Among the numerous political challenges facing working families is protection of Railroad Retirement and Social Security — both under attack by political conservatives.

At the UTU’s Portland, Ore., regional meeting in June, the labor member of the Railroad Retirement Board, Walt Barrows, told attendees, “You can be very proud of your leadership and your legislative staff. You have the best legislative team of any union, bar none. [The UTU] is in the forefront of defending our retirement system against those who try to weaken it.”

Echoing those comments was Joe Nigro, general president of the Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA), who said the UTU has “the best political machine” among labor organizations, which is essential in the fight to preserve Railroad Retirement and Social Security.

Nigro said the SMWIA and the UTU — now combined as SMART — “share the goal of achieving power and success to make legislators, other unions and employers look to us for leadership and training.”

Barrows, a senior officer of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen before being nominated by President Obama and confirmed by the Senate to the three-member Railroad Retirement Board, warned that “the trend of attacking and eliminating defined benefit pension plans across the country will continue.

“In the last 30 years, defined benefit plans have been stripped away from most workers,” Barrows said. “We have seen defined-benefit plans replaced by tax-deferred savings accounts, like 401(k) plans.” Barrows said that with the decline of defined-benefit plans, far too many Americans cannot retire with any sense of dignity or security. Railroad Retirement gives you that assurance.

“You would think that the strength and viability of our system would exempt us from attacks, but our retirement system is not totally safe from attack,” Barrows said. “Rail workers must remain vigilant if we expect our retirement system to be there for us and for future generations of rail workers.

“We all must be vigilant to make sure that our retirement system is there for us and for future generations of rail workers and their families,” Barrows said.

“So when we hear retirement benefits attacked, and hear them referred to as entitlements, remind people that railroad workers are entitled: We are entitled because we worked for it; sacrificed for it; contributed to it, and because the profits enjoyed by the railroad industry came from our blood and sweat,” Barrows said.

“One of the best things about this union is all about, how it is the backbone of America’s middle class, how strong we are and the achievements and experiences you gained in regional meetings workshops back to your members. Tell them what this union is all about, how it is the backbone of America’s middle class, how strong we are and how the UTU has led the way and will continue to lead the way.”
Local 511, Atlanta

The third grade class of Miss Rachel Keown at Trinity Christian School in Shapburg, Ga., was treated to a railroad history and safety lesson in May by her uncle, former Georgia State Legislative Director Howell Keown. The students had been studying railroads for some time and Keown was invited to share his experiences. Keown said the 19 students already knew about the Transcontinental Railroad, the task of being a fireman, grade-crossings and other historic railroad events. “There were a lot of questions. It is good to know that the youth of our nation are still interested in safety and the future success of our railroads,” Keown said.

Howell Keown talks railroading with Miss Keown and her third grade students at Trinity Christian School.

Local 887, Harvey, N.D.

Members of this CP (Soo Line – former Milwaukee Road) local have established a fund to benefit the family of conductor Robert J. Glasgow, 39, who died May 28 while setting out cars as part of a two-person crew at a CP yard. Glasgow began railroading on CP in 2025 as a track worker, transferring to train service in 2011. He had mounted the lead car of 28 cars being switched conventionally when it sideswiped other cars. He was pronounced dead at a local hospital. He is survived by wife Jenny Ann and children Jacob, Carter, Cole, Ethan and Kaylee. Donations should be sent to the Robert Glasgow Family, 299 Ninth St. N.E., Minot, ND 58703.

Local 1059, Minot, N.D.

North Dakota State Legislative Director Jim Chase presented a plaque of appreciation to former Legislative Rep. Larry Schoenwald for his years of service as chairperson of the state legislative board and to his local. Schoenwald retired last year after more than 35 years of railroad service.

Local 1137, Fargo, N.D.

Local Secretary & Treasurer Vincent LaBella announced the elevation of Kevin Hughes to the position of local president, GO SIR General Secretary Joe Palmieri to the position of local vice president and Glen Mournet to the position of alternate legislative representative. “Kevin brings much experience as a former legislative director and secretary and we expect him to be a great leader,” Joe said. “For Glen, he has been fighting our members’ rights as a member of the general committee for the past two years and has displayed professionalism and leadership that all can be proud of. Glen has more than 20 years of experience as a conductor and will work well with Legislative Rep. Richard Hald to protect the safety rights of our local members,” LaBella said.

Local 1470, Edmonston, Md.

Amtrak conductor and UTU PAC contributor Sohner Delia, 58, graduated June 23 with a degree in political economy of labor and union leadership & administration from the National Labor College in Silver Spring, Md. He has been a member of the UTU since May 1, 1993.

Local 1563, Los Angeles

Some 600 mourners — including more than 300 workers and UTU officials — attended the funeral June 9 of slain Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) bus operator Alan Thomas, who was murdered May 20 by a lone passenger. Also in attendance were law enforcement officials, transit executives and political leaders and representatives of other labor organizations. Thomas was remembered by his children, spouse, parents and other relatives for his strong family ties, and mourned as a public servant “doing a job for a community” when he was gunned down in a third-floor homicide.

GO LIRR, Babylon, N.Y.

UTU members on the Long Island Rail Road hosted their annual golf classic May 14 at the Hamlet Wind Watch Golf & Country Club in Hauppauge, N.Y. Vice General Chairperson Vincent Tesoriero reported. The event was a great success as friends and supporters of rail labor gathered together in unity to make a difference in their community. The dinner cost $88 to help families on Long Island, N.Y., affected by autism, besting the more than $6,500 raised in its first year.

General Chairperson Anthony Simon expressed his sincere thanks to International President Mike Fathy and Assistant President Arti Martin for their visit to Long Island to support this great event, and thanks the members of his general committee on for all of their hard work.

Around the UTU

North Dakota State Legislative Director Jim Chase, left, presents a plaque of appreciation to former State Legislative Director Marc Hilderman for his years of service to the board and to Local 1137 as legislative representative.

Local 1370, New York

Member John Kaniuk of this Amtrak local is asking all UTU members traveling to New York’s Penn Station on layover, or who work out of New York, to stop by the New Jersey Transit crew room and participate in an ongoing 50/50 raffle to benefit a fellow railroader who is currently battling cancer. New Jersey Transit conductor Alan Terry is on medical leave and is currently in a New Jersey hospital. “She’s only 44 years old. Please say a prayer for Alan and contribute what you can,” Kaniuk asks.

Local 1440, Staten Island, N.Y.

The members of this Union Pacific general committee of the Alliance celebrate the retirement of Vice General Chairperson Danny Rampy May 31 with a gathering at Rudy’s Barbecue, General Chairperson Troy Johnson reported. Rampy’s service with UP began April 8, 1970, and concluded May 31. He also served as local chairperson of UTU Local 459 at Tyler, Texas. Pictured, from left, are Johnson, Rampy, Designated Legal Counsel Michael Herzik and Vice General Chairperson Steve Simpson.

Midwest river rendezvous ‘just a beautiful thing to do’

UTU Alumni Association member Mike Davis can now add another occupation to his growing resume: first mate.

Dave, a retired railroad conductor, labor-management safety representative and inventor — he shares a joint patent for a rear-end locking glad hand for end-of-train devices that is still in use today and assisted in the design for a railroad lantern — recently completed a two-man, 126-mile river trip on his cousin-in-law’s pontoon boat.

In April, he joined his wife’s cousin, Jim Tibbett, for the nine-day trip of a lifetime.

They day-tripped Terre Haute, Ind., taking the Wabash River into the Ohio River, up the Cumberland River and across Lake Barkley. They then traveled down a canal into Kentucky Lake, then into the Tennessee River and back to the Ohio River. They exited the Ohio River at Paducah, Ky.

They made the journey in a 25-foot pontoon boat that Tibbett purchased and which Tibbett, Davis said, was modified with a tarp roof and netting to protect them from leaping Asian carp.

“I was always wanting to make a river trip. I had talked to fellow employees about it, but once we were retired, they didn’t want to,” Davis said. “There were a lot of railroad bridges that I was interested in and wanted to photograph. The railroads have done so much for this area. The bridges were just beautiful, really something to see. It was just a beautiful thing to do,” Davis added.

Tibbett wrote in a log that “Mike is a retired railroad worker. He spent many years working in a labor-management railroad safety program, a little fact that I did not know but soon found out.”

“I thought it was a bad thing by all means, but I did not realize how many rules and regulations would come into play for this nine-day trip on the inland waterways. At this point, the one thing I can tell you is that we are going to look good as well as comply with all the safety and boosting regulations on this voyage.”

“Just went on the Internet and found out all the specifications to meet the Coast Guard’s requirements,” Davis said. “These rivers are nothing you want to fool with if you haven’t done your research.”

“The best part of the trip, I think, was on the Wabash River. The people are just so friendly. They came up to see what we were doing. They took us into town to buy food and fuel. Wouldn’t take any money,” he added.

A member of Local 1518 at Indianapolis, Ind., Davis still calls himself “a union man. I am grateful for the UTU and know I wouldn’t be enjoying the retirement I am now without them.”

To obtain a link to hundreds of Davis’ photos and Tibbett’s log online, email Davis at mdavis@ma.rr.com.

UP GO 927, Tyler, Texas

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Pictured, from left, are Tesoriero, Simon, Fathy, U.S. Rep. Tim Bolyard (Dist. 1, N.Y.) and Martin at breakfast prior to the golf classic.

U S Rep. Tim Bolyard (Dist. 1, N.Y.) and Martin at breakfast prior to the golf classic.
Congressman praises UTU activism, vision

"People railing about labor unions are engaged in a war on the middle class," U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) told attendees at the UTU regional meeting in Portland in June.

"In corporate America, shareholders can’t meaningfully vote and oversee corporate democracy, yet they have the gull to criticize [democratic labor unions]," Blumenauer said, adding that his father was an operating engineer and union member and taught him the importance of men and women “linking arms” at the ballot box “to make things better.

"How we put the process together matters because we need to be smart” in how we elect lawmakers at the local, state and federal levels, he said.

Blumenauer, who holds quarterly transportation and infrastructure meetings in Washington, D.C., with those that include state lawmakers who say we don’t need federal strong investment in transportation and infrastructure.

"Now, more than ever, when interest rates are at an all-time low, it’s time to rebuild and renew America. Your union is taking steps to be smarter and more organized. With your efforts, we can make sure [Congress, through increased federal investment] puts thousands back to work.

"We founded this country on the notion we are all in this together," Blumenauer said. "Without the Pacific Railway Act, we would have never celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad. We need to be more tenacious to create a vision of rebuilding America and beat back [the forces] willing to borrow from China for tax cuts.

In the House, Blumenauer is a member of the most powerful committees: the Budget Committee and Ways and Means Committee, which oversees Railroad Retirement and Social Security.

OSHA fines NS for retaliation against three workers

It is reasonable to wonder just how many millions of dollars in sanctions must be assessed against railroads by the federal government before they learn the lesson that employees are not the equivalent of number 2 pencils to be chewed on at will and discarded when convenient.

In the most recent consequence applied to Norfolk Southern by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration, sanctions totaling more than $802,000 were imposed as punishment for violating the whistleblower protection provisions of the Federal Railroad Safety Act of 1970 as supplemented by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

NS was found to have harassed, intimidated and ultimately fired three employees who reported and sought medical attention for on-duty injuries. NS also was ordered by OSHA to expunge the disciplinary records of the three whistleblowers, pay workers who were fired and to provide its employees’ whistleblower protection rights and provide training to its employees about these rights.

The latest OSHA fines – and there have been several in the past – against NS followed OSHA investigations in Greenville, S.C.; Louisville, Ky.; and Harrisburg, Pa., each resulting, according to OSHA, “reasonable cause to believe that the employees’ reporting of their workplace injuries led to internal investigations and, ultimately, to dismissals from the company.

OSHA does not release the names of whistleblowers. The Harrisburg employee was reportedly a conductor, the Louisville whistleblower an engineer and the Greenville whistleblower a maintenance-of-way employee.

"Firing workers for reporting an injury is not only illegal, it also endangers all workers. When workers are discouraged from reporting injuries, no investigation into the cause of an injury can occur," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels.

In 2011, OSHA, in hitting NS with sanctions of more than $122,000, said NS culture of employee harassment and intimidation permitted the railroad to “maintain the appearance of an exemplary safety record and continue its 22-consecutive-year record as recipient of the E.H. Harriman Gold Medal Rail Safety Award.”

"Firing workers for reporting an injury is illegal and dangerous"

In the latest assessment of sanctions against NS, OSHA reported:

- A maintenance-of-way employee was charged with improper performance of duties after reporting an injury as a result of being hit by a NS highway vehicle. OSHA found he had been single out and treated with bias.
- A locomotive engineer was charged with falsifying an injury and terminated after reporting he tripped and fell in a locomotive restroom. OSHA found the investigative hearing was flawed and orchestrated to intentionally support the decision to terminate the employee.
- A conductor was charged with making false and conflicting statements and terminated after reporting a head injury sustained when he blacked out and fell down steps while returning from the locomotive lavatory. OSHA said the employee had previously been lauded for excellent performance, highlighted by no lost work time due to injuries in his 35-year career. OSHA again found that the hearing was flawed, and there was no evidence the employee intended to misrepresent his injury.

The Federal Railroad Safety Act of 1970 extended whistleblower protection to employees retaliated against for reporting an injury or illness requiring medical attention. The Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 added additional requirements ensuring injured workers receive prompt medical attention. Prohibitions were imposed by Congress in an effort to end a culture that placed the winning of safety awards and year-end managerial bonuses as a higher priority than treatment and prevention of injuries.

TSA sets new TWIC renewal policy

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has established a new policy on renewals of the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) – a tamper-resistant biometric worker-access pass – which is required of rail crews entering maritime ports.

Beginning Aug. 30, U.S. nationals holding TWICs set to expire on or before Dec. 31, 2014, can avoid the regular five-year renewable process by obtaining a three-year card.

The replacement card will expire three years after the expiration of the TWIC card it is replacing, cost $60, and require only one trip to the enrollment center when it is ready to be activated and collected.

TSA said that while the process is simpler and less expensive, the card provides the same access as the traditional five-year card.

Some 6,500 rail employees currently hold a TWIC. Obtaining a TWIC requires submitting to a FBI background check and completion of a security threat assessment.

To read the new policy, as published in the Federal Register, go to www.utu.org and search for “TSA.”

Workers on Ma&N ratify first contract

UTU-represented maintenance-of-way employees on Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad, who chose the UTU as their bargaining representative in January, have ratified their first collective bargaining agreement.

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www.utu.org / www.utuia.org
Fight assault on organized labor at the ballot box

Each of us should be furious over the assault on labor and the middle class by anti-union political extremists and their conservative financial backers. We should also be eager to head to the polls Election Day in support of labor-friendly candidates.

Our aggressors assert their agenda is to reduce deficits, but their real aim is to destroy labor unions. Consider Wisconsin, where the extremist governor and conservative-majority legislature curtailed collective bargaining rights of public employees. “We can’t afford it,” Gov. Scott Walker said, even though Wisconsin’s public employee unions were prepared to negotiate changes in public employee pension and health care plans.

The real agenda was destruction of labor unions.

Indeed, months following passage of the Wisconsin law, the Wall Street Journal reported that state-worker membership in the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees plummeted from 62,818 to 28,745, a drop of 54 percent, which adversely affects the union’s financial ability to pursue grievances and other activities important to worker safety and quality of life.

As union membership falls, so tumbles the financial strength of the no worker should be forced to belong to a union even if a majority of workers voted for representation. Imagine if the Indiana legislature also allowed individual citizens to opt out of paying state taxes.

In dozens of states and in Congress, political extremists — backed by the wealthy corporate executives and wealthy conservatives — are pursuing tactics intended to weaken and destroy organized labor.

It is those who fund attacks on labor who benefit most. The Wall Street Journal boasted that as companies shed jobs and held down wages and worker benefits, corporate revenue per employee at S&P 500 companies soared from $378,000 in 2007 to $420,000 in 2011 — and greater profits. Increase in corporate executive pay and bonuses followed.

Unions and their members cannot match the political contributions of corporations and their senior executives. But we can go to the polls in greater numbers on Election Day and cast ballots for labor-friendly candidates.

We all have political issues we are passionate about, but the bottom line is to protect your job security, working conditions and retirement when you vote. Please ensure you and your eligible family members are registered to vote on Election Day. If you don’t vote your paycheck, it may be the first casualty after the November elections.

Our aggressors assert their agenda is to reduce deficits, but their aim is to destroy labor unions.

Coal vital in America’s energy future

Coal is America’s most abundant source of energy, helping reduce our nation’s dependence on imported oil.

Coal also means jobs, with almost one in every five freight rail jobs dependent on transporting coal. Coal also means high-paying jobs for coal miners, power plant workers and the building trades, who build, maintain and update coal-fired generating plants.

Troubling is that coal — and this means American jobs — is under attack within the Environmental Protection Agency and from some in Congress who want to impose such stringent new emissions regulations that as many as one-third of our coal-fired power plants could be closed and no new ones built. That puts thousands of jobs on the line.

This debate will continue until the process is discovered to allow carbon-dioxide gases from coal to be captured and used productively.

Railroads, coal producers, the AFL-CIO, whose strong legislative voice has long been a beacon of hope for working men and women seeking equality, fair dealing and safety in the workplace. Our adversaries know full well that fewer union members means weaker labor unions.

In Indiana, a conservative governor and state legislature passed a right-to-work (for less) law, asserting that as many as one-third of such stringent new emissions regulations that as many as one-third of our coal-fired power plants could be closed and no new ones built. That puts thousands of jobs on the line.

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Indiana

Jim Ball Jr., who serves the members of Local 687, Elkhart, as local chairperson, treasurer and legislative representative, is running for state senate in District 12.

Ball is running against Carol Yoder, one of the authors of the right-to-work (for less) law that was recently passed by the legislature.

“As a father and as someone who served this community and country, I can no longer sit back and watch what’s happening in Indianapolis,” said Ball. “Unfortunately, the general assembly, and the state senate in particular, has chosen to spend its time and our money on unnecessary legislation that seeks to divide us rather than creating economic opportunities for working families.

“Im in this race because I want to restore some balance and some common sense to the state-house so we can get more people back to work,” Ball said.

For more information on Jim Ball or his campaign call (574) 361-6156 or email Hoosiers4JimBall@gmail.com.

Washington

Long-time Washington state legislative director Larry McKillip has retired. Above, McKillip, left, is presented with an engraved pocket watch to honor his 49 years of railroad and union service by Union Pacific (GO 953) General Chairperson Brent Leonard as newly elected State Legislative Director Herb Krohn looks on.

Wisconsin

UTU International President Mike Futhey and Sheet Metal Workers International Association General President Joe Nigro were in Wisconsin for the vote count. From left are General Chairperson Jim Nelson (GO 261), Wisconsin Legislative Board Secretary Chris Tassone (Local 531), Futhey, Wisconsin State Legislative Director Craig Peachy, and Nigro.

While a recall of the governor – the architect of anti-union legislation – was not successful, voters in June did return control of the state senate to labor-friendly Democrats by recalling an anti-union senator. It was the senate last year that gave final passage to a bill curtailing collective bargaining rights for Wisconsin public employees and included provisions to weaken organized labor.

National Legislative Director James Stem called the efforts a “dress rehearsal for congressional and state elections in November, identifying strengths we will build on in November to install more labor-friendly lawmakers in Congress and state legislatures.”

The United States

State legislative directors met at the UTU’s Portland regional meeting for their quadrennial meeting. The UTU Constitution provides that the state directors meet every four years to elect officers to the National Association of State Legislative Directors and conduct other pertinent business.

Elected to head the association was Pennsylvania State Legislative Director Don Dunlevy. Florida State Legislative Director Andres Trujillo (GO 970) was elected vice president, Oregon State Legislative Director Randy Russ was elected secretary and Kansas State Legislative Director Ty Dragoo was elected treasurer.

The state directors heard from UTU/SMART leaders including Sheet Metal Workers International Association President Joe Nigro, UTU International President Mike Futhey, UTU Assistant President Amy Martin, SMWIA Director of Railroad and Shipyard Workers Larry Holbert, UTU National Legislative Director James Stem and UTU Alternate National Legislative Director John Risch.

“Some 16 new state legislative directors were elected this spring and this was a good opportunity for them to interact with other state legislative directors and union leadership,” Risch said.

“Much discussion centered on how to operate state legislative boards at peak efficiency and for the maximum benefit of union members and their families.”

South Carolina

The State Legislative Board recently held its reorganization meeting in the state capital of Columbia to elect officers and discuss items of importance to UTU members and their families.

Jack Ramsey Jr. said he was “deeply honored” by being re-elected by acclamation for a fifth term.

Standing (left to right) are: Will Ferguson (L-970, Abbeville); Steve White (L-1814, Spartanburg); Steve Cox (L-931, Greenville); Robert Walker (L-407, Charleston) and Marc Scarborough (L-942, Florence). Seated (left to right) are: Steve W hite (L-1814, Spartanburg); Steve Cox (L-931, Greenville); Robert Walker (L-407, Charleston) and Marc Scarborough (L-942, Florence).
Portland
UTU/UTUIA 2012 Regional Meeting

Local legislature Rep. Charles Jones (1886), third from left, greets General Secretary & Treasurer Ken Thompson, International President Mike Palardy and Assistant President Amy Martin at the closing session of the meeting.

UTU Vice Presidents John Lemenski, left, and Delbert Smoker, right, get acquainted with SMWIA’s Larry Halver, who serves as director of railroad and shipyard workers. More than 2,000 SMWIA members are employed by U.S. freight and commuter railroads.

UTU’s Director of Organizing Rich Ross is flanked by granddaughters Morgan (left) and Madysen Strahlman at the regional meeting’s Sunday night welcome reception.

Nicole Schultz, Local Chairperson Kristian Willis (1117) and Local President Brian Erickson (1117) relax at the Tuesday evening theme party.

UTU/UTUIA 2012 Regional Meeting

Local officers who live in or near the regional meeting host city volunteered short time to assist UTU International staff before, during and after a regional meeting. Three-year committee members were, from left, Alternate Vice President – Bus Brian Donald (163), Alternate Legislative Rep. Marion Miller (1637), Assistant State Legislative Director Greg Brown (473), Oregon State Legislative Director Randy Ross (281), Local Chairperson Larry Romine (473) and Local Chairperson Bart Duerr (126).

Members of the UTU Auxiliary gathered in the ballroom foyer of the Portland Hilton for this snapshot during a break from the Auxiliary’s continental breakfast and program. The program included presentations by Auxiliary International President Mac Parker and other Auxiliary officers, as well as visits from UTU International President Mike Palardy, SMWIA General President Joe Negro and other UTU International officers.

Local Chairperson Francis Quinn was standing room only.

Unlike the always-popular workshop by Young and arbitrator Dr. Guilded Legal Counsel Steve Young during a break in the “No Rules” Bus Workshops.

Local Chairperson Richard Madrid (1637) takes time to speak with Dis-ignated Legal Counsel Steve Young during a break in the “No Rules” workshop. The always-popular workshop by Young and arbitrator Dr. Guilded Legal Counsel Steve Young during a break in the “No Rules” workshop.

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Auxiliary International Secretary & Treasurer Cindy Milborrow, spouse of Local Chairperson Bob Milborrow (1366), displays a child’s shirt from American Products that was available at the UTU store.

Local Chairperson Doug Scott (1780) and Local President Travis Rogers (1780) introduce themselves to SMWIA General President Joe Negro (far right) and Assistants to the General President, SMWIA, Rich McTigue (far left) at the Tuesday evening “Streets of Portland” theme party.

Like father, like son. Kansas State Legislative Director Ty Dragoo (1503), right, has followed in his father Nile’s footsteps and has become active in union affairs. Nile currently serves as chairperson of the UTU Transportation Safety Team.

Local Chairperson and National Labor College hazardous waste staff member Yorreme Haynes (1118) looks on as Legislative Rep. Bobby Eastburn (1524) serves a choice to make following a simulated hazardous materials drill exercize on a computer tablet.

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Local Chairperson James Bell (1114), left, and Utah State Legislative Director Jon Napier (1362) were filling political strategy when they photo-boothed in front of the UTU PAC pledge table. Both officers are running for political office in the fall elections. Members of the PAC pledge table are Pennsylvania State Legislative Director Dan Dooling (1074) and Oklahoma State Legislative Director Dennis Smith (1094), far right.

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Bus Workshops

UTU/UTUIA 2012 Regional Meeting

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Members of the UTU Auxiliary gathered in the ballroom foyer of the Portland Hilton for this snapshot during a break from the Auxiliary’s continental breakfast and program. The program included presentations by Auxiliary International President Mac Parker and other Auxiliary officers, as well as visits from UTU International President Mike Palardy, SMWIA General President Joe Negro and other UTU International officers.

Local Chairperson Richard Madrid (1637) takes time to speak with Dis-ignated Legal Counsel Steve Young during a break in the “No Rules” workshop. The always-popular workshop by Young and arbitrator Dr. Guilded Legal Counsel Steve Young during a break in the “No Rules” workshop.

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Local Chairperson Doug Scott (1780) and Local President Travis Rogers (1780) introduce themselves to SMWIA General President Joe Negro (far right) and Assistants to the General President, SMWIA, Rich McTigue (far left) at the Tuesday evening “Streets of Portland” theme party.

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Deadline nears for fall foliage cruise

The deadline to sign up for a UTU-sponsored fall foliage cruise up the East Coast is approaching. Landfall Travel, the UTU’s official travel provider, has arranged a seven-day voyage on Princess Cruise’s Caribbean Princess north along the Eastern seaboard of the U.S. and Canada, departing from New York City Sept. 29. Ports of call include Newport, R.I.; Boston; Bar Harbor, Maine; St. John, New Brunswick, and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Throughout your journey you will be treated to freshly prepared cuisine, great service and the many amenities for which Princess Cruise Lines is famous. Prices start at $699 per person based on double occupancy. Air fare, taxes and certain other fees are extra. You do not need to be a member of the UTU Alumni Association to take advantage of this offer. For more details, contact Landfall at (800) 835-9233 or see the UTU Alumni Association page at www.landfalltravel.com.

The Final Call

Following are the names of recently deceased members who maintained annual membership in the UTU Alumni Association, according to reports received at UTU International Headquarters. These brothers and sisters will be missed by their many friends and fellow UTU Alumni Association members.
Saunders named UTUIA volunteer of the year

Kameron “K.T.” Saunders has been named the United Transportation Union Insurance Association’s volunteer of the year for 2012.

Saunders, a member of Local 508 in Smithville, Texas, is a locomotive engineer on Union Pacific. He serves his union as assistant state legislative director, local chairperson, local legislative representative and delegate.

As legislative representative, Saunders has worked to increase UTU PAC donations from his local, earning it the fourth-highest rank in the country for 2011, with an average $12.02 per member per month in UTU PAC donations.

He also serves as president of the Smithville Independent School Board and is a member of the Smithville Volunteer Fire Department. He also serves on the board of directors of the Smithville Jamboree Celebration Committee, which puts on an annual fair to raise money for scholarships.

This past year, Texas suffered a history-making drought. When wildfires threatened the area, Saunders took two weeks off from work to fight the fires, and then fought them, as time permitted, for another two weeks.

These wild fires were some of the most devastating in the history of the Bastrop and Smithville, Texas, areas, and Saunders “showed real compassion for his fellow man in helping to fight these fires,” Texas State Legislative Director Connie English said.

“Saunders is always there when someone needs a helping hand,” said David Fehlker, secretary & treasurer of Local 508, who nominated Saunders. “He truly deserves being the UTUIA volunteer of the year.”

Saunders, who was honored at the recent regional meeting in Portland and who was awarded a $1,000 annuity from the UTUIA, said he was “very surprised” that he was nominated and won the award. “I am humbled and honored,” he said.
The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) sponsors annual bus and rail transit roadeos designed to encourage excellence and professionalism among bus and rail transit operators and mechanics.

In the APTA International Rail Roadeo in Dallas in June, two UTU Local 1565 members—Sheila Celestain and Carolyn Kelly, both employed by the Los Angeles County Metropolitian Transportation Authority (LACMTA)—placed third. Thirteen rail public transportation teams from across North America competed, demonstrating professional skills including train operation and knowledge of safety regulations, train equipment, track right-of-way rules and procedures.

Celestain, of Long Beach, Calif., is a 22-year UTU member; and Kelly, of Compton, Calif., has been a UTU member for 24 years. They both are veterans of the LACMTA light-rail Blue Line, running north-south between Long Beach and downtown Los Angeles. The Blue Line is the oldest and second busiest of five light-rail lines in Los Angeles and carries more than 26 million passengers annually.

Seven UTU members representing bus operators and mechanics competed in the APTA International Bus Roadeo in Long Beach, Calif., in May.

Bus operators and mechanics vie in separate competitions involving safe driving skills and maintenance disciplines.

Representing the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) maintenance and mechanics division were UTU Local 1596 members Troy Andrews (Charlotte, N.C.), a six-year UTU member and now a CATS supervisor, William Belcher (Gastonia, N.C.), a three-year UTU member, and Craig Patch (Salisbury, N.C.), a 15-year UTU member.

The UTU CATS team placed 14th among 31 entrants. There is a NASCAR pit-crew element to the maintenance competition, as the three team members must coordinate activities flawlessly with stopwatch precision. “I have competed at six or seven national competitions, and because of turnover, I have never competed with the same team twice, which makes it tougher,” Patch said.

Affordable Care Act eliminates many copays

UTU members with questions on how the Affordable Care Act will affect them and their families should visit the websites of their health care insurance carriers.

For UTU members covered under the national railroad medical, prescription drug, dental, vision, and life insurance benefits plans, links to your health insurance providers’ websites can be found at www.utu.org by clicking on the “Health Care” link at the top of the home page.

In addition to accessing the UTU health care web pages for information, also view the Railroad Information Depot, accessible at http://www.rmrdepot.com/.

Following is general information on the Affordable Care Act:

• Those with health care insurance no longer will pay out-of-pocket for certain preventive care services when they are rendered by a network provider. The purpose is to promote wellness and reduce the high cost of treating and managing disease. For a list of preventive service covered, use the following link: www.healthcare.gov/law/about/provisions/services/lists.html.

• Dependents stay on plans: “donut hole” closes

This provision could prove a significant cost saver for UTU members covered by the national railroad health care plan because copays will be eliminated for many preventive health care services.

“When we entered the most recent round of negotiations with the carriers, our strategy was to hold the monthly cost-sharing premium under $200 – rather than allow it to escalate to $300 or more – in exchange for somewhat higher copays,” said UTU International President Mike Furhym.

There is a NASA P pit-crew element to the maintenance competition, as the three team members must coordinate activities flawlessly with stopwatch precision. “I have competed at six or seven national competitions, and because of turnover, I have never competed with the same team twice, which makes it tougher,” Patch said.

FRA seeks to improve Northeast Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration said it is preparing an environmental impact statement to evaluate potential passenger rail improvements on the Northeast Corridor linking Washington with Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

This is one of numerous initiatives as part of the Northeast Corridor Future program that will define current and future markets for improved rail service and extend the corridor, design a plan to meet those needs, and create a regional planning framework to engage stakeholders. An investment plan will follow.

To learn more, go to www.NECfuture.com.

FRA eyes rule on Amtrak emergency preparedness

The Federal Railroad Administration has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking to clarify certain requirements of the existing emergency preparedness standards for passenger trains, and address issues that have arisen since the regulations were issued in May 1998.

The proposed rule would ensure railroad personnel who communicate and coordinate with first responders during emergency situations receive initial and periodic training, and are subject to operational efficiency tests and inspections.

The proposed new rule says railroads must:

• Develop procedures in their emergency preparedness plans addressing the safe evacuation of passengers with disabilities during an emergency situation.

• Specify new operational efficiency testing and inspection requirements for both operating and non-operating employees for railroads.
New surface transport law a mixed bag

A surface transport bill passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama is a mixed bag for UTU members.

It’s not all we wanted, but, maybe more important, it’s not as bad as it could have been.

Given the polarization of this Congress, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century—MAP 21— is as good a new transportation authorization bill as we could have hoped for. It was passed by bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate June 29.

This is what MAP 21 does as it applies to bus, commuter rail, intercity passenger rail and freight rail:

- It increases federal expenditures for federal transit programs—bus and commuter rail—beginning in October and continuing through September 2014. Within those numbers, however, is a reduction in bus and bus-facilities spending, which is a victory of sorts since an earlier version sought to zero out such spending.
- It allows transit systems operating fewer than 100 buses in peak service to use a portion of their capital grants for operating expenses. This will allow money for smaller, cash-strapped systems to keep buses on the road and return furloughed drivers to work. But, sadly, larger bus systems do not gain such flexibility, even during periods of high unemployment.
- It extends a $17-billion federal loan program for transit and freight rail operators, making, for example, up to $350 million available to the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) for transit improvements.
- It grants authority to the Department of Transportation to create a national safety plan for all modes of public transportation, which will result in minimum safety performance standards for systems not currently regulated by the federal government. These safety performance standards will include enforcement of the national safety certification training program for employees of federal- and state-owned transit systems.
- It requires the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to establish a national registry of medical examiners within one year, and requires employers periodically to verify the commercial driver license status of employees.
- It provides 80 percent in federal match dollars for transit systems to develop and carry out state safety oversight programs. State oversight will include review, approval and enforcement of transit agency safety plans, including audits by the Federal Transit Administration.
- It scraps an attempt to eliminate overtime and minimum wage provisions for van drivers whose routes cross state lines.
- It strengthens Buy America requirements for all new bus and passenger-rail rolling stock and other capital expenditures, which means more American jobs.
- It leaves in place a requirement that positive train control be implemented on all track carrying passenger rail and Amtrak and Amtrak—by Dec. 31, 2015. It does, however, reduce the PTC installation requirement for freight railroads, providing that PTC be installed on fewer than 40 percent of main line trackage by Dec. 31, 2015, with 60 percent (freight only trackage) continuing to use existing train control systems.
- Importantly, it does not include a provision

Congress retains Essential Air subsidies

Of importance to UTU-represented Great Lakes Airlines pilots and flight attendants, Congress has scrapped an attempt by conservatives to eliminate the Essential Air Service program.

Great Lakes Airlines is the largest recipient of Essential Air Service grants, which helps keep flights operating to 120 communities in 35 states. Such assistance is seen as crucial to the economies of rural communities.

Congress has changed a provision of the program to require that Essential Air Service routes average at least 10 passengers daily and that no new communities be added to the program.

Contact Palmetto for permission forms

If you need a family member or friend to call Railroad Medicare to inquire on a claim, update your address, or ask a specific question about your benefits, Palmetto GBA Railroad Medicare makes sure that your personal Medicare information is given out only to persons to whom you authorize.

If you call to ask questions about Part B Medicare, before Palmetto can answer your questions, you will always be asked to give your: Full name; date of birth; Medicare beneficiary identification number; and Medicare beneficiary number.

Medicare cannot release any specific information about your benefits to someone else unless you give your verbal or written permission.

Verbal permission has to be given over the phone at the time of each call. Written permission must include the form FT-16. The name of the person or group to whom information can be given; the specific types of information (data or records) that can be released; your signature, and a date you signed your name, and length of authorization (ongoing or one-time only).

If Palmetto does not have your verbal or written consent, it can only release very limited information.

If you have any questions, call Palmetto’s Beneficiary Contact Center at (800) 833-4455 for Medicare or at (800) 377-4850.
Three Union Pacific crewmembers died June 24 in a head-on collision between two freight trains near Guymon, Okla., that produced a diesel-fueled fire so intense that the thick, black smoke could be seen for 10 miles. The fire burned for some 24 hours.

Dead are UTU member Brian L. Stone (Local 923), age 49, of Dalhart, Texas; engineer Dan Hall, 56, and engineer John Hall, 49 (no relation to Dan Hall).

Stone had been a conductor since September 2003. Both Halls were members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

Dan Hall is the cousin of Local 923 delegate Randy N. Johnson.

Conductor Juan Zurita (Local 923) jumped to safety and suffered only cuts and bruises.

Guymon is some 130 miles north of Amarillo, Texas, on the former Southern Pacific Golden State route linking El Paso with Kansas City.

The Oklahoma newspaper quoted National Transportation Safety Board member Mark Rosekind as saying that one of the trains – and he declined to specify which – failed to take a siding.

Two members of the UTU Transportation Safety Team assisted NTSB investigators at the scene.

Stone is the fourth UTU member killed on duty in 2012.

Local 887 (Harvey, N.D.) member Robert J. Glasgow, 38, was killed May 28 in a switching accident near Kenmare, N.D.; and Local 1383 (Gary, Ind.) member Michael M. Shoemaker, 55, was killed in a switching accident Jan. 10 in Gary, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority driver and Local 1563 member Alan Thomas, 51, was murdered aboard his bus May 20.

Stone is survived by his wife, Cindy Stone of Dalhart, daughter Samantha Meredith of Georgia, daughter Sidonia Allo and husband Daniel of South Carolina, daughter Halee Stone of Amarillo, son Robert Lemley of Dalhart, and daughter Jade Stone of Dalhart, and many others.

Family requests memorials be made to the First Baptist Church of Dalhart, 1000 E. 16th St., Dalhart, TX 79022.