



**UNIFIED SYSTEM DIVISION  
NEWSLETTER  
VOLUME 36 – January 2022**

***Right to Work....code words for busting unions.***



## ***National Bargaining Update***

The BMWED/SMART-MD Coalition held another mediation session on December 3, 2021, with the National Carriers Conference Committee (NCCC), as facilitated by the assigned mediator of the National Mediation Board (NMB).

The Carriers provided a brief presentation, summarizing their bargaining position, which remains that railroad workers deserve: minimal wage increases that do not keep up with the rising cost of living; diminished health insurance benefits and increased out of pocket costs for those worsened benefits; unpredictable work schedules and rest days by giving the Carriers more flexibility for workweek assignments; and less opportunity to perform work that is within the scope of their respective Agreement so that contractors can do such work instead.

These are untenable positions for the BMWED/SMART-MD and we remain opposed to this carrier offer.

Labor Economist Tom Roth provided a presentation regarding the Railroads' economic performance through the third quarter of 2021, on behalf of the BMWED/SMART-MD Coalition. Roth's presentation reaffirms the railroads' unrealistic and unreasonable bargaining position, considering the carriers' recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and continued spree of record profitability and record low operating ratios. Roth also pointed out that the railroads have so much cash money on hand that the "Big 3" railroads (CSX, NS and Union Pacific) spent over \$28 billion in stock buybacks in the last 33 months, while spending only \$25.3 billion in wages and benefits for all their employees combined.

BMWED/SMART-MD Coalition spokesman, Richard Edelman, followed Roth's presentation with some comments, noting that railroad employment levels are down nearly 30% since the last round of National Negotiations, and that railroad workers are quitting more frequently than ever – often in mid-career which is unheard of in this industry - given the railroads' continued campaign of demanding more and more work from less and less railroad workers. He also noted that the railroads would need to recognize that in order to reach an Agreement, the railroads would have to make real changes in their bargaining position.

The railroads have enjoyed record profits and boom in business for far too long without allowing their workforce adequate increases in wages and benefits. The time is past due for them to recognize the value of their workforce and offer them an agreement which is fair and competitive moving forward for the years to come.

## ***Unified System Division signs Several Agreements improving working conditions for employees.***

- In November 2021, the Unified System Division ratified an agreement which will allow BMWED members on the Union Pacific Railroad to move into the future with Tie Plate Distribution by assigned BMWED members to the "New" "Tie Plate Distribution Machine"

- In December 2021, the Unified System Division ratified an agreement as a result of a claim dispute that will allow applicants for REO positions who already have seniority in the REO class to become more easily assigned to positions in which they do not currently hold qualification on.

- In January 2022, the Unified System Division ratified an agreement which increased the paid deferential to \$2.00 for System Brandt Truck Operators and System Tracker Unloader positions while extending the restricted time on those positions to 12 months.

# **UNIFIED SYSTEM DIVISION NEWS**

## **Unified System Division Convention**

The Unified System Division will hold its fifth quadrennial Convention October 24-28, 2022 at Flamingo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, NV. As set forth in the Unified System Division Bylaws each Local Chairman will represent his or her Lodge at the Unified System Division Convention, in the event the Local Chairman cannot attend the convention the Lodge Alternate Local Chairman will have the opportunity to represent their respective lodge at the Convention. An official Call Letter will be mailed soon to all Local Lodges explaining the process for delegates to make arrangements for both lodging and travel to the Convention. In accordance with the USD bylaws the General Chairman will appoint two committees, a resolution and a bylaw committee which will meet prior to the convention to discuss any business to be addressed. Both convention call letters and committee meeting call letters outlining the details for each meeting will be sent to the appropriate Local Chairman at a later date. We look forward to seeing you all in Las Vegas.

## **5th Regular Quadrennial BMWED National Convention**

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters will hold it's Fourth Regular National Convention the week of June 13, 2022 at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, NV. Each Local Lodge will have the opportunity to elect a delegate to represent their membership at the National Convention. The Unified System Bylaws dictate that the system will be responsible for travel and motel for each Convention Delegate who comes under the jurisdiction of the USD however, the local lodge will be responsible for any lost wages or other cost when attending the convention. Generally each Lodge will be required to hold a special election between January 1, 2022 and May 1, 2022 to elect a convention delegate and a alternate. A duplicate of the Credential must be received by the National Division Secretary/Treasurer 20 days prior to the commencement of the convention or May 22, 2022.

## **Seniority Rosters**

**Seniority Roster are being distributed and it is your responsibility to assure your Seniority Placement is correct and the dates are accurate.**

It is that time of year again and seniority rosters should be being distributed on each of the respective railroads. All roads are different when it comes to distribution but ultimately it is an employees responsibility to assure their respective seniority dates are correct.

Please take the time to review the seniority roster rule in your respective agreement and make sure if there are issues with your seniority dates, you contact a system officer and file a seniority protest within the specific time limits outlined in your respective seniority roster rule.

## **WWW.USDBMWED.ORG**

Are you familiar with the website provided for your utilization and knowledge? The Unified System Division has a website for members to access as much pertinent information as possible.

The site provides items such as agreements, pay rates, benefit information, contract negotiation updates, and a number of links which benefit the members of the Unified System Division.

If you have not explored this wealth of information that is provided for your benefit. Visit today at: [www.usdbmwed.org](http://www.usdbmwed.org) and start exploring the information available at your finger tips.

# ***RAILROAD RETIREMENT NEWS***

Most railroad retirement annuities, like social security benefits, will increase in January 2022 due to a rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the third quarter of 2020 to the corresponding period of the current year.

Cost-of-living increases are calculated in both the tier I and tier II portion of a railroad retirement annuity. Tier I benefits, like social security benefits, will increase by 5.9 percent, which is the percentage of the CPI rise. This is the first time the tier I increase has been over 5 percent since January 2009, when it was 5.8 percent. The tier I increase for 2021 was 1.3 percent, following a 1.6 percent increase in January 2020.

Tier II benefits will go up by 1.9 percent, which is 32.5 percent of the CPI increase. Vested dual benefit payments and supplemental annuities also paid by the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) are not adjusted for the CPI change.

In January 2022, the average regular railroad retirement employee annuity will increase \$138 a month to \$3,104 and the average of combined benefits for an employee and spouse will increase \$194 a month to \$4,501. For those aged widow(er)s eligible for an increase, the average annuity will increase \$76 a month to \$1,534.

Widow(er)s whose annuities are being paid under the Railroad Retirement and Survivors' Improvement Act of 2001 will not receive annual cost-of-living adjustments until their annuity amount is exceeded by the amount that would have been paid under prior law, counting all interim cost-of-living increases otherwise payable. Some 56 percent of the widow(er)s on the RRB's rolls are being paid under the 2001 law.

If a railroad retirement or survivor annuitant also receives a social security or other government benefit, such as a public service pension, any cost-of-living increase in that benefit will offset the increased tier I benefit. However, tier II cost-of-living increases are not reduced by increases in other government benefits. If a widow(er) whose annuity is being paid under the 2001 law is also entitled to an increased government benefit, her or his railroad retirement survivor annuity may decrease.

However, the total amount of the combined railroad retirement widow(er)'s annuity and other government benefits will not be less than the total payable before the cost-of-living increase and any increase in Medicare premium deductions.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will announce Medicare Part B premiums for 2022 later this year, and this information will be available then at [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov). Individual benefit amounts cannot be calculated until that announcement.

In late December the RRB will mail notices to all annuitants providing a breakdown of the annuity rates payable to them in January 2022.



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