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The Official Publication of the United Transportation Union

THE VOICE OF TRANSPORTATION LABOR

“Let us continue to practice and preach solidarity. Let us remain united. Let us remain strong. Let us march together, let us vote together, let us fight together.” – *UTU International President Paul Thompson*

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News & Notes

Member drowns in rescue

Jordan Reid, a BNSF Railway worker and member of UTU Local 1168 in Clovis, N.M., drowned May 19 while vacationing in Milwaukee, Wis., after successfully rescuing his son from a swimming pool.

Brother Reid was observing his 30th birthday on the date of the tragedy. He leaves a wife and five children behind.

Brother Reid's mother, Brenda Wilson, also is a member of Local 1168.

Those wishing to make a donation on behalf of Brother Reid should make checks out to “Brenda Wilson.” Please forward checks to Secretary/Treasurer Buddy Blue at 1301 S. Main Ave., Portales, NM 88130.

UTUIA jobs available

The United Transportation Union Insurance Association is seeking individuals to represent its fine line of insurance products. The positions offer an excellent pay and benefit package. Those interested should respond by mailing their resume to: Office of the President, UTUIA, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250.

COLAs paid July 1

Paychecks for rail employees covered under the UTU national agreement with the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) were increased July 1 due to a cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment.

The COLA adjustment increased daily pay rates by 1 cent hourly, or 8 cents daily. The COLA was rolled into the basic daily rates of pay. Employee health care cost-sharing payments were not increased.

Employees affected include those of BNSF, CSX, KCS, NS and UP, as well as smaller railroads whose bargaining agent is the NCCC.

Revised pay-rate tables have been posted on the UTU web page, www.utu.org.

COLAs are computed by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The COLA applied to rail-employee collective bargaining agreements is calculated from a BLS weighted-average of consumer prices for goods and services called the CPI-W, where “CPI” stands for consumer-price-index and the “W” stands for wage earners and clerical workers.

The period measured for the July 1 COLA was September 2005 through March 2006. Because of steep price increases from the effects of Hurricane Katrina, the Jan. 1 COLA increased paychecks by 31 cents hourly. Those sharp increases last year served to dampen price inflation in the most recent BLS measurement. That is why the July 1 COLA is considerably lower than the Jan. 1 COLA.

Thompson blasts carriers in state-of-union speech

It is written – and most recently by the UTU – that “as ye sow, so shall ye reap.”

Railroad management has been sowing seeds of dishonesty, disinformation and disrespect.

“If the end game of rail management is the destruction of rail labor, then rail management better do some soul searching.”

That was the message of UTU International President Paul Thompson in his state-of-the-union speech June 21 at UTU's western regional meeting in Reno, Nev.

“Carriers have lied to us during this round of national negotiations,” Thompson said. “They have attempted to pit one labor union against the other. They say they

are in favor of improved safety. But what they do is fail to provide employees with sufficient training and rest. They fail to hire sufficient train crews.

“We exposed their lies about positive train control. We exposed that the technology is

experimental. We exposed that the technology doesn't even work. We exposed that public safety and national security would be jeopardized by one-person crews.

“We won a lawsuit preventing the carriers from demanding we negotiate one-person crews in national negotiations. We forced the carriers back to the bargaining table to discuss training and fatigue mitigation.”

So far, during this current round of national negotiations, Thompson said, railroads “spit in the face of labor and they spit in the face of public safety and national security.”

“As a British prime minister once said, ‘There are no permanent friends...only permanent interests.’ Rail labor's permanent inter-

ests are protection of our members' jobs, safety and working conditions.

“Working families should not, cannot and will not be treated like garbage – to be discard-

“Working families should not, cannot and will not be treated like garbage, to be discarded at the convenience of greedy employers.”

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Hazmat shippers align with UTU

In what may be a first for rail labor, a major shipper organization told Congress it shares with train and engine service employees an urgent safety concern.

Specifically, the American Chemistry Council (ACC) told the House Railroad Subcommittee that “proposals to permit one-person train crews should not be considered until proven technology solutions are in place to allow for safe operations with a single crew member.”

Recently, officials of the ACC met with UTU International President Paul Thompson, who provided a primer on rail safety and efforts by the carriers to compromise that safety by reducing crew size in an effort to boost profits.

Thompson provided evidence from federal regulatory agency hearings and other sources

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Two victories for Amtrak

Call them two giant steps.

The first giant step was a June 13 vote by the House of Representatives – including 71 Republicans – to tell George Bush it won't accept a starvation budget for Amtrak.

The second giant step was a DOT-ordered study by the Federal Railroad Administration into the safety and national security implications of Amtrak's desire to eliminate assistant conductors.

By a 266-151 vote, the House on June 13 approved an amendment to a transportation funding bill to provide Amtrak with \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2007, which begins Oct. 1. The Bush administration had sought to cut Amtrak funding to just \$900 million for FY 2007, and the House Appropriations Committee, earlier in June, had supported that figure, which likely

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Around the UTU

News from around the U.S. and Canada

Local 265, Pocatello, Idaho

Members of this Union Pacific local are mourning the death of Marine Corps veteran and yard Local Chairperson **Bob Baumgartner**, who lost his battle with cancer on June 15, said Local Treasurer **Steve Wheeler**.

Local 762, Montgomery, Ala.

Members of this CSXT local in May held informational meetings for all UTU members and their spouses in central Alabama, said Local President **Dale Barnett**. Playing a key role was State Legislative Director **Ronnie Clements**, who arranged attendance by representatives from the FRA, RRB, UTUIA, UTU Auxiliary and UnitedHealthcare, as well as appearances by political candidates. Also attending were L&N Vice General Chairperson **Barry Hogan** and SCL Vice General Chairperson **John Whitaker**. A special thanks for his efforts goes out to Local Secretary **Jimmy Weekley** for his assistance.

Local 1042, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Members of this local employed by Jefferson Bus Lines are mourning the death of General Chairperson **Keith Tanner**, who lost his battle with cancer on June 24, said UTU International Vice President and Bus Department Director **Roy Arnold**.

Local 1043, Sparks, Nev.

Those attending the UTU regional meeting in Reno, Nev., donated money in honor of former Local Chairperson **John Fitzgerald's** 16-year-old son, Tom, who died June 15 after a short illness, said Local Chairperson **Rod Nelms** and Secretary and Treasurer **Howard Palmer**. More than \$400 was raised for the Give Hope Foundation, which assists terminally ill children. Donations in honor of **Tom Fitzgerald** also may be sent to the Give Hope Foundation, P.O. Box 20908, Reno, NV 89515-0908.

Local 1129, Raleigh, N.C.

This Norfolk Southern and CSXT local recently held its annual picnic for active and retired members and their families, said State Legislative Director **Dickie Westbrook**. Among those attending were the "Old Norfolk and Southern" employees, who had worked on a railroad that ran from Charlotte, N.C., to Norfolk, Va., with various branch lines. Brother Westbrook counts himself as one of five "Old NS" employees still working.



UTU International Vice President J.R. Cumby (left) administers the oath of office to his brother, David, who recently became chairperson of Local 1962 in Toledo, Ohio. The local holds its meetings on the last Thursday of the month at the Comfort Inn South at 2426 Oregon Road in Toledo.



Alton & Southern switchman Denis Wier sits behind the wheel of one of the cars he runs on a fuel made mostly from vegetable oil.

Vegetable oil powers member's automobiles

With rising fuel costs eating into family budgets, Alton & Southern Railway switchman **Denis Wier** is striking back, figuring out ways to squeeze increasing mileage out of two older-model cars using a formulation largely composed of vegetable oil discarded by a fish stand.

"When all the costs are figured, it's about \$12 or \$13 to fill the tank now. I'm getting about 325 miles per tank in one of my cars, and about 400 miles from another," said Wier, who belongs to Local 1929 in E. St. Louis, Ill. "It costs a bit more in the winter because you have to do things to keep the fuel thinner in cold weather."

Wier's work with alternative fuels is strictly applicable to diesel engines. "It won't help gasoline engines," he said. "But I've had successes from the beginning. It's a great feeling. Sometimes you get a whiff of exhaust from the engine, though there isn't a great deal of it. It's not a gross smell, but it makes you hungry!"

By his own account, Wier is no rocket scientist. After serving in the Army, he began work in the Alton & Southern roundhouse in 1974, and began switching a year later. (His brother, **Dave Wier**, is a UTU International alternate vice president and alternate delegate from Local 469 in Madison, Ill.)

The education Wier draws on comes mostly from the Internet and from fellow members of The Biodiesel Club of St. Louis. "There's an unbelievable amount of people doing things like this, and you learn from other people's mistakes."

For his experiments, Wier bought two older cars. "I've got a silver 1983 Mercedes-Benz station wagon and a red 1979 Mercedes-Benz 300 SD Turbo," he said. "The older diesels have better injector pumps than available in late-model cars. They were made to last forever." And in the event of a disastrous experiment that goes all wrong, Wier said he won't feel too bad about either car's demise.

"What I'm doing in my three-barrel process isn't too radical, especially when you consider the original diesel engine was developed to run on peanut oil," Wier said. "My process actually doesn't produce true biodiesel fuel in the strictest sense. That calls for the use of acids and other dangerous items. I may experiment with biodiesel out of curiosity, but I don't want to blow up my garage, and I'm getting great results with what I'm doing."

Local 1293, Altoona, Wis.

All active and retired members of this Union Pacific local and their families are invited to the annual picnic being held on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Lake Altoona County Park, according to retired member **Edward Thompson**. Food and beverages will be supplied. For information, contact retired engineer **Donald Knutson** at (715) 834-4405.

Local 1366, Salt Lake City, Utah

This Union Pacific local held its first pair of informational seminars in April, said Local President **Dan Thomas**, who hopes the meetings will become annual events. Thanks go to Local Chairperson **Bob Milbourn** for organizing the event and helping arrange appearances by International Vice President **Arty Martin**, Vice General Chairperson **Sam Taullie**, Utah State Legislative Director **Jay Seegmiller**, UTU Auxiliary International President **Carol Menges** and Auxiliary National Legislative Director **Charlie Belden**. Also on hand were representatives from the UTUIA, RRB, UnitedHealthcare and Union Pacific Health Systems.

Local 1373, Philadelphia, Pa.

Members of this CSXT local raised \$3,780 during a 50/50 raffle to assist Local Chairperson (yard) **Charlie Kinsel** in his battle with cancer, said member **Greg Brecker**. Winner of the 50/50 drawing, yardmaster **Tommy Piazza** of Local 1949 in Baltimore, Md., donated his winnings back to the medical fund.

Local 1697, Lubbock, Texas

Members are mourning the death of **Ken "Grumpy" Frizzell Jr.**, who passed away May 21 following a motorcycle accident, said International Vice President and Bus Department Director **Roy Arnold**. Frizzell, 54, served in the U.S. Army, worked as a carpenter for 20 years, and was a bus operator for 12 years at Texas New Mexico & Oklahoma (Panhandle Trailways).

Local 1741, San Francisco, Calif.

This bus local's new vice local chairperson at the San Mateo School District property is **Griselda Machuca**, said Local President and Legislative Rep. **Ange Belay**. The 80 members at the property, who recently approved their first contract with Durham School Services, operate school buses for about 650 students.

Belden memorial ride

Preparations are underway for the Scott Belden Memorial Motorcycle Ride on Monday, Aug. 21, at the Asheville regional meeting.

Those who plan to ride should contact UTU Auxiliary National Legislative Director **Charlie Belden** at (540) 972-4627 or via e-mail at utuauxnld@aol.com as soon as possible.

The suggested UTU PAC contribution is \$50 per rider and \$25 per passenger. Donors will receive a beautiful, custom-designed T-shirt, refreshments and snacks, and a CD of the pictures taken during the ride.

UTU calls for more training for rail crews

Inadequate training for new employees, and the failure of recurrent training for existing employees, are the biggest safety challenges facing the rail industry, UTU Alternate Legislative Director James Stem told the House Rail Subcommittee June 27.



Stem

Subcommittee Chairman Steve LaTourette (R-Ohio) called the hearing as part of the subcommittee's oversight of Federal Railroad Administration safety initiatives.

Stem challenged rail industry assertions that the industry's safety record is improving. "FRA data reveal

that over a three-year period ending December 2005, train collisions increased by more than 42 percent and employee fatalities were up by 17 percent.

"The lack of appropriate training is the number one safety issue facing the rail industry today – and it should be of significant and urgent concern to the members of Congress," Stem said. "These training deficiencies are not confined to just operating employees, but also include yardmasters, train dispatchers, signal employees, maintenance-of-way employees, locomotive repair and servicing employees and track inspectors.

"It is not uncommon on any train, anywhere in America, to find an inexperienced trainman paired with a new engineer. It is very unlikely the trainman received training over the territory he or she is working, or was taught the special problems that exist, and skills required, in regions with temperature extremes, heavy grades or complex operating environments.

"Most troubling," Stem said, "is that it is unlikely either the new trainman or new engineer were provided classroom training where actual application of the operating rules was taught.

"The UTU is of the strong opinion that newly hired trainmen should not be required to work unsupervised or operate locomotives until they are truly experienced in the trainman craft," Stem said. "This ensures they have become proficient in their train service and have gained needed on-the-job experience before assuming additional demanding duties and responsibilities.

"A one-year minimum in train service prior to becoming a conductor would improve the quality and competency of railroad operating employees," Stem said. "It also ensures that newly hired employees will have approximately two years of practical railroad experience before they can be expected to operate loco-

growing problem. Employees must have early and reliable information indicating when they will be required to report for duty."

Stem also called on Congress to "ensure that workers who report or identify a safety or security risk will not face retribution or retaliation from their employers. One should not have to choose between doing the right thing on safety or security at the risk of losing his or her job. Despite whistleblower protections included in the current law, rail workers and their unions continue to experience employer harassment and intimidation when reporting accidents, injuries and other safety concerns."

Turning to track safety, Stem said, "maintenance-of-way forces are also critically short-

"The lack of appropriate training is the number one safety issue facing the rail industry today, and it should be of significant and urgent concern to the members of Congress."

motives without direct supervision."

Stem also urged additional training in identifying threats to national security. "Workers still do not know what constitutes a security risk, although they are told to be 'vigilant.' They do not know how to respond when they see someone or something suspicious and they certainly do not know what to do if something actually happens. The only way workers are going to get the security training they need is for the federal government to tell the carriers they must offer this training."

As for employee fatigue, Stem said, "Unless a rail employee knows in advance what time he or she must report to work, they cannot arrange to be rested and fit for duty. The carriers give good lip service to fatigue, and very little tangible commitment to resolving this

handed to the point that track maintenance is now only reactive, instead of being proactive."

Directing the subcommittee's attention to carrier efforts at reducing crew size, Stem made clear that development and implementation of positive train control (PTC) must be treated separately from crew-consist issues.

"PTC systems," Stem said, "are not designed to reduce the numbers of hot journals on freight trains. PTC has no effect on reducing the numbers of grade-crossing collisions or the striking of trespassers. PTC has no effect on burst air hoses, broken coupling devices or shifted lading. PTC systems were not designed to interact with emergency responders following a derailment or a collision, or to open a public grade crossing to allow emergency vehicles and the general public to cross."

NTSB's Hersman praises UTU safety team

A member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recently singled out the United Transportation Union's Transportation Safety Team for its professionalism, expertise and assistance.

"We have a great working relationship with the UTU Transportation Safety Team," said NTSB Board Member Deborah Hersman in remarks June 19 to some 600 UTU members and guests attending the regional meeting in Reno, Nevada.

"UTU brings (to our accident investigations) a level of expertise with operating procedures, and that's why we rely on you," Hersman said.

The five-member federal agency, she said, has the funds to investigate only a relative handful of the more than 3,000 railroad accidents annually, and focuses its limited resources on accidents involving fatalities, hazmat releases and accidents involving "different issues" than looked at previously.

NTSB's professional staff numbers some 400, who are spread among all major forms of freight and passenger transportation. For assistance in understanding the cause of accidents, the NTSB looks to industry experts, such as UTU's Transportation Safety Team, which frequently is invited by the NTSB to accident sites.

As for highway accidents, NTSB resources are spread even more thinly, Hersman said, with



National Transportation Safety Board member Deborah Hersman praised the work of the UTU's Transportation Safety Team.

the agency able to investigate only about 10 such accidents annually, even though highway accidents kill more than 43,000 each year. In choosing which highway accidents to investigate, Hersman said the NTSB looks at the public interest, emerging trends and whether similar accidents have been previously investigated.

She reviewed for the audience more than

half a dozen rail and bus accidents investigated in recent years by the NTSB.

Hersman said the NTSB has no regulatory authority. Although the NTSB is charged by Congress with improving transportation safety, its determination of probable cause serves only as a catalyst to Congress and regulatory agencies to mandate new laws and regulations.

Annually, the NTSB publishes a "most wanted" list of safety improvements. Since that list was first created in 1990, it has annually urged introduction of positive train control "to prevent collisions and over-speed accidents by requiring automatic control systems to override mistakes by human operators."

NTSB's "most wanted" list also calls for enhanced bus-driver training and noise-reducing switches on new buses.

Hersman, who was confirmed to her post by the Senate in 2004, previously advised Senate Democrats on all transportation issues. She is a certified child passenger safety technician, and holds a commercial driver's license with passenger, school bus and air-brake endorsements.

The UTU Transportation Safety Team, chaired by UTU International Vice President David Hakey and coordinated by Vice President Jim Cumby, consists of David Brooks, Tom Dwyer, Steve Fritter, Jim Herndon, Steve Reveley, Robert Strzelczyk, Curtis Wall, Steve Dawson and John England.

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UTU PAC a good bet

Does it help to have friends in Congress? You bet your UTU PAC it does.

Consider adequate training for new employees and the failure of recurrent training for existing employees.

Enter Rep. Corrine Brown of Florida, senior Democrat on the House Railroad Subcommittee, who likely would become chairman if Democrats regain control of the House.

When informed of a conflict between the railroads' labor negotiators' stonewalling on employee training and the more progressive position of the industry's chief lobbyist, Brown picked up the telephone.

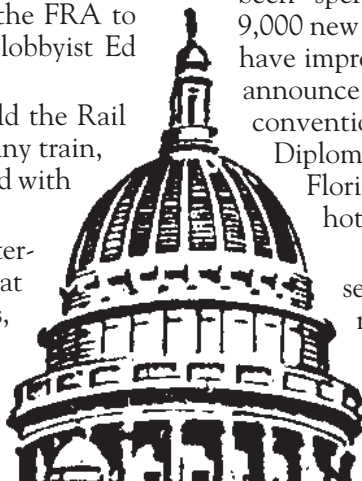
To railroad chief labor negotiator Bob Allen, Brown expressed displeasure he had rejected direct rail-labor involvement in establishing, implementing and conducting employee training programs.

Brown favors collaboration among rail labor, carriers and the FRA to find a mutually acceptable solution. So does railroad chief lobbyist Ed Hamberger, but Hamberger isn't in charge of negotiations.

As Alternate National Legislative Director James Stem told the Rail Subcommittee June 27 (see page 3), "It is not uncommon on any train, anywhere in America, to find an inexperienced trainman paired with a new engineer.

"It is very unlikely the trainman received training over the territory he or she is working, or was taught the special problems that exist, and skills required, in regions with temperature extremes, heavy grades or complex operating environments," Stem said.

Brown, like the UTU, finds this unacceptable. Bravo!



WASHINGTON WATCH

By James M. Brunkenhoefer

The only throats railroads cut are their own

The railroads dream of having a Bush Presidential Emergency Board.

It is their hope he would appoint Ann Coulter, Karl Rove and Frank Lorenzo, or people like them – people who would just rubber stamp the railroads' demands to force one-person crews, impose massive pay cuts and force employees to shoulder most costs of health-care insurance.



Brunkenhoefer

The UTU is not alone in having problems with rail carriers. Their customers – already forced to pay higher rates and accept reduced levels of service – similarly are up in arms.

The railroads have had numerous hazmat-related accidents and derailments. The railroads say the answer is to require shippers to shoulder the cost of improved tank-car design and accept liability for hazmat accidents.

The railroads are targeting shippers as they are targeting employees, while resisting their own responsibility to improve training and reduce crew fatigue.

Rail management has forgotten the savings rail labor helped them achieve from Railroad Retirement reform, or the \$180 million in annual savings from fuel-tax relief. They forget how labor helped them defeat coal slurry pipelines, bigger trucks and reregulation.

Don't you find it mystifying that the railroads want our help at the same time they want to eliminate your job, cut

A brighter future

By Paul Thompson
International President

Together, and with solidarity, we have made great strides over the past two years.

Here is where we were two years ago:

Our finances were in disarray. We were losing members. Our friends were the carriers. Our enemies were other unions. Throughout the labor movement, UTU was considered a bastard child.

Two years ago, I asked you to join me in rolling up our sleeves, forgetting internal politics and getting on with a rehab effort.

I made clear we could, and would, turn things around and restore pride in our UTU if we all pulled in the same direction.

With help from our International officers, local officers, general committees, legislative boards and UTU staff, we did turn things around.

We are back in the AFL-CIO and we have a seat on the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

Loans have been paid off. Since November, the UTU has taken in more money each month than has been spent. We added almost 9,000 new members. Our finances have improved enough that I can announce our 2007 quadrennial convention will be held at the Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida – a union-owned hotel.

No longer is the UTU seen in bed with the carriers. No longer is the UTU considered the pariah of labor. Today,

we are arm-in-arm with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

We have regained the respect of all of organized labor.

The rail carriers no longer see a perfect storm. The carriers had hope that the White House and the conservative-controlled Congress would cram a carrier-friendly agreement down our throats this year. That carrier hope has vanished. No longer do they see a slam-dunk in creating one-person crews.

We also beat back the carriers in their attempt to eliminate the Federal Employers' Liability Act.

We must now focus our energies on the November elections.

Although we have many friends in the Republican Party, we must end control of Congress by anti-labor conservatives. This will take solidarity of the entire house of labor. We can do it.

Only then will airline, bus and rail employers stop attempting to trash their labor contracts.

As we mobilize to focus on the November elections, we must not permit internal politics or other issues to interfere. There will be plenty of time after the November elections to focus on internal politics.

Job number one is registering to vote and voting on Election Day for labor-friendly candidates.

Let us continue to practice and preach solidarity. Let us remain united. Let us remain strong. Let us march together, let us vote together, let us fight together.



Thompson

With unions on one side and shippers the other, railroads are in a bind

plow and plant their fields anew or reap the troubled harvest they previously sowed."

President Thompson and I met with hazmat shippers and will continue to meet with shipper groups. No longer should railroads expect the UTU to do their bidding while they plot against us.

As shippers go to Capitol Hill for solutions to railroad problems, the railroads may start regretting how they have been treating their employees. In fact, Matt Rose may regret the lies he has been telling about positive train control and how the experimental, unproven technology allows one-person crews.

The railroads now face the reality of the saying, "Live by the sword, die by the sword."

State Watch *News from UTU State Legislative Boards*

South Dakota



State Legislative Director Rick Davids (right) is shown with gubernatorial candidate Jack Billion at the Democratic Party's recent "Spring Fling" in Hot Springs. Billion easily won the Democratic primary, Davids said. "Jack Billion is a former legislator and understands the needs of UTU members and their families. The UTU will be quite active on Billion's behalf between now and November."

Maryland



The Maryland State Legislative Board and all UTU locals there have reaffiliated with the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIOs, State Legislative Director Larry Kasekamp reports. Above, Kasekamp, second from left, celebrates unification with Maryland AFL-CIO Treasurer Donna Edwards; U.S. Senate candidate Ben Cardin, and Maryland AFL-CIO President Fred Mason. "The UTU is officially back in the AFL-CIO, but Larry never really left our family," Mason said.

Arizona



Assistant State Legislative Director Greg Hynes and wife Mona recently attended a fundraiser for Senate candidate Jim Pederson, which was attended by former President Bill Clinton. "We helped raise more than \$500,000 for the UTU- and labor-friendly Pederson," Hynes said. "We strongly urge members in Arizona to support this candidate." Above, left to right, are Clinton, Greg and Mona Hynes, and Pederson.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Legislative Board has completed another productive legislative session for members and retirees, State Legislative Director **P.J. Qualy** reports.

"We have benefited from bipartisan support for rail labor," he said.

"The UTU got language included in the Northstar Commuter Rail Authorization Act that will assure that future commuter rail operations in the state will be run with Class I, union-represented train crews protected by FELA and the Railway Labor Act.

"The UTU also joined bipartisan efforts to pass the Mercury Reduction Act of 2006 which will assure coal-train jobs into the future. The UTU joined with the carriers to defeat the Railroad Antitrust and Competition Act which would have limited industry revenues at a time when unions are in national contract negotiations and trying to get more investment in track signal systems in the state.

"The carriers were again shut out in their bid to pass state legislation giving private railroad police full civilian police authority.

"Please contribute to your UTU PAC today," Qualy said. "We make bipartisan contributions to friends of the railroad working person, and it pays off."

Ohio

The Ohio State Legislative Board is offering two tickets to the biggest football game in the state – the Ohio State/University of Michigan contest – to a lucky UTU PAC donor.

Any member or retiree in the state who voluntarily fills out a pledge form and contributes to the UTU PAC Diamond Club (\$300 per year) or better in 2006 prior to Oct. 31, 2006, will be eligible to win, according to State Legislative Director **Joe Boda Jr.**

The more a member donates, the more chances he or she will have to win, Boda said.

To obtain a UTU PAC pledge form, members should contact their local legislative representative, or the state legislative board office at (614) 847-0011.

North Dakota



Former Minnesota State Legislative Director and Alternate National Legislative Director Willis Croonquist recently was honored with the presentation of his 50-year membership emblem and a certificate of appreciation signed by International President Paul Thompson and Assistant President Rick Marceau. The presentation took place at the annual North Dakota special meeting sponsored by North Dakota State Legislative Director John Risch in Moorhead, Minn. Above, Croonquist, center, shows off his award to two of the former legislative representatives who worked with him during his term in office: Rick Olson of Local 1175 in Duluth (left) and Roger Braith of Local 727 in Staples.

Bus Department

By Roy Arnold, vice president/director

Locals negotiate improved pacts

It has been said that you always pass failure on the way to success. The Bus Department prefers to stay in the fast lane, where it passes by failure on the way to success in helping members and their families achieve better lives.

Tom Fortes, general chairperson of Local 1584, and his LCA, which includes Vice General Chairperson Jose Sobalvarro, reached a favorable contract with Veolia Transportation in Lancaster/Palmdale, Calif. The new agreement, which was overwhelmingly ratified by members, includes improved benefits, large wage increases and better working conditions.

The new contract provides an almost doubling of wages, improved health care benefits and pension plan, five new uniforms and one pair of work shoes annually, precision watches for drivers, a pool table and computer for the day room, plus a sharing with drivers of revenue from day-room vending machines.

Tom possesses inordinate patience and perseverance, which continue to pay dividends for his members.

Gerald McElroy, general chairperson of Local 1496 in Riverside, Calif., led negotiations toward a new three-year agreement with Laidlaw Transit for UTU school bus operators, who will gain substantial wage increases and pertinent contract language changes.

In Rockland County, N.Y., a good first contract was reached for the Chestnut Ridge School Bus District members of UTU Local 153. New York State Legislative Director Sam Nasca and Bus Department Alternate Vice President Rich Deiser assisted in those negotiations.

In Albany, N.Y., Local 167 achieved an improved contract for airport employees. General Chairperson Harry Moreash was instrumental in those talks.



Yardmasters

By J.R. "Jim" Cumby, vice president

Communications crucial to safety

As coordinator of the UTU's Transportation Safety Team, I recently attended an NTSB meeting where the board determined the probable cause of a 2004 head-on collision of two BNSF trains near Gunter, Texas.

The engineer of the southbound train was killed and the conductor suffered serious injuries. Crew members of the northbound train were injured.

The investigation determined that the probable cause was the southbound crew's failure to adhere to an "after-arrival track warrant," which required them to stay in one location until the northbound train arrived. Contributing to the accident was BNSF's use of after-arrival track warrant authority in dark territory, and the FRA's failure to prohibit the use of such authority.

Also contributing to the accident was the train dispatcher's informal communications regarding the meeting locations for the involved trains.

We all should learn from this. As professional railroaders, we should strive to make sure we use train and/or job numbers, along with engine numbers, in all radio communications. Poor, inadequate or irrelevant communications should not contribute to the loss of life or limb of our fellow employees.

Meanwhile, the NTSB named Jim Southworth chief of its Railroad Division, which investigates railroad accidents. Southworth joined the NTSB in 1998 as an investigator, and has twice served as acting associate director of the division. Previously, he spent 15 years at the Association of American Railroads.

I have worked with Jim since he came to the NTSB and I wish him well in his new position.





Regional Meeting Photo Scrapbook



Reno, Nev. — June 19-21, 2006



UTU International President Paul Thompson delivers his state-of-the-union address to members and guests attending the UTU Regional Meeting in Reno, Nev., declaring the union's determination to prevail and noting that "labor has never been more united" as the November elections approach.



Aetna Representative William J. Lichota (left) offers health and welfare information to Local Secretary Rose Mumford and Local Treasurer Willie Fulwiley, both members of Local 1563 in El Monte, Calif.



UTU Assistant President Rick Marceau (left) greets National Mediation Board Member Harry Hoglander, who delivered a speech to UTU members and their guests on Tuesday, June 20.



Alternate Legislative Rep. Brian DiPietro of Local 254, Fitchburg, Mass., and his wife, Cheryl, check the schedule of events after registering at the regional meeting.



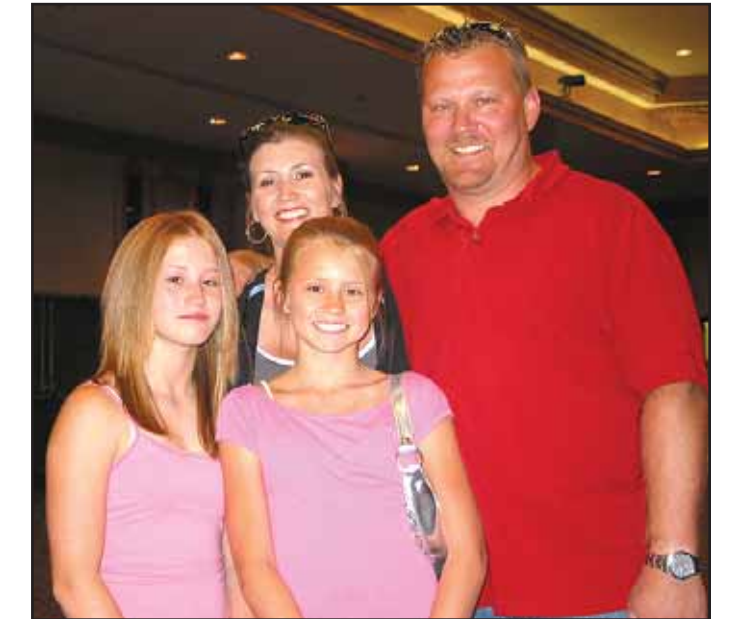
Enjoying a round of golf at the Rosewood Lakes Golf Course on Sunday, June 18, were (from left) Susan Hanson and her husband, Oregon State Legislative Director and Local Legislative Rep. Delmer Hanson of Local 473 (La Grande, Ore.); retiree Larry Parker of Local 771 (Needles, Calif.), and Local Chairperson Greg Burger of Local 756 (San Antonio, Texas).



Director of UTU for Life program Carl Cochran with newly recruited program member Ronald Dean, a retired school bus and Santa Cruz Metro Transit bus operator from Local 23 (Santa Cruz, Calif.).



Shopping at the UTU Store for apparel (right) is Local Chairperson Bonnie Morr of Santa Cruz Metro Transit Local 23 (Santa Cruz, Calif.). Displaying one of the new jacket styles is shopkeeper Sherry Schirripa of the American Products Co.



Secretary-Treasurer Vance Valentine of Local 524 (Palestine, Texas) combines business with pleasure by bringing the family. From left are Victoria (age 13), Samantha (age 10) and wife Sheila.



Dawn Gibbons, a Republican who hopes to compete for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, sought out UTU International President Paul Thompson at the regional meeting to gain the UTU's blessing. Gibbons, who faces a primary on Aug. 15, made a favorable impression and won the UTU Nevada State Legislative Board's endorsement. Her husband, who holds the post his wife is seeking, will vacate the seat to run for governor of Nevada.



A winner of one of the regional meeting workshop evaluation drawings, Vice Local Chairperson and Local Insurance Representative Grover Sharp of Local 951 (Sheridan, Wyo.) displays his prize, a pull-over golf shirt.



Officers of the Auxiliary of the United Transportation Union hosted a variety of sessions. From left are International President Carol S. Menges, International Secretary and Treasurer Joan P. Montgomery, National Legislative Director Charlie Belden, District 8 Vice President Mae Parker and District 10 Vice President Marilyn Home.



The members of the local committee, who volunteered to put in long hours to assure a successful event, included (from left) Local Chairperson Martin Banks (Local 1117, Las Vegas, Nev.); Secretary-Treasurer and Delegate Tom Fortes (Local 1584, Lancaster, Calif.); Nevada State Legislative Director and Legislative Rep. and Delegate Jack Fetters (Local 1117); Secretary-Treasurer Howard Palmer (Local 1043, Sparks, Nev.) and Local Chairperson (yard) Rod Nelms (Local 1043).

UTU for Life



Retired Grand Trunk brakeman John Egan stands in front of his caboose, which serves as his summer home.

Retiree summers in Grand Trunk caboose

It's not too hard for retired Grand Trunk brakeman John Egan to picture the caboose he rode in on his first assignment back in 1949. When the opportunity arose in 1973, he bought it for \$850, renovated it, and now lives in it from late May to late October.

"The outside is original," said Egan, a member of Local 1400, S. Portland, Maine, "but the inside is modern. We have running water, heat, electricity, a kitchenette, a shower and a sewer hookup. It's something like a recreational vehicle."

The frosting on the cake is its location at the Conway Scenic Railroad in North Conway, Maine, where Egan works summers as a conductor. The caboose sits on a siding alongside other refurbished cabooses lived in by former railroaders and rail fans.

Egan began his rail career in earnest after serving in the Army. "But in high school, I did track work for Grand Trunk, so I've got about 60 years of railroad experience," he said.

He retired in 1988, taking a buyout at age 60, while there were still five-man crews. "I saw what was coming and didn't want any part of it."



John Egan's caboose, his summer home, on the grounds of the Conway Scenic Railroad in North Conway, N.H.

What kind of member joins the **UTU for Life** program?

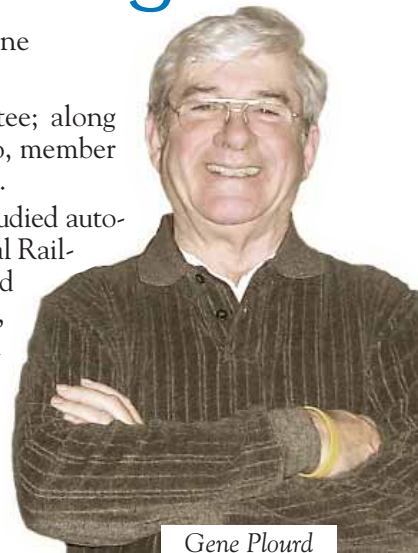
Name: Eugene R. "Gene" Plourd; Local 1400, S. Portland, Maine

Home: North Waterboro, Maine

Activities: Member of the York County Democratic Committee; along with his wife, Rosemary, will serve as a convention delegate. Also, member of governor's committee seeking funding for Amtrak's *Downeaster*.

Background: After high school and two years in the Marines, studied automotive mechanics, then went to work in 1954 on the Maine Central Railroad as a fireman. Joined Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and was elected local legislative representative. In 1960, became chairperson of the BLF&E's Maine Legislative Board. Held that position through unification, and in 1993, was elected UTU's alternate U.S. national legislative director. Served UTU in that capacity until retirement in December 1997.

Quote: "You never know what the Bush Administration is going to do to our Medicare, Railroad Retirement, Social Security or Amtrak!"



Gene Plourd

Because the *UTU for Life* program is a powerful political force, Brother Plourd has been a member since retiring. "But it's also a great way to keep in touch with friends," Plourd said. Aimed at bringing retired and active UTU members together for fellowship, information and political action, the program now includes nine local chapters that meet on a monthly basis.

For \$9 a year, benefits include discounts on cell phones and service; a baseball-style cap featuring the *UTU for Life* logo; a colorful full-size wall calendar; a wallet-size medical emergency card; membership in the UTU Travelers Club; discounts on car rentals; discounts on room rates at a number of the nation's most popular hotel chains; two booklets to help keep track of health issues and finances; an important-papers folder designed to hold legal documents; a listing upon death in "The Final Call" section of the *UTU News*, and discounts of 15 percent on railroad artwork by noted rail artist "Scotty."

For more information, contact the UTU International at (216) 228-9400, or check the UTU's Web site at www.utu.org and click on "UTU for Life." Or fill out the application below, mail it in, and become a member now!

UTU for Life Membership Form

(Please print legibly)

Name _____ Local _____

Address _____

City _____ State or Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

I wish to join the *UTU for Life* program. Enclosed is a check or money order payable to "UTU for Life" in the amount of \$9 (U.S.) for one year's dues.

Complete and return to **UTU for Life, 14600 Detroit Ave., Cleveland, OH 44107-4250**

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.

Local	Name	City/State	Local	Name	City/State	Local	Name	City/State
145	Oliver, Russell O.	Huntsville, Ohio	565	Sweitzer, R.C.	Mt. Vernon, Ill.	1074	Erbel, David G.	Pittsburgh, Pa.
259	Hiserote, Robert L.	Plattsburg, Mo.	656	Batchelor, William H.	Gurdon, Ark.	1293	Perry, Wayne C.	Spooner, Wis.
262	Pagnani, Anthony F.	Weymouth, Mass.	811	Schaefer, William O.	Las Vegas, Nev.	1376	Ryan, John M.	Dublin, Ohio
298	Imhoff, Theron J.	Auburn, Ind.	835	Akin, Clifford D.	Bakersfield, Calif.	1386	Fry, Clyde S.	Parkersburg, W. Va.
298	Zeider, Ralph E.	Logansport, Ind.	872	Evans, Donald D.	Glenwood, Iowa	1393	Wichlac, Arthur J.	Dayton, Ohio
300	McGinley, William J.	Pottsville, Pa.	911	Berghoff, Richard B.	Minneapolis, Minn.	1517	Stewart, Raleigh O.	Florence, Ky.
367	Sydzzyk, Donald A.	Council Bluffs, Iowa	933	Richardson, Lloyd D.	Jefferson City, Mo.	1548	Mathews, Edward I.	Fortville, Ind.
419	Tauro, Phillip P.	Ocean City, N.J.	942	Lewis, William A.	Florence, S.C.	1614	Nagel, Roman J.	St. Paul, Minn.
496	Swayne, Omer C.	McDermott, Ohio	991	Diederich, Harold W.	Steubenville, Ohio	1816	Faneuff, Ronald E.	Holland, Ohio
498	Saylor, Harold E.	Catasauqua, Pa.	1000	Fife, Howard K.	Minneapolis, Minn.	1904	Davis, Harley P.	Pasadena, Texas
528	Marek, Charles W.	McHenry, Ill.	1031	Johnson, Rupert	Bluffton, S.C.			

Erroneously included in this listing recently was **Artie Lebsack** of Local 626, who is alive and well in McCook, Neb.

Tragedy Strikes!

Are you prepared?

If you or your spouse died, where would the money come from to replace the lost earnings caused by death? You may have a big mortgage, credit card debts, automobile loans and other large expenses.

The answer is an insurance policy that provides the funds to deal with such a tragedy and targets your specific needs.

Our **Ultimate Term** and **Ultimate Par** policies are flexible. You tell us how much coverage you need and for how long a period, and UTUIA will custom design the product for you.

Complete the coupon below for more information, or call us toll-free at **1-800-558-8842** for assistance from your UTUIA representative.



Information, please

I would like more information on UTUIA's products.

Please print



_____	_____	_____
<i>Full name</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Date of birth</i>
_____	_____	_____
<i>Address</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>State</i> <i>ZIP</i>
_____	_____	_____
<i>Telephone number with area code</i>	<i>UTU local number</i>	

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

07/06

UTU offers new items featuring union logo

A variety of new apparel, promotional and novelty items is now available on the UTU merchandise Web site administered by American Products.

To view these items, visit the UTU Web site at www.utu.org and click on the "UTU Gear" button in the blue menu bar on the left-hand side of the page.



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

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

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

The new line of custom promotional items from American Products gives you the opportunity to customize items for political rallies, elections, organizing and many other events.



These items are available with your state name or local number and design.

All buttons, stickers and luggage tags are union made in the U.S.A. Prices vary depending on the quantity ordered.

American Products also has available covers for rail, bus and transit time books that can be ordered in quantities of 25 or 50. To view the covers, click on "Specialty Items" at the top of the page.

Please allow four to six weeks for delivery.

NMB's WebEx online service now available

The National Mediation Board demonstrated its new WebEx online service to attendees at the recent regional meeting in Reno, Nevada.

WebEx is a web-based video conferencing program that allows multiple users, from multiple locations, to see each other, hear each other, and share documents on screen.

WebEx can be utilized from any computer able to access the Internet, and the video function is available with a very inexpensive web camera.

In some circumstances, the NMB can even temporarily supply a camera to parties for online use.

Using this system, it is possible for all participants to see documents posted by one party, and it is even possible for parties online to jointly edit contract language.

At the regional meeting, the audience was able to see and hear the session via large-screen projection in the conference hall.

Afterwards, members were able to test-drive the system and ask questions about how it might be useful to them as a way to hold arbitration hearings, as well as other meetings and conferences, without the time and expense of travel.

Two cases, Public Law Board 6931's Cases 50 and 51, were presented to the board for arbitration.

In both cases, which involved the UTU and Kansas City Southern Railway Co., the union sought to recover lost wages and other expenses incurred by members suspended from service by the carrier.

The cases, which were heard in their entirety, were chosen specifically for the UTU regional meeting to give UTU members and others the opportunity to experience the NMB's WebEx service firsthand.

When PLB 6931 rules on the cases, the awards also will be documented on the UTU Web site.

To view the documents submitted by both the UTU and KCS, including UTU and carrier submissions and all pertinent exhibits, go to the UTU Web site (www.utu.org), then click "Awards/Agreements" in the red menu bar on the left and then select "Public Law Board 6931 - Cases 50 and 51 - Documents for Live Arbitration" under Award Summary Index.

Thompson

Continued from page 1

ed at the convenience of greedy employers," Thompson said.

"Carriers have forgotten the many times rail labor was there for them when they needed us. For too long, railroads have taken for granted that the UTU and rail labor will be on their side when they seek to raise rates on captive shippers or gain new tax cuts.

"No more. No more. As the railroads favorite commander-in-chief, George Bush, said, 'Either you are with us or you are against us.'

"It is time now for the carriers to plow and plant their fields anew or reap the troubled har-

vest they previously sowed," Thompson said, previewing a strategy the UTU is embarking on so long as the carriers continue their vicious, unprovoked and unjustified attack on their loyal employees.

"Just last week, the American Chemistry Council, which represents hazardous-materials shippers, told Congress that one-person crews could spell disaster. The testimony came after I met with the leadership of the American Chemistry Council.

"Those hazmat shippers now understand the importance of improved training and eliminating fatigue among overworked train crews.

"I offer the carriers a means to get back on track," Thompson said.

"Sit down at the negotiating table to address

a reasonable training program whose true objective is improved safety. Once an employee completes his or her required training, treat them as equals. Stop this two-tier pay system that creates an underclass.

"Share some of your record profits with your employees who make those profits happen.

"Work with labor and the FRA to address the fatigue problem before another horrific accident snuffs out more innocent lives.

"Reach out to labor to develop a quality of life that makes your company world-class in all respects.

"Let us be honest and truthful in our dealings with one another. We may not always agree, but we should deal with one another out of trust," Thompson said.

Hazmat shippers

Continued from page 1

where carrier officials admitted that so-called positive train control technology is still in the experimental stage and its reliability is far from a level that would permit computers to take over from conductors and engineers the safe operation of freight trains.

In fact, the FBI has warned that the rail network is a likely target of al Qaeda, yet there has been no federal study into the public safety and national security implications of operating trains with just a single crew member. Even a medical emergency or grade-crossing accident could result in a disaster where just a single crew member is aboard.

Nonetheless, carriers have been lobbying Congress not only to permit crew-size reduction, but to pass the increased dangers from such operations onto chemical shippers, whom carriers want to shoulder the liability cost of hazardous materials accidents and spills.

In addition to warning of the dangers to the public and national security of one-person train operations, the ACC urged Congress to support adequate training for crews as well as train-crew fatigue abatement measures, and to help ensure there are sufficient well-trained and adequately rested crew members "to safely transport hazardous materials."

Rail labor unions, backed by the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win Coalition, have been delivering this message to Congress, federal regulatory agencies, state lawmakers and the media since the carriers last year began a push to eliminate the conductor and operate freight trains with a single so-called transportation operator.

The UTU successfully sued the carriers in federal court, preventing them from pressing those demands during this current round of national negotiations. But the railroads have not given up the fight.

The American Chemistry Council is the trade association representing companies that manufacture the chemicals that make modern life possible. Many of those chemicals are classi-

fied as hazardous materials and are essential in manufacturing, agriculture, energy, transportation, technology, communications, health care and national defense.

The ACC said rail transportation is "critical" to its members and industries depending on the safe and timely delivery of chemicals. "Rail remains a remarkably safe way to ship hazardous materials," the ACC said. Those shippers want rail transportation to remain safe.

The chemical shippers cautioned that safe train operations "can be compromised when hazardous materials are left on un-crewed trains for lengthy periods of time and transported by tired and inadequately trained crews."

The ACC cited Federal Railroad Administration data that "the train accident rate has not shown substantive improvement in recent years" – and that the accident rate was higher in 2004 than in 1995.

"The nation needs a safe and reliable system of hazardous materials rail transportation, governed by uniform, national rules," the ACC told Congress.

Amtrak

Continued from page 1

would have caused Amtrak to shut down.

The House amendment to provide Amtrak with sufficient funding to keep it operating through at least Sept. 30, 2007, was introduced jointly by Minnesota's Jim Oberstar, the ranking Democrat on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and Ohio's Steve LaTourette, the Republican chairman of the House Railroad Subcommittee.

The second giant step was toward saving the jobs of Amtrak's assistant conductors, and involved successful arm twisting by the Republican chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee – Alaska's Don Young, a long-time friend of the UTU.

Young secured from Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta a commitment to have the FRA look closely at the safety and national security aspects of eliminating assistant conductors on Amtrak passenger trains.

"Neither giant step yet gets us across the finish line, but both get us a heck of a lot closer to where we want to be in saving Amtrak and protecting UTU jobs," UTU International President Paul Thompson said.

"Both of these giant steps," Thompson said, "were made possible by contributions to the UTU PAC, which helps the UTU build friends and influence on Capitol Hill. The UTU's bipartisan approach, which rewards labor-friendly lawmakers, regardless of their political affiliation, continues to pay valuable dividends to our members and their families," Thompson said.

The Bush administration and anti-labor conservatives in the House and Senate have been hellbent on starving Amtrak into a shutdown so they might break up the national intercity rail passenger network, privatize the most favorable routes (staffed with non-union crews), and eliminate what the private sector doesn't want.

"Each year's fight to avoid an Amtrak shutdown is not an assured victory, however," said UTU National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer. "Although the House has now voted to provide Amtrak with sufficient funding in fiscal year 2007 to keep it operating, we now must gain a similar vote from the Senate, where

ing agreements require a minimum of one conductor and one assistant conductor on Amtrak long-distance trains; and that a preliminary FRA review concluded such staffing levels "are currently sufficient to provide for the safety of passengers and passenger train operations." Those current agreements provide for additional assistant conductors depending on the number of coaches in the train.

Amtrak, however, is seeking to amend its collective bargaining agreements to eliminate the assistant conductor. Mineta said that while crew consist "has always been determined by collective bargaining agreements," FRA would have

We must be more energized in saving Amtrak than its opponents are in killing it. Every senator must hear every day and every hour by e-mail, phone and personal visits from Amtrak supporters.

the fight will be tougher.

"Phone calls, e-mails and visits to senators from UTU members, their families and friends will help us in that fight, which is likely to last through the summer," Brunkenhoefer said. "We must be more energized in saving Amtrak than its opponents are in killing it. Every senator must hear every day and every hour by e-mail, phone and personal visits from Amtrak supporters."

As for the fight to preserve the jobs of Amtrak assistant conductors, Young gained from Mineta a written commitment that it is "worthwhile to conduct a more in-depth study" of the value of assistant conductors in ensuring passenger safety and national security.

Mineta said that current collective bargain-

sufficient cause to prevent Amtrak from eliminating assistant conductors if "railroad safety is jeopardized. Therefore, I have directed FRA to contract with DOT's Volpe Center to conduct the appropriate study" into the safety and national security implications of eliminating assistant conductors, Mineta said.

The UTU and Amtrak have been at the bargaining table on this and other wage, rules and working conditions issues since the summer of 2000.

Under the Railway Labor Act, contracts between railroads and their unions do not expire until amended. However, Amtrak employees covered by these existing contracts receive cost-of-living adjustments twice annually.



UTU BUS LINES

News items culled from the UTU's Daily News Digest, posted every morning on the UTU Web site, www.utu.org.

Chestnut Ridge drivers get new pact

UTU-represented school bus drivers in Local 153, employed by Chestnut Ridge Transportation in Rockland County, N.Y., are now enjoying the protections of a collectively bargained agreement with the carrier.

About 370 people drive buses full-time and part-time for the carrier. Drivers voted last year to join the UTU.

Chestnut Ridge Transportation is the largest private bus company in Rockland County. Its fleet of 350 buses and vans shuttles 20,000 children to and from schools, mostly in the Ramapo, East Ramapo and Pearl River school districts.

Most of the drivers are Haitian immigrants. More than 100 of the drivers have worked at the company for less than two years.

UTU International Vice President Roy Arnold, director of the UTU's Bus Department, said the labor agreement reached with the employer "is one of the best I have ever seen for a first contract. It contains substantial wage increases, better benefits and a good grievance procedure.

"I am quite sure that when the drivers realize the pay increases and the job protections afforded them under this new agreement, they will be even more satisfied with their decision to join the UTU," Arnold said.

Arnold praised New York State Legislative Director Sam Nasca and Alternate Vice President-Bus Rich Deiser for their hard work hammering out the new contract.

Antelope Valley drivers ratify new contract

UTU-represented bus drivers who serve customers of the Antelope Valley Transit Authority in Lancaster/Palmdale, Calif., have overwhelmingly ratified a new five-year contract.

The ratification vote by the members of Local 1584 was 76 in favor, 12 opposed.

The drivers are employees of Veolia, which holds the contract to operate the service.

Tom Fortes is the general chairperson.

"This is the highest wage increase we ever got," Fortes said. "The wage increase is about double what we ever got before.

"The contract also improves health care benefits and our pension plan. Also, we get five uniforms a year instead of one; the company gave new railroad-certified watches to all drivers, and everybody gets a new pair of shoes a year.

"Compared to what we had before, this is unbelievable," Fortes said.

"In the day room, all we had before were chairs. Now we have pool tables, a computer, and all drivers get an e-mail address. Also, the union is getting 45 percent of the money from the vending machines and the pool table."

Fortes praised UTU International Vice President Roy Arnold, director of the UTU Bus Department, for his assistance. "Roy gave us a solution that worked for everybody," he said.

Fortes also thanked Vice General Chairperson Jose Sobalvarro for his hard work.

UTU members voting on LACMTA contract

The UTU and two other unions have reached tentative agreements with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority on new three-year contracts.

The UTU's ratification vote was underway as this issue of *UTU News* went to press.

The contracts were negotiated with the UTU, representing 4,800 bus drivers and rail operators; the Amalgamated Transit Union, representing 2,000 maintenance and service workers, and the Transportation Communications Union, representing 700 clerical workers.

"We reached a good agreement," James A. Williams, UTU general chairperson, said. "My members are going to like it. This is an excellent package.

"And, this is the first time in 18 years we have reached agreement prior to the expiration of the contract," Williams said.

Williams praised the other members of his negotiating committee – Vice General Chairperson Victor Baffoni and local chairpersons Robert Gonzalez, Enrique "Rick" Ortega, Benjamin Cooper and Tim Del Cambre – for their hard work and dedication.

Williams said California State Legislative Director J.P. Jones also assisted during negotiations.

No details of the contracts between the MTA and three unions were released.

Local 61 members on SEPTA voting on pact

Members of UTU Local 61 in Philadelphia, conductors and assistant conductors who work on the Southeast Pennsylvania Transit Authority's (SEPTA) Regional Rail Division, at *UTU News* press time were voting on a tentative agreement reached with the carrier.

Results of the ratification vote will be known July 9.

The proposal includes an improvement in

wages, work rules and medical and prescription benefits over a four-year period.

The negotiating committee, led by General Chairperson Ralph A. Vazquez, includes Frank McDermott, Elliott Cintron, Fred Williams, Glen Lockley, Dan Bradley and Michelle Duncan.

Vazquez expressed his thanks to UTU International President Paul Thompson for contin-

ued support during these difficult negotiations.

"We knew exactly what we needed, and we got it," Vazquez said.

"I am proud to be the general chairperson and more proud of my local for their solidarity, professionalism and willingness to make decisions so that, at the end of the day, every member will realize an improvement in wages, benefits and job security."

Your help needed on RRB disability legislation

The United Transportation Union, with assistance from other labor organizations, is on the road to solving a two-decades-old problem that places an inequitable ceiling of just \$400 a month on outside earnings for anyone drawing a Railroad Retirement disability annuity.

By contrast, those receiving disability benefits under Social Security can earn considerably more than \$400 monthly, and the Social Security earnings limitation increases every year under a cost-of-living adjustment.

To help achieve the goal of increasing the Railroad Retirement earnings limitation for disability annuitants, it is essential that UTU members and retirees contact their lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives to ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 5483, which will be known as the Railroad Retirement Disability Earnings Act.

This legislation will raise the ceiling on outside earnings for those receiving Railroad Retirement disability annuities to \$700 a month. It also would include automatic yearly cost-of-living increases in the monthly earnings limitation. The yearly rate of increase would be the same as that for Social Security disability recipients.

This is bipartisan legislation. Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska) and ranking Democrat James Oberstar (Minn.), of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, have been joined by Chairman Steve LaTourette (R-Ohio) and ranking Democrat Corrine Brown (Florida), of the House Railroad Subcommittee, to introduce H.R. 5483.

Please contact your congressman and ask that he/she cosponsor and support H.R. 5483; and that the congressman contact Chairman

Young's office to urge a markup to move this important legislation as soon as possible.

The UTU has promised it would correct, at the first opportunity, this technical flaw that harms those receiving Railroad Retirement disability annuities. This is exactly what it is doing.

To find the name, phone number and e-mail address of your congressman, go to the UTU home page at www.utu.org and click, in the red column, on "Washington Updates."

Then scroll down and click on "Contacting the Congress."

Then fill in your address, including ZIP code, and your congressman's name will appear with contact information.

You should only contact your congressional representative at this time, not your senators.

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 months.

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 or digital 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 **Steve Brown**, a member of Local 117 in Vancouver, Wash. The photo shows a westbound Union Pacific intermodal train going by Multnomah Falls on the carrier's Portland Subdivision. Multnomah Falls is the second-highest year-round waterfall in the nation. The water of the falls drops 620 feet from its origin on Larch Mountain.

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The Official Publication of the United Transportation Union

UTU tells FRA: More, better training of rail crews needed

Although railroads are the safest means of moving hazardous materials, stringent safeguards are essential for the public safety – and these safeguards include improved training for train and engine service crews.

This was the message delivered to the Federal Railroad Administration May 31 by UTU National Legislative Director James Brunkenhoefer during a hearing on rail tank-car safety.

"The railroads' current training situation leaves a great deal to be desired," Brunkenhoefer said. "I know of no regulations that require certification of those who accept the shipment of hazardous materials. There is nothing that I know of that requires a trained and licensed inspector where hazardous materials are loaded.

"The railroads would have others believe that trainmen or conductors are qualified to carry out this responsibility," Brunkenhoefer said. "Very plainly put, this is a lie. Getting others to believe this lie saves the railroads a lot of money. They do not have to have the added personnel to carry out these responsibilities nor do they have to pay for the additional training."

Brunkenhoefer said that "during the previous round of national collective bargaining, the railroads signed a side letter saying they would discuss improving training during this current round of negotiations. Instead of fulfilling this promise, the carriers came to the bargaining table with a different agenda. They wanted to discuss one-person crews and crew consist. This was in spite of a moratorium that said they would not do that.

"Surely everybody knows that a reduction in crew consist would create significant safety issues," Brunkenhoefer said. "But the carriers wanted to break the contract they had previously signed so they could have the right to run trains with one person only, and without taking into consideration the regulators' view on safety issues such as experimental technology.

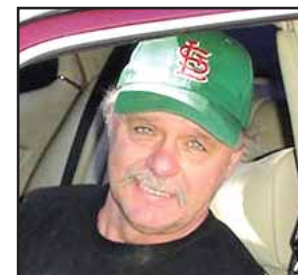
"The carriers don't let little things like contracts, safety, laws and regulations – or even respect for the regulator – get in the way of their goal of reducing head counts," Brunkenhoefer said.

"After a trip to a federal courthouse and an adverse court decision for the carriers, the UTU expected the carriers would be prepared finally to discuss the promises made in the previous contract. But it required another trip by the UTU to the courthouse to bring the carriers back to the negotiating table to discuss training," Brunkenhoefer said.

"Training is not just about learning how to do the job better. It is about doing the job safely," Brunkenhoefer said. "It is about how not to get hurt or killed, or hurt or kill others. This is absolutely critical because of the significant increase in the hiring of new employees. But the railroads are telling us that they will not let such issues stand in the way of their efforts to gain concessions on crew consist. They either do not realize, or refuse to realize, that training employees to do their jobs more safely has a greater economic advantage in the long term."



Inside this issue of the UTU News:



Switchman Denis Wier has switched to vegetable oil. See page 2.



Safety board's Deborah Hersman praises work of UTU. See page 3.



Grand Trunk caboose is UTU retiree's summer home. See Page 8.



The UTU is offering new items bearing the union logo. See page 9.