

# Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund



## THE HIGHBALL

Fall 2023

### BNSF ASSESSING ACTUAL SUSPENSIONS

Since 2006, the BNSF has assessed record suspensions in lieu of actual suspensions. This practice recently changed when BNSF assessed a BR&CF member a 15-day record suspension and a 15-day actual suspension. How does this impact BR&CF members? If BNSF assesses an employee an actual suspension in lieu of a record suspension, said employee will not be allowed to work in any capacity when decertified. Previously, an engineer or conductor could mark up as a brakeman or switchman to make inferior wages.

### POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL (PTC) ENFORCEMENTS

Rail carriers east of the Mississippi continue to assess discipline for PTC enforcements. The carriers require train crews to utilize Trip Optimizer (TO), a smart cruise-control system according to WABTEC. We all know the technology is far from perfect. Many enforcements are caused by TO's inability to maintain authorized speed. A 5-mph overspeed condition causes enforcement and the train crew ends up disciplined for the deficiencies of TO.

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

The board of directors acted at the October meeting to amend the BR&CF Constitution. I am pleased to report the amendment was adopted by unanimous consent. A letter was recently mailed to all BR&CF members regarding the amended constitution. The letter includes a QR code that will direct you to the amended constitution.

Discipline has been moderate for quite a few years at BNSF. However, the pendulum may be beginning to swing. Since the implementation of the Safety Summit Agreement, T&E employees have been assessed alternative handling/record suspensions, which allowed them to continue working and earn a paycheck. BNSF recently began assessing actual suspensions. This action will adversely affect all BNSF T&E employees, highlighting the value of a BR&CF membership.

The fund engaged the accounting firm of Boyer and Ritter to audit the organization's financial statements in accordance with Article XXVII, Section 5, of the BR&CF Constitution. The firm concluded the fiscal year ended September 30, 2023, audit and presented their report. A Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Fund Balances will be published in the Winter 2024 issue of the Highball newsletter.

If you have a high school senior or a child in college under 27 years of age, I encourage you to have him/her submit a scholarship application. The application is available by clicking [here](#). The Fund will award twenty (20) scholarships for \$2,500 each.

I wish to congratulate Brother Patrick H. Perea on his retirement. I have worked side-by-side with Brother Perea since he joined the board of directors in 2015. I will miss his passion and dedication to serving the membership of this Brotherhood.

I would also like to welcome Brother Lonnie Swigert as the newest member of the board of directors. He is a great addition to the board. I look forward to working with him.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year.



Jesse E. Taylor  
International President

# 365 DAYS OF COVERAGE ON DAY ONE

There has never been a better time to be a BR&CF member or increase your daily benefit level. Membership dues were reduced by nearly 30% in 2022 and the board of directors extended 365 days of coverage to all new members and increases of daily benefit level. The

BR&CF consistently offers the **best value** by combining the most affordable income protection in the industry with the **highest level of service**.

## MOST AFFORDABLE DUES IN THE INDUSTRY

BENEFIT LEVEL	\$100	\$150	\$200	\$250
BR&CF	\$32.50	\$48.75	\$65.00	\$81.25
LE&CMPA (No. 16)	\$44.63	\$65.63	\$87.94	\$110.25
SMART-TD (DIPP)	\$50.00	\$75.00	\$100.00	\$125.00

## JOB INCOME PROTECTION THAT PAYS FOR ITSELF

BENEFIT LEVEL	MONTHLY DUES	ANNUAL DUES	REFERRALS: \$250 Each
\$100	\$32.50	\$390.00	<b>\$500</b> : 2 REFERRALS
\$150	\$48.75	\$585.00	<b>\$500</b> : 2 REFERRALS
\$200	\$65.00	\$780.00	<b>\$750</b> : 3 REFERRALS
\$250	\$81.25	\$975.00	<b>\$1000</b> : 4 REFERRALS

## A SIMPLE REFERRAL CAN EARN YOU **\$250!**

The BR&CF does not have a traditional sales force. We rely on existing BR&CF members to refer coworkers to the organization. If a coworker you introduce to the BR&CF is approved for membership, we will pay you a referral fee of \$250.00, provided they have not been a member in the previous twelve months. No sales pitch is necessary – just a simple referral.

Click [here](#) to learn more about the Referral Program and to order brochures and posters.

## Director Patrick H. Perea Retires



Director Pat Perea announced his retirement at the October board of directors meeting. Brother Perea hired with the Sante Fe in 1977 and joined the BR&CF in 1980. He served as the BR&CF Terminal President in Albuquerque, New Mexico from 2003 until his appointment to the board of directors in April 2015. Brother Perea's railroad experience and his dedication to serving the membership will be greatly missed. We thank him for his service to the organization and wish him health and happiness in retirement.

## Lonnie J. Swigert Appointed to the Board of Directors



In accordance with article XXI, Sec. 5, of the BR&CF Constitution, the board of directors appointed Lonnie J. Swigert to the director position that was vacated by Brother Perea. Brother Swigert hired as a conductor at the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway in January 2006 and earned promotion to locomotive engineer in 2012. Brother Swigert has a long history of service to his union brothers and sisters. He is the local chairman of BLET Division 292 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice General Chairman of the Norfolk Southern – Eastern Lines GCA. He also serves as a member of the BLET Safety Task Force. Brother Swigert hails from Uhrichsville, Ohio.



- ... the BR&CF is not an insurance company?
- ... the BR&CF is a not-for-profit organization?
- ... it is simple and fast to submit an application for “Held Out of Service” benefits?
- ... the average processing time of an application for “Held Out of Service” benefits is less than one hour?
- ... the BR&CF's direct debit/deposit plan allows for same-day deposit of “HOS” benefits?
- ... the BR&CF provides “HOS” benefits ranging from one day up to and including dismissal?
- ... the BR&CF is the only Job Income Protection provider that offers benefits for dismemberment?
- ... a \$50,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit is a benefit of membership?
- ... a “Retirement” benefit based on years of membership is a benefit of membership?
- ... the BR&CF awards twenty (20) scholarships annually of \$2,500 each as a benefit of membership?
- ... the BR&CF does not employ a traditional sales force?
- ... you can earn a referral fee of \$250 if you refer a coworker to the BR&CF?
- ... the BR&CF Board of Directors has seven members with approximately two hundred (200) years of railroad experience, three of whom actively manage the day-to-day operation of the Fund?



## BR&CF Constitution Amended

The BR&CF Board of Directors acted unanimously to amend the BR&CF Constitution at their regularly scheduled meeting held the week of October 16, 2023. The amendment of the constitution was prepared by the in-house officers and reviewed by the Fund's general counsel. The amendment removes obsolete language and simplifies sentence structure to improve clarity.

The constitution is a document that describes and specifically defines member rights, responsibilities, and administrative procedures. The amendment represents a comprehensive revision of a document that had not materially changed since 2011. Each article has been modified for clarity and conciseness. Word count has been reduced by a third. There has been a significant amount of rearranging of Articles VII through XIII to group subjects logically.

The primary objective of the revision was to enhance member benefits. A few examples of expanded member benefits include the elimination of the 180-day limit for benefits when signing a waiver of investigation, allowing benefits to continue when a member obtains employment at another railroad while seeking reinstatement, and clarifying when benefits can be provided when discipline is assessed for eligible and ineligible occurrences concurrently.

The revision will also increase the efficiency of the governance of the Fund by streamlining the ability of the board of directors to raise daily benefit levels, adjust dues rates to reflect the discipline environment, and communicate with the membership electronically.

Important changes have also been made to ensure the continued stability of the organization. The annual meeting of the members has been rescheduled to October to align with the end of the fiscal year.

**The effective date of the amended constitution is December 1, 2023. The constitution is available for review by logging in at [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org).**



## 2024 Luther G. Smith Scholarship Program

The scholarship application is now available at [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org). The application process is entirely online. Twenty scholarship recipients are selected by an independent committee and will each receive \$2,500. The deadline for the submission of an application is March 1, 2024.

## **NOT WORKING?**

If you are off work a complete calendar month (except when “Held Out of Service”), you may be relieved of dues for the following reasons:

**Furlough – Sick – Injured – Management – Parental Leave  
Military Service – Ineligible Occurrence – Leave of Absence**

Visit [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org), select Electronic Forms, and submit a Complete Relief of Dues Form.

### **Division Meetings**

Please contact the office if you would like a BR&CF officer to attend a division meeting, either in person or video conference. Our attendance is an opportunity for an officer of the Fund to answer questions and address any concerns of the membership. Please provide as much advance notice as possible to avoid scheduling conflicts.

### **Update Personal Information**

It is important that your contact information is complete and up to date to ensure your receipt of important communication from the organization. Please log in to your account and select personal information to review and update your email address and mobile telephone number.

### **Dates to Remember**

January 16, 2024 - Board of Directors Meeting

### **Office Closed**

November 23 & 24, 2023 - Thanksgiving

December 25 & 26, 2023 - Christmas

January 1 & 2, 2024 - New Years

February 19, 2024 - President's Day

### **Contact the Office**

Canada: (800) 233-7080

US: (717) 657-1890

Address: 300 Sterling Pkwy, Suite 105  
Mechanicsburg PA 17050

Website: [www.brcf.org](http://www.brcf.org)

Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
Eastern Time

