads to permit them to abandon track virtually without regulatory oversight—a strategy that could have been used in collaboration with major railroads to avoid labor protection.

The regional and short-line railroads sought to exempt themselves from much of the existing abandonment oversight because they object to the burden and cost of having to seek regulatory approval of any abandonment. For example, they do not like having to prove to the STB that they are losing money operating the line, or prove that the abandonment will not impose an undue burden on shippers or communities.

When rail regulations were extensively overhauled by Congress more than a decade ago, Congress was asked to increase the skills for regional and short-line railroad abandonments. Congress declined.

The UTU and other labor organizations warned the agency that allowing willfully abandonment by regional and short-line railroads could encourage major railroads to bypass more stringent abandonment standards by selling track to short lines with the expectation the track would be abandoned.

Already, major railroads sell line segments to regional and short-line railroads to escape labor protection provisions—but there exists with these sales a public-policy expectation that the lines will continue to be operated by the regional and short-line railroads. That expectation would evaporate if the regionals and short lines could bypass having to make an economic case for abandonment, UTU said.

Had the STB approved the sham petition, the eased abandonment procedure for regional and short-line railroads could have been used by BNSE, CSX, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific, Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific in collaboration with regionals and short lines to facilitate a wholesale subversion of labor-protection requirements in the U.S.

UTU Auxiliary scholarship deadline nears

Newly elected UTU Auxiliary International Secretary and Treasurer Dana Garvin (left), a member of Auxiliary Lodge 565, Toledo, Ohio, confers with UTU Auxiliary International President Carol Menges about the group’s scholarship program. The Auxiliary awards a minimum of eight $1,000 four-year scholarships a year to applicants chosen at random. Only the children, grandchildren, stepchildren and step-grandchildren of Auxiliary members who have belonged to the organization for one year or longer are eligible to apply. Applications must be postmarked by March 31. To request an application or for more information, call (440) 250-0227.

www.utu.org
Heed our warnings

By Paul Thompson
International President

At every opportunity, this union stresses to the carriers that they must take immediate action to improve employee training and eliminate fatigue.

If we do not jointly solve these problems, there is going to be a catastrophic accident. Yet the carriers continue to ignore these concerns.

Meanwhile, on the rails and in the yards, there continue to be serious accidents, injuries and deaths. Many could be avoided were there better employee training programs, and work schedules designed to permit employees adequate and uninterrupted rest.

The problem goes beyond the frequency of hazmat cars exploding, communities evacuated and rail workers and nearby residents killed and injured. There also are national security concerns.

A recent series of newspaper articles detailed how easy it would be for a terrorist to create mayhem by placing explosives on or around hazmat cars. Most chilling was an FRA observation that workers are not receiving sufficient training in handling hazmat movements, which is important in how to understand and respond quickly and properly to security threats.

In fact, the carriers shockingly are looking to eliminate the few safety regulations they already face.

A recent Southern FRA effort to permit them to operate trains with up to a dozen or more freight cars having inoperable brakes. Union Pacific wants permission to perform mechanical safety inspections in Mexico on trains headed into the U.S. – a request that has everything to do with avoiding tougher and more detailed inspections on U.S. soil.

Although the Transportation Security Administration is concerned with a terrorist threat to deadly hazmat loads that sit idle in rail yards, railroads ignore those concerns much as they ignore other warnings.

An Association of American Railroads' official said, matter of factly, as if she were talking about gum wrappers littering the sidewalk, “We cannot protect every railcar, every rail yard or every customer’s facility all the time.”

And that comment came after the Department of Homeland Security warned that “a toxic emission from an attack against [hazmat shipments] is among the most serious risks facing Ameri can’s highest-threat areas.”

With railroads asleep at the throttle, Congress may be the only effective alarm bell.

Accordingly, I have instructed our national legislative director to intensify his urging of lawmakers to pass a new rail-safety bill that includes effective measures to improve worker training and eliminate employee fatigue.

We are talking about innocent lives and the security of the United States of America. This union will not be shy in its refusal to allow – nor let the railroads shirk theirs.

Railroads fiddle as safety concerns burn

The General Accountability Office, which serves as Congress’ watchdog, engaged in some pretty loud barking last month, warning lawmakers that railroads are asleep at the throttle when it comes to national security.

We might title the episode, “At Dawn We Slept,” if it weren’t so painful a reminder of America’s unpreparedness at Pearl Harbor the morning of Dec. 7, 1941. The railroad industry, it seems, has its eyes wide shut to 9/11 and subsequent terrorist rail and subway bombings in Europe.

For corroborating evidence, we need look no further than the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review newspaper, which recently published a series of six articles on the utter lack of security at most rail yards, where deadly hazmat is stored in rolling bombs called tank cars.

A Tribune-Review journalist repeatedly went unchallenged into rail facilities across America and placed his business cards where terrorists might attach explosives.

Railroad executives, rather than showing concern over these security gaps, accused the newspaper of sensationalism and criticized the reporter for trespassing on their property, as if a terrorist would obey the “no trespassing” sign.

If railroads choose to sleep at the throttle and put all Americans at risk, then America must look to the Federal Railroad Administration, the Transportation Security Administration and the Congress to sound the alarm and issue appropriate instructions to the railroad sleepyheads and naysayers.

Contact the UTU:
via telephone at (216) 228-9400
via fax at (216) 228-5755
via e-mail at utuneWS@utu.org

With friends in Congress, our hopes now soar

Whistleblower protection. Abolition of timeloop. Limitations on cumulative time a railroad can force employees to be on duty. More predictable work schedules. Uninterrupted rest periods. Improved and more extensive training of new hires. Refresh training for experienced railroaders. Improvements in commercial driver license standards.

And the list goes on as to how we might enhance workplace safety and national security.

With the labor-friendly majority you helped elect in this congressional session.

Washington Watch

By James M. Brunkenhoefer

We welcome the chance to tell the new Congress of our many concerns

About harassment and intimidation intended to prevent employees from blowing the whistle on safety and security violations and injuries.

This doesn’t automatically mean there will be new legislation providing for this. As union stewards, it does mean we will have our day in court and the ability to prove our case. We are ready and anxious.

The UTU prides itself on being a bipartisan union. We have friends in both major political parties; but the truth is, we have more friends in the Democratic Party.

For sure, our Republican friends have helped us in the past, but anti-labor conservatives who controlled Congress generally kept a lid on our friends. Those days are over, thank goodness.

Among other objectives we will be pursuing in this 110th Congress, which will be more labor friendly, is improved funding for Amtrak; efforts at gaining improved wages, rules and working conditions – and saving jobs – cannot succeed.

We will be calling on you to help by sending e-mails, letters and making telephone calls to lawmakers. Together, we can and will make a difference this congressional session.
Illinois

State Legislative Director Joseph C. Szabo has been elected a vice president of the Illinois AFL-CIO.

Szabo’s election comes almost exactly six months after the Illinois Legislative Board announced its return to the Illinois AFL-CIO after an absence of several years. The UTU International had rejoined the national AFL-CIO shortly before.

“I am honored and pleased to be made a vice president so soon after the UTU’s re-enlistment with the state AFL-CIO,” Szabo said.

“I’m particularly honored because my position will enable me to work closely with President Margaret Blackshear and Secretary-Treasurer Michael Carrigan. Both are dedicated, effective union leaders whose experience and wisdom will be very valuable in the struggles railroad employees will face over the next few years,” Szabo said.

Szabo said that despite the Illinois Legislative Board’s recent record of winning long-overdue health and safety regulations to protect its members, the railroad industry continues to target railroad jobs.

“The bottom line is, the carriers want to use a few token improvements in signal technology as an excuse to go to one-person crews,” Szabo said. “After decades of business decline that let the industry slash payrolls, the railroads finally are flush with traffic and hiring again. But they’re alarmed by their employment-growth trend, so they’re seeking to abolish jobs even in the midst of record traffic.”

Szabo said blocking the carriers’ campaign for one-person crews now has become the UTU’s number-one priority, and the AFL-CIO will be an invaluable ally.

“Protecting our members’ jobs is a battle no single union can fight alone,” Szabo said.

“I have asked these lawmakers, as well as the California State Association of Counties, the California League of Cities, the California Public Utilities Commission as well as various passenger train advocacy groups, to join us in blocking this,” Jones said.

“Our organization is very strongly opposed to the granting of this (UP) waiver,” Jones wrote to the legislators. “I am requesting that you join us in opposing this unsafe elimination of rail safety requirements.

“Do not give in to the carriers’ campaign to get a one-person crew on this train. We need your help on this called for in the draft bill, page 13 section 20129.105 of the proposed regulation.”

California

State Legislative Director James “J.P.” Jones is working hard to make sure that only safe, U.S.-inspected trains roll through his state.

Jones recently contacted all 53 members of Congress from California, both U.S. senators, all 40 state senators and 80 members of the state assembly to ask them to oppose efforts by the UP to allow its trains to be safety inspected in Mexico.

“I have asked these lawmakers, as well as the California State Association of Counties, the California League of Cities, the California Public Utilities Commission as well as various passenger train advocacy groups, to join us in opposing this,” Jones said.

“Your help needed on FRA safety audit

Railroads and their hazmat cargo have become front-page news, again.

In mid-January, a Pittsburgh newspaper reported how easy it would be for a terrorist to gain entry to a rail facility and create mayhem by attaching explosives to a tank car containing a deadly chemical or gas. The article quoted the FRA as criticizing as inadequate the training of workers responsible for hazmat transportation.

Also, last month, CSX suffered two spectacular hazmat tank-car explosions in Kentucky: one following a derailment; the other after four cars broke free and rolled into a locomotive.

The 2005 Graniteville, S.C., disaster on Norfolk Southern that killed nine following a release of chlorine gas continues to be discussed in newspapers; as does the 2002 Canadian Pacific derailment in Minot, N.D., that killed one and injured hundreds. In San Antonio, a series of derailments and hazmat releases has those citizens on edge.

Each of us has a legitimate expectation to return home safely from our jobs. For this reason, I encourage you to cooperate with an FRA audit, now underway, to determine train placement and proper documentation of hazmat.

It is imperative that yardmasters and ground service crews cooperate to ensure proper placement of hazmat cars in all train pick-ups or movements, and that proper documentation is provided train crews.

As for train crews, you face personal fines from the FRA for failure to have proper documentation on hazmat shipments. Should you be ordered to depart without proper documentation, request and document the name of the person ordering you out and provide this information to your local and/or general chairperson.

Bus Department

By Roy Arnold, vice president/director

New regulations demand attention

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and Congress are considering changes to regulations and laws that will directly affect all bus operators.

The FMCSA is proposing that states be required to place information about each commercial driver’s license holder’s medical certification on an electronic database available to carriers, drivers, the FMCSA and other authorized users.

Carriers would be required to check the database and place evidence of the driver’s qualified status in the driver’s qualification file before allowing the driver to operate a commercial motor vehicle.

Congress, meanwhile, is examining hours-of-service limitations, which govern how long a bus operator may drive without a rest period.

Also, bus companies with a history of serious hours-of-service violations may be required to install electronic on-board recorders in all of their commercial vehicles for a minimum of two years.

We also have issues related to buses from other countries that operate in the United States without being subject to the same safety and other regulations as domestic bus operations.

Keeping abreast of these issues at www.utu.org and discussing them in the workplace helps all of us focus on issues of importance. It also helps us find common ground that can be communicated to general chairpersons, state legislative directors and the national legislative office.

By working together we can use our strong voice in Washington, and in state capitals, to ensure a better and safer workplace.

Yardmasters

By J.R. “Jim” Cumby, vice president

Your help needed on FRA safety audit

The help of yardmasters is needed to ensure proper placement of hazmat cars in all train pick-ups or movements, and that proper documentation is provided train crews.

As for train crews, you face personal fines from the FRA for failure to have proper documentation on hazmat shipments. Should you be ordered to depart without proper documentation, request and document the name of the person ordering you out and provide this information to your local and/or general chairperson.

Indiana

Support of the UTU PAC has paid off for members living in “The Crossroads of America.” UTU friend State Rep. Joe Micon, a Democrat elected by residents in the state’s 26th District, was recently returned to office thanks in part to the UTU. Above, Assistant State Legislative Director K.O. Edwards (left) and UTU PAC Gold Card Member Arba Richardson (right) are shown presenting Micon with a check in the amount of $450 for his re-election campaign. Both Edwards and Richardson are members of Local 744, Lafayette. “UTU PAC protects our jobs, wages, safety and benefits,” State Legislative Director Thomas Hendler said. “It only costs a few cents, but it makes a lot of sense.”

Missouri

State Legislative Director W. Larry Foster and the officers and members of Local 330 (Poplar Bluff) recently joined together to thank Dale Alexander for his years of service to the union. Alexander retired in 1972 and recently retired from the Union Pacific. He served the union and its members as associate general chairperson, secretary of the state legislative board, local chairperson, local delegate and local legislative rep. At 82 years at the time of retirement, Alexander was the longest-serving member of the state legislative board. “There is no way to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for all your true loyalty to your local brothers, the Missouri State Legislative Board and UTU,” Foster told Alexander at the meeting. “You have always been there for us, through good and bad, always a true and honest friend and gentleman. Dale, you will be sorely missed.”

5
Around the UTU in pictures

Members of UTU Local 490 in Evansville, Ind., and their families march in the Labor Day Association Parade, the oldest Labor Day parade in the state (1886) and the second oldest in the nation. The parade travels between Evansville, Princeton and Bosseville, Ind.

Local Chairperson Harry Divine Jr., center, presents commemorative art to retired FRA Regional Administrator Dick Clairmont on behalf of the North Dakota State Legislative Director Delmer Hanson of UTU Local 1567, who served as the outstanding administrator who applied the rules fairly on both sides. Hanson and Clairmont live in close proximity.

UGCPA Grand Chairperson Ken Koo addresses members of the multi-state UTU Local 1854 strike against the transit agency in November 2005. Approximately 650 members of the local operate buses, trains and high-speed rail service for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

Local 590 members Don Walsh, Treasurer Gary Haltzman, Local Chairperson James Wilson and Robert Clements prepare for the local's national championship streamlined steam engine train tour of the nation.

A line forms quickly at UTU Local 1290's ninth annual picnic at Governor's Trail Park in Matteson, Ill., when the children in attendance hear that ice cream is being served. More than 350 attended the picnic, a joint affair with BLET Division 131.

SEPTA General Chairperson Ron Koran addresses members of the media during UTU Local 1594's strike against the transit agency in November 2005. Approximately 325 members of the local operate buses, trolleys and high-speed rail service for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

Local 590 members in portion of state Highway 33 just south of Portage, Ind. The men stand in front of the Veterans Memorial Highway.

Outgoing Local Chairperson Bruce King, right, receives a plaque for his service and devotion to the membership of Local 1162 in Erwin, Tenn. King retired after 39 years of service as a conductor on CSX and the former Clinchfield Railroad. Local President John Hilemon, left, presented King with the plaque.

Jason Elm, left, and James Wathan Jr., both Canadian National Railway conductors and members of UTU Local 582 at Fond du Lac, Wis., complete their first Operation Lifesaver program for the first grade students at Roberts Elementary School.

New Jersey Transit Conductor Ranessa Green of UTU Local 800 at Jersey City, N.J., spends a chilly December morning on a commuter platform in Gladstone, N.J.

About 45 active and retired members attended Local 1167's winter holiday party at the St. John's Club in South Philadelphia, Pa. Pictured, from left, are President Tony Mirarchi, Al Luckey, Pennsylvania State Legislative Director Don Dunlevy and UTUIA Field Supervisor Art Rayner.

UGCPA Grand Chairperson Ken Koo addresses members of the multi-state UTU Local 1854 strike against the transit agency in November 2005. Approximately 650 members of the local operate buses, trains and high-speed rail service for the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority.

New Jersey Transit Conductor Ranessa Green of UTU Local 800 at Jersey City, N.J., spends a chilly December morning on a commuter platform in Gladstone, N.J.
UTU for Life

RRB benefits may be payable to survivors

By V. M. “Butch” Speakman Jr.

Monthly benefits may be payable under the Railroad Retirement Act to the surviving widow(er), children and certain other dependents of a railroad employee. Lump-sum death benefits may also be payable to qualified survivors.

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

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

Widow(er)s’ benefits are payable at age 60 or over. They are payable at any age if the widow(er) is caring for an unmarried child under age 18 of the deceased employee or a disabled child of any age who became permanently disabled before age 22. Widow(er)s’ benefits are also payable at ages 50-59 if the widow(er) is permanently disabled and unable to work in any regular employment.

There are also two kinds of lump-sum death benefits payable in some cases to survivors. A lump-sum death benefit for burial expenses is payable to certain survivors of an employee with an “insured” status under the Railroad Retirement Act if no survivor is immediately eligible for a monthly benefit when the employee dies.

For more information on Railroad Retirement benefits for survivors, including children and other dependents, call or visit the nearest RRB field office. You can find the address and phone number of the RRB office serving your area by visiting the nearest RRB field office. You can find the address and phone number of the RRB office serving your area by visiting the nearest RRB field office. You can find the address and phone number of the RRB office serving your area by visiting the nearest RRB field office. You can find the address and phone number of the RRB office serving your area by visiting the nearest RRB field office.

V. M. “Butch” Speakman Jr. serves as labor member of the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board.

Retiree’s caboose draws all ages during holidays

When he built Seaboard Air Line Railroad caboose #5735 in August 2005, he knew it would be a hit with the youngsters, but retired engineer R.W. Willaford soon discovered his caboose had a magnetic attraction for all ages.

“It’s amazing how many older people come out to see it,” said Willaford, a member of Local 1221 in Tampa, Fl. “That caboose brings a lot of old friends and a lot of the people I worked with back to me.”

The caboose sits on a set of rails Willaford installed in front of his house in Plant City, Fl. The last two December, he and his wife, Felice, decorated it with Christmas lights and hired Santa Claus to host the children who visit on school-sponsored field trips.

“Felice makes up a small bag for each child to take home,” Willaford said. “The bags include material from Operation Lifesaver, crayons, coloring books and candy. Each child sits on Santa’s lap, and my wife takes a Polaroid picture and gives it to them.”

Willaford said the youngsters are treated to a short safety video. “We try to get a message through to them and give them a bit of a history lesson,” he said. “It’s educational, but it’s more entertaining than sitting in a classroom. It really opens their eyes.”

In the spring, the routine is much the same, with the Easter Bunny and a balloon artist on hand to break the ice. “We do this out of our own pocket,” Willaford said. “We don’t charge admission and we won’t accept donations.”

Nearly 130 children went through the caboose in December 2005, and 284 experienced it in December 2006. “We don’t keep count of the adults,” Willaford said. “But maybe we should.”

Caboose #5735 is one of three he bought from people in Wildwood, Fl., who saved five from a scrap yard. “They sold two reg-

cular cabooses to other buyers, and I pur-

chased the three wide-body, cushion underframes,” Willaford said.

“I sold one on the spot, and kept two,” Willaford said. “I put #575 in the back of my farm. They were built in 1963 by inter-

ational Car & Foundry in Canton, Ohio. The SAL had purchased about 60 of them for something like $60,000 each. They were lined up to be scrapped in 1987.”

The son of an SAL trainman, Willaford, 69, hired out with the company after graduating high school in 1956, becoming a fireman and joining the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen & Enginemen. He worked 42 years and eight months and retired from CSX in September 1999.

Willaford says running a farm that’s been in the family since 1935 and taking care of a 114-space mobile home park. “I miss the people and the environ-

ment of railroading, but I don’t miss the phone calls at 2 a.m.,” he said.

“I’ve got two daughters and five grand-

children,” he said. “And when we get spare time, my wife and I travel. We’ve been on every Amtrak route except one, and took two trips across Canada on VIA Rail.”

The Final Call

Following are the names of recently deceased retirees who maintained annual membership in the UTU for Life program (formerly known as the UTU Retiree Program), according to reports received at UTU International Headquarters. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and by fellow UTU for Life members.
Additionally, he or she will be honored at the 2007 UTU/UTUIA Regional Meeting nearest his or her home, with all expenses paid by UTUIA. Also, 20 runners up will be selected to receive certificates of appreciation for their volunteer efforts. Nominations must be received or postmarked by Friday, March 30, 2007. The winning individual will be notified by registered mail, and certificates of appreciation will be forwarded to runners up as soon as possible. The decision of UTUIA judges is final. Previous nominees may be nominated again; however, former Volunteers of the Year are ineligible to receive awards.

The Volunteer of the Year program is an opportunity for the men and women of the UTUIA to let their fraternal lights shine. It also provides an opportunity for UTUIA to recognize its volunteers for their outstanding contributions to others.

Nomination forms should be mailed to: UTUIA Volunteer of the Year, Attn.: Tony Martella, director of insurance, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250. Do not forget to include a separate sheet of paper describing the applicant’s volunteer activities.

UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION INSURANCE ASSOCIATION

2007 Volunteer of the Year Nomination Form

Name ____________________________ Local ____________________________

Address ____________________________

City __________________ State ____ ZIP ______

Telephone number ____________ Dates of volunteer activities ____________

Total volunteer time (hours, minutes) Weekly __ Monthly __

Value of contribution (if applicable) ____________

Please attach a separate sheet of paper describing volunteer activities. The more documentation you can provide, the better.

UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION INSURANCE ASSOCIATION, 14600 DETROIT AVE., CLEVELAND, OH 44107-4250

Money Saving Tips

✓ Bring your lunch, coffee, pop or bottled water to work with you.

✓ Seek out free entertainment such as museums, parks and free concerts.

✓ Stop impulse buying. Before buying anything, ask yourself, “Do I really need this?”

✓ Borrow movies and books from the library instead of buying books or paying for the theatre.

✓ Get rid of the cable movie channels and cut back to basic cable.

✓ Cook your own meals instead of eating out. Buy store brands instead of costly name brands.

IRÁ Information, please

I would like more information on UTUIA’s retirement savings plans. Please print.

Full name ____________________________ Address ____________________________

City __________________ State ____ ZIP ______

Date of birth ____________ UTU local number ____________

Telephone number with area code ____________

Are you currently working? Yes __ No __

Complete and mail to: UTUIA Sales Dept., 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250

Call (800) 558-8842 today for your free annuity illustration, or visit www.utuia.org.

UTUIA seeks 2007 Volunteer of the Year

The United Transportation Union Insurance Association is looking for a special person to honor as its 2007 Volunteer of the Year. Do you regularly volunteer at a hospital or nursing home? Do you lead a Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop or work with the handicapped? Are you involved in some other activity that benefits those in your community?

If so, the UTUIA would like to know about it. A panel of judges at the UTU International will review all submissions and select the 2007 Volunteer of the Year. The individual selected as UTUIA Volunteer of the Year will receive a $1,000 U.S. Savings Bond and a plaque of appreciation from the UTUIA.

Additionally, he or she will be honored at the 2007 UTU/UTUIA Regional Meeting nearest his or her home, with all expenses paid by UTUIA.

Also, 20 runners up will be selected to receive certificates of appreciation for their volunteer efforts.

Nominations must be received or postmarked by Friday, March 30, 2007.

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Retire smart…

Make your money work for you!

With so many Americans living paycheck to paycheck, some may wonder how it’s possible to save for retirement when there’s no money left at the end of the week. The answer is spending less than you earn. There are a lot of ways to reduce expenses. Some may be challenging, but some may be easier than you think.

Determining where to cut corners is an individual decision, but once you free up some cash, it’s important to get that money into a savings vehicle as soon as possible. Even small amounts can make a big difference given enough time.

Here’s an example: A 20-year-old who invests just $600 per year into a UTUIA IRA can expect a guaranteed annuity value of $69,708 at the end of the year of age 70. Assuming the current interest rate of 4.25%, the annuity value could be as high as $103,217. Just by investing $600 per year! That’s less than $1.75 per day!

Call (800) 558-8842 today for your free annuity illustration, or visit www.utuia.org.

UTUIA News

www.utuia.org www.utu.org
The FRA is seeking comment about proposed changes to the medical-certification requirements for holders of commercial drivers’ licenses (CDLs).

The new rules would require states to determine if a driver applying for, or renewing, a CDL is subject to federal medical-certification requirements.

If so, then the state must ensure that the driver’s current medical certification qualifies him or her to obtain a new or renewed CDL.

A state could also “downgrade” the status of a driver who holds a CDL but does not have an adequate or current medical certification.

States also would be required to place information about each CDL holder’s medical certification on an electronic database.

Additionally, carriers would be required to check the database and place evidence of the driver’s qualified status in his or her file before allowing the driver to work.

Brunkenhoefer said that following a deadly switch-related accident in Graniteville, S.C., in 2005, the National Transportation Safety Board expressed concern that many switches were not being visited by inspectors frequently enough to prevent degradation of safety.

“Since the importance of a switch monitor has been reiterated previously, and in view of the urgency of installing switch monitors on every main-line switch in non-signaled (dark) territory, we are adding another incentive,” Brunkenhoefer said.

The FRA also recommended that carriers consider how to make flat cars, which the FRA said are “less perceptible” than the approach of other yard movement being shoved by a remote control locomotive, even more conspicuous when they are the cars, which the FRA said are “less perceptible” than the approach of other yard movement being shoved by a remote control locomotive.

Brunkenhoefer said that following a deadly switch-related accident in Graniteville, S.C., in 2005, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended similar action.

Indeed, the UTU and the BLET stressed that of the two technologies, installation of main-line switch monitors in dark territory should have priority over installation of ECP brakes.

“We do not want to see scarce safety dollars diverted away from main-line switch monitors to dark territory, because such installations will produce the most significant improvements in safety immediately,” Brunkenhoefer said.

BNSF and NS are asking, in exchange for implementation of ECP brake equipment on a few train sets, that they be allowed to cease various vital mechanical safety checks, including:

• The now-required daily locomotive inspection of all locomotives used with ECP train sets;
• The maintenance of dynamic brakes on locomotives used with ECP;
• Various manufacturer-recommended maintenance of brake equipment on freight cars;
• The requirement to provide operating crews with conventional train-handling information.

Were BNSF and NS given the exemptions they seek, “then all of the safety enhancements for this equipment will be removed and a significant reduction in braking capacity below conventional trains will occur,” Brunkenhoefer said.

The request for waivers would, for example, permit BNSF and NS to operate continuously with up to 22 cars of a 150-car train without any brakes — a dangerous request,” Brunkenhoefer said.

Currently, a train leaving its initial terminal is required to have 100 percent of its brakes working. The required brake inspections identify cars that have inoperable brakes and the repairs are made or the car is set out of the train.

But BNSF and NS are demanding that 15 percent of cars in an ECP train can continue to operate without needed repairs.

In fact, BNSF and NS also are demanding, in exchange for installing a few ECP brake sets, to be able to operate locomotives with clogged toilets, inoperable heaters, inoperable windshield wipers, burned out light bulbs, bent grab irons, broken windows, and worn out brake shoes — none of which have anything to do with ECP brakes.

“In other words, the railroads want to pay for ECP through deferred maintenance of locomotives,” Brunkenhoefer said.

The negotiating committee was also successful in holding off the company’s efforts to eliminate previously contracted bonus payments for expert bus operators and safety officers.

Manzano offered gratitude for support received from UTU International President Paul Thompson, Vice President and Bus Department Director Roy Arnold and Alternate Vice President (Bus-Eastern Region) Rich Deiser. He also praised his committee, including James Powell, Jose Rivera and Joe Freierson.

The U.S. Navy has estimated that as many as 100,000 Americans in a heavily populated area could die within 30 minutes following a chlorine gas leak from just one ruptured tank car.

UP transports some 700,000 carloads of hazmat each year.

“America should not be rolling the dice on public safety and national security,” Brunkenhoefer said.

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The FRA additionally recommended that carriers consider how to make flat cars and other equipment with low profiles more conspicuous when they are the cars, which the FRA said are “less perceptible” than the approach of other yard movement being shoved by a remote control locomotive.

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“In other words, the railroads want to pay for ECP through deferred maintenance of locomotives,” Brunkenhoefer said.

The U.S. Navy has estimated that as many as 100,000 Americans in a heavily populated area could die within 30 minutes following a chlorine gas leak from just one ruptured tank car.
UTUIA Scholarship: A Key to Success

A message from UTU International President Paul Thompson

Education is the key to success, and the key to an education can be a United Transportation Union Insurance Association scholarship. With college enrollment time upon us, we strongly urge all eligible persons to take a few minutes to fill out the UTUIA scholarship application form printed below and apply for a UTUIA scholarship. It will be one of the smartest things they ever do.

This is the 3rd year UTUIA is making available 50 continuing $500 scholarships for its members, and the sons, daughters and grandchildren of its members. We are very proud of our scholarship program, a pride that comes from helping thousands of college students over the years.

We realize the amount awarded, $500 a year, doesn't meet the full cost of the recipient's education, but in this way we can help a larger number of students with educational costs. They may use the scholarship money for tuition, learning materials or other related expenses.

UTUIA scholarship winners will receive the full amount of the award each year for up to four years of undergraduate study as long as they maintain a satisfactory academic record.

With a UTUIA scholarship, we hope to give the recipient the opportunity for a full-time education instead of a part-time education, day school instead of night school, higher education instead of basic training.

We are proud also in knowing that UTUIA scholarship recipients are enrolled in some of the finest and most prestigious colleges and universities in the world. We also can point proudly to the many achievements of past scholarship winners who have contributed so much to our great nation.

UTUIA is proud and happy to provide these scholarships for they are an opportunity for achievement. The success of deserving students is our success and the benefits are boundless. The key to success is education, and the key to education is a UTUIA scholarship. Take a minute to apply for the chance of a lifetime.

As the saying goes: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance."

Paul Thompson
International President

UTUIA Scholarship Application Form 2007/2008

(Please type or print)

Student’s Name

(Last) (First) (M.I.)

Address of Member

(UPTU Local #)

UTUIA Local Unit #

Member’s Name

(Last) (First) (M.I.)

Member’s Address

OCCUPATION

EMPLOYER

Student’s Relationship to Member

COLLEGE YEAR, 2007-2008

FRESHMAN

SOPHOMORE

JUNIOR

SENIOR

SIGNATURE OF MEMBER

(Please include date of death if member is deceased.)

APPLICATION FORM 2007/2008

UTUIA SCHOLARSHIP DISTRICTS

District

Scholarships


2. Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania

3. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia

4. Indiana, Michigan, Ohio

5. Illinois, Wisconsin

6. Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

7. Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

8. Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah


Applications must be received no later than March 31, 2007.

Please submit only one application per student. Incomplete, photocopied or duplicate applications will not be accepted.

The application form printed on this page is the official UTUIA scholarship application form and is the only one you will receive. If you need another application form, request one from the address below. Please include your UTU local or UTUIA local unit number with your request. Complete the form above, cut it out (leaving address label on reverse side, if possible), and mail to:

UTUIA Scholarship Program
United Transportation Union Insurance Association
14600 Detroit Ave.
Cleveland, OH 44107-4250

DISTRIBUTION

Fifty continuing $500 scholarships are awarded each year upon verification of enrollment for the fall term. The scholarships are prorated according to the number of UTU members in each of nine districts. The names of the 50 scholarship winners for the academic year 2007-2008 will be drawn at UTUIA headquarters in Cleveland after the March 31, 2007, deadline for submission of applications.

ELIGIBILITY

Requirements for a scholarship applicant are that he or she be at least a high school senior or equivalent; age 25 or under; be a UTU member or UTUIA-insured member, the child or grandchild of a UTU member or UTUIA-insured member, or the child of a deceased UTU member or UTUIA-insured member. (If member is deceased please include date of death), UTU members or UTUIA-insured members must be U.S. residents.

Applicants also must be accepted for admittance, or already enrolled, for at least 12 credit hours per quarter or semester at a recognized institution of higher learning (university, college or junior college, nursing or technical school offering college credit). Graduate schools are not included. Families of full-time International officers are not eligible.

AWARDS

Scholarships are awarded on the basis of chance, not grades. A UTUIA scholar, however, is expected to maintain a satisfactory academic record to keep the scholarship for the full four years.

ADMINISTRATION

The UTUIA Scholarship Committee decides whether individual scholarships should be continued or discontinued. Each successful applicant must provide annual proof of eligibility on or before a deadline set by the scholarship committee to qualify for a continuing award. The day-to-day management of the program is handled by the office of the UTUIA general secretary and treasurer.

INVEST IN THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

The UTUIA Scholarship Program is an open program. All eligible students, regardless of previous grades or future plans that don’t happen to include college, are strongly urged to apply, to take five minutes to invest in the chance of a lifetime, the chance for a better future.
This month’s winning photo:

The UTU Public Relations Department awards UTU gear to the union member who submits the best photograph during the previous month.

The winning photo will be published in the UTU News. Exceptional photographs will be included on the UTU website.

The UTU would like to see photographs of work-related scenes, such as railroad, bus or mass transit operations, new equipment photos, scenic shots, activities of your local, or photos of your brothers and sisters keeping America rolling.

Printed photographs should be mailed to UTU News, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250.

High-resolution digital photographs should be in the JPEG format and e-mailed to "utunews@utu.org".

With each photograph, please include your name and UTU local number, the names of the persons in the photo (left to right), where the photo was taken, and all other pertinent information.

All photographs submitted become property of the UTU.

Remember to review your employer’s policies regarding use of cameras on the property or during work hours.

This month’s winning photograph was taken by Steven Messina, a member of Local 722 in Babylon, N.Y. This photo of a Long Island Rail Road M-1 commuter car was taken at the carrier’s West Side Yard at a ceremony commemorating the last ride of the M-1s, which are being taken out of service. A number of train enthusiasts paid to take part in the last trip, Messina said.

The UTU lost three members recently: William Magel Jr., in a rail-switching accident; Steve Cook in a bus accident; and David Collins, who was struck by a passing train.

Magel, 57, of Sioux City, Iowa, was killed in a yard accident Dec. 28, 2006, in Sioux City.

Magel was riding the side of a car when he was pinched up by a car on an adjacent track, Pearson said.

“I have known him 30 years. He was a hell of a nice guy,” Pearson said. “He was a strong union man and was at local meetings all the time. There is nobody on the planet that could say anything bad about Bill Magel. He was a genuinely nice fellow and good family man.”

Officials said 35-year-old Los Angeles Metro bus driver Steve Cook, a member of Local 1563 in El Monte, Calif., died early Jan. 4 after his vehicle crashed into a tree in Willowbrook, Calif.

Cook, who was single and lived in Los Angeles, died at King/Drew Medical Center.

Collins, 50, a member of Local 29 at Babylon, N.Y., was working for the Long Island Rail Road, supervising repairs to the tracks between Valley Stream and Rosedale, when he was struck by a train Jan. 17 and later died.

All five moved away from an eastbound train, Roderick said, but Collins apparently didn’t realize another train, heading west, was coming about a minute later.

He was walking back to the spot where he had been working when the train hit him, Roderick said.

Enjoy a photographic journey around the UTU. See pages 6/7.

Member’s old SAL caboose draws new visitors. See page 8.

The UTUIA scholarship application? See page 11.