In response to the formation of the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) on October 6th, the Railroad Workers United Steering Committee has published the following “Open Letter to President Obama and Congress.” Its purpose is to help railroad workers and our unions to put the maximum pressure possible on the politicians in Washington, DC, whose actions can legally saddle us with a contract that we find unacceptable.

Feel free to use this letter to send to your Congressional Reps, newspapers and other media you have access to. It’s been twenty years since we have had a national rail strike. We need a campaign to make it effective.

Open letter from Railroad Workers United to President Obama and Congress:

As is the case of other working people, railroad workers have seen their standard of living, working conditions and benefits decline over the last decades. This while the railroad corporations have raked in record profits. For example, according to CNN, “Union Pacific, headquartered in Omaha, is the country’s biggest railroad by revenue. Its performance has been spectacular: Profits have risen at an annual rate of 25% over the past five years.” Profits which have not been shared with the railroad workforce, outside of the 1 percent at the top of the corporate ladder.

The good times continue to roll for the big railroads, even as the U.S. unemployment rate remains stuck at nearly 10%. The Association of American Railroads (AAR) on September 29 reported gains for weekly rail traffic, with “U.S. railroads originating 305,133 carloads for the week ending September 24, 2011, up 1.1% compared with the same week last year. Intermodal volume for the week was up 3% compared with the same week last year. Nevertheless, the rail carriers come to the bargaining table, hat in hand, demanding health care and other concessions from the workforce.

While our contract expired nearly two years ago, the Railway Labor Act finally will permit railroad workers to strike in early December. The Act will also permit Congress and the President to intervene and order us back to work under a contract that we would never consent to otherwise. This will be done in the name preventing the obstruction of commerce. Of course, when Wall Street and the banks nearly brought commerce to a halt with their greed and recklessness a few short years ago, it was another matter. You rushed to their aid and bailed them out. Your rescue of the banks allowed them to return to their bonus-paying ways, while the bottom 99 percent received wage cuts and layoffs. Stopping our ability to strike would – in effect -- be just another bailout, this time for the railroad corporations.

The basic right of organized labor is the right to strike. Should you intervene, you will simply aid and assist the rail carriers, and help perpetuate the downward slide for U.S. railroaders. As rank & file railroad workers, we ask you to remain neutral and please refrain from interfering in our dispute with the rail carriers.

Sincerely,

Railroad Workers United Steering Committee

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Innovative Safety Conference to be Held in Iowa City

All railroad workers are invited to take part in a major safety conference in Iowa City, Iowa on November 17th and 18th. Sponsored by the BLET Iowa State Legislative Board and the University of Iowa Labor Center, the conference was originally instigated by changes promulgated under the Rail Safety Improvement Act (RSIA) of 2008.

“Anyone from any craft is welcome to the conference,” according to conference organizer, BLET Iowa State Legislative Chair Jeff Kurtz. “What is going on in the industry is too important to try to confine to one organization or one group of people the task of trying to clear up. It’s going to take all of us working together to get things done and make the rail industry safer and more employee friendly.”

With the passage of RSIA in 2008, there is a potential for great change in the rail industry. On the one hand, we have the change in the hours of service, which did not address the underlying problem of fatigue and in some cases made things worse. But RSIA has established a basis for safety in the industry by passing provisions that mandate a “fatigue management plan” and a “risk reduction plan”. This mandate applies to all class I carriers and all carriers that are designated by the Secretary of Transportation as having a safety problem. “The carriers will be forced to negotiate with us on the structure of the safety committees and the content of the fatigue management plan”, points out Brother Kurtz. “A major object of this conference is to prepare us for these negotiations”.

Nancy Lessin, one of the premiere labor educators in the country, will be participating in the conference, and plans are afoot to secure a fatigue expert to assist in understanding the science behind fatigue. According to Kurtz, “We need to make sure that our membership has the best information available to make certain that we can secure the best possible fatigue management plan possible”.

All railroaders are encouraged to take part in this valuable conference. For more information, contact Paul Iverson at the University of Iowa Labor Center: Paul-Iverson@uiowa.edu or 319-335-4041 or Jeff Kurtz: rottenlr391@mchsi.com or 319-470-9990. To register, contact Sarah Clark at sarah-j-clark@uiowa.edu or call 319-335-4144. Cost of the two-day conference including registration, all materials, meals and hotel for two nights is just under $300.00. Rank & file safety activists, together with legislative reps and other local/division/lodge officers are encouraged to attend. Whether you plan to attend on your own dime or have your union pay your fees, please take the necessary action and register ASAP as space is extremely limited.

Our safety is too important to leave it to the carriers to decide what is best for us. Please come to this valuable safety conference and make a difference.

Railroad Workers United

Railroad Workers United was organized in April 2008 at a Founding Convention in Dearborn, Mi. RWU grew out of decades of struggle within the craft unions for unity, solidarity, and democracy. We are carrying on a tradition of rank-and-file activity which dates back to the 1890s and the time of Eugene V. Debs.

RWU is a cross-craft inter-union caucus of rail labor activists across North America. All rail workers of all crafts from all carriers who support our Statement of Principles are welcome to join in our efforts. Please write, call or email the address below.

Statement of Principles

- Unity of All Rail Crafts
- An End to Inter-Union Conflict
- Rank-and-File Democracy
- Membership Participation & Action
- Solidarity Among All Railroaders
- No to Concessionary Bargaining

Railroad Workers United P.O. Box 1053 Salem, IL 62881

www.railroadworkersunited.org 206-984-3051 info@railroadworkersunited.org
As the political and economic waves rise higher in this turbulent fall of 2011, locomotive engineers employed by US freight railroads took a strike authorization vote. According to the press release of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET), “the level of voter turnout was higher than any referendum in decades.” This turnout reflects the growing anger of rail workers who have seen their wages and benefits decline during a period of record profits for the rail corporations. A strike was authorized by 97%!

Like workers at Verizon, who balked at that corporation’s demand for major givebacks while Verizon’s coffers overflowed with profit, rail workers are not in a mood to make the concessions demanded of them in this contract round. So despite the fact that the carriers managed to get an agreement from one rail union, the United Transportation Union (UTU), we are now on track for a national rail strike for the first time in almost 20 years.

Unlike most other unionized workers in the U.S., the railroad workforce labors under the federal Railway Labor Act (RLA) which dates back to 1926. It was passed in the wake of the great Shop Workers Strike of 1922, when almost half a million workers in the railroad shops walked out of what was at the time, one of the largest industries in the country, a strike that convulsed the nation. The RLA was designed purposely to prevent this interruption of business. It is full of “cooling-off periods”, endless mediation, and ultimately federal back-to-work enforcement of whatever either some arbitrator comes up with, or a contract based on the precedent-setting deal made by the first union to settle with the railroad corporations.

In 1991, Congress voted 400-to-5 to end the last national rail strike and send railroad workers back to work. Congressman Gerald Solomon of New York State said, “If it went on for three or four days, it could have been an economic catastrophe.” This is the rationale in a nutshell of our corporate dominated political system. Nothing must stop the profit machinery. The full force of the U.S. government is expected to back the carriers, and prevent rail workers wielding power to protect their interests.

The result of the Railway Labor Act over the decades of its existence has been to create an atmosphere of resignation on the part of the rail labor workforce. Contracts routinely go on past their expiration dates for years. The rail unions rarely, if ever run contract campaigns, nor do they attempt to mobilize the membership. Divided into a plethora of craft unions, it is every union for itself, and the devil take the hindmost.

Will it be different this time? That is up to rail workers, who like many other workers have increasingly had their fill of business-as-usual. Workers are on the move worldwide, all across Europe and North Africa. Public workers staged an impressive uprising in Wisconsin and other midwest states this past spring. Verizon workers in the east went on strike this summer, while Longshoremen are battling it out on the west coast (see Page 7). Citizens are “occupying” financial districts from coast-to-coast, identifying the banks, the wealthy and the corporations as the enemy of the rest of us, the “99%”. (see Page 6). Rail workers may soon join the ranks of these insurgents and take up the fight against corporate domination.

Jon Flanders, IAM #1145 Selkirk, NY RWU Co-Chair

Calling All Rail Union Members: It’s Time for Action!

It’s been a long time since there has been a national rail strike in the U.S. Only time will tell if we engage in one in the coming months. Regardless, it is up to all union members to prepare themselves and be ready. Strikes are generally won or lost according to the degree of membership involvement and solidarity of the rank & file. Members of ALL crafts -- conductors included -- should prepare and be ready for whatever comes down the pike. Talk to your co-workers, attend your union meetings, keep up with the communications from your union, from RWU, and from other sources. Maybe now is the time to read up on previous rail strikes or grab that book off the shelf about Eugene V. Debs and the American Railway Union.

If a strike breaks out, it is imperative that we maintain the highest level of solidarity and unity. And we cannot simply rely upon our union leadership to run the strike. If a strike happens, it will be YOUR strike, and it is up to you to participate in all facets of it, beginning to end.
Chicago, Illinois, the railroad capital of the world, will play host to the third biennial Convention of Railroad Workers United, May 4 – 6th, 2012. More freight passes through this city on a day-to-day basis than any other city on earth. And there are more railroad workers here – from all crafts and unions, and all the major Class I carriers (except KCS) plus numerous regionals and short lines – than in any city in North America, making it the perfect spot for a railroad workers’ convention (with all due respects to Las Vegas, Miami, Honolulu, and Reno, just a few of the cities where certain rail unions have chosen to conduct their own get togethers over the years).

As in previous years, the RWU function will be held in conjunction with the biennial Labor Notes Conference. The RWU Convention will conduct the business of the organization on Friday May 4th. The gathering will debate proposed resolutions and consider a series of bylaws amendments. In addition, members will elect the Steering Committee for the next two years. (All RWU members in good standing are eligible to run for the Steering Committee). Finally, we will hear reports from various committees and campaigns, and from guest speakers from other unions both inside and outside of rail labor. That evening, RWU will host a party for those present at the day’s proceedings. In addition, we plan to invite all rails in Chicagoland in addition to the more than 1,000 labor activists at the Labor Notes Conference.

The weekend’s activities will include dozens of workshops, plenaries, discussion groups and forums on strategies and tactics of how to rebuild our unions and the labor movement. And of course, plenty of networking, socializing, singing, and music of the working class.

The Convention and Labor Notes Conference will be held at the Crown Plaza Hotel & Conference Center, just a short free shuttle ride from O’Hair Airport in Chicago. Please make plans to attend the Convention and consider registering for the entire Labor Notes Conference. You will not be disappointed.

More information will be forthcoming as the date gets closer. Watch the RWU website and list serve as well as future issues of The Highball for registration and room rates, registration forms, a tentative agenda, and a listing of workshops scheduled throughout the weekend.

In November, RWU will hold its first meeting of the newly established Chicago Chapter. In the past, RWU has held regional meetings in The Bay Area, the Puget Sound, Chicago, and Tucson, AZ among other locales. A 2008 Founding Convention Resolution was passed on the need for such regional Chapters to build RWU “on the ground.”

With a number of members, a sizable list of supporters and thousands of rails in the area, Chapter organizers expect the group to blossom. “We have a lot of railroaders scattered throughout the Chicagoland metropolitan area divided up by terminal, craft, carrier, union, yard/road,” states Michael Hopp of UTU # 1433.” An RWU Chapter will go a long way to unifying us and coordinating joint initiatives across the region. One such task will be to raise the awareness of the other workers’ struggles and mobilize solidarity for them among rail labor.”

RWU Chapters are to be regionally based and are open to all railroaders in a geographic area. And of course, according to RWU philosophy, they are open to members of all rail union and all crafts from all rail carriers in the region. Pro-union rails from unorganized properties who agree with the RWU Statement of Principles are welcome.

So what can an RWU Chapter accomplish? In addition to more actively disseminating RWU flyers, leaflets, newsletters and stickers, etc. throughout the region, the RWU Chapter has the ability to do the following:

- Introduce members to one another, and unite the various railroad workers in that specific region of the country.
- Facilitate information sharing among the various crafts, unions members, and properties in the region;
- Build a group of rail activists in the area who can come to each others’ aid and assistance when any one group, craft, union, terminal, etc. comes under attack;
- Coordinate a regional strategy to include all rails in the area to wage campaigns and fights more effectively;
- Promote the ability of railroaders to get to know, trust and work with one another on issues of concern to all.

If you are interested in building an RWU Chapter where you live and work, please contact RWU General Secretary Ron Kaminkow at eugene_v_debs_aru@yahoo.com or at 608-358-5771 for more ideas and assistance. If you are in the Chicago area and want to be part of the effort to build the Chapter there, please contact organizer Mark Burrows at 773-480-7285 or email him at potashpuller55@clear.net.
Ask Your Union Prez to Condemn Single Employee Crews

In November 2004, the rail carriers, through their bargaining agent, the National Carriers Conference Committee (NCCC), put forth the demand in their Section 6 Notices to both the UTU and the BLET that the craft of engineer and conductor be abolished and replaced by “transportation employee”. And that the carrier be the sole determinant of train crew size (read, “single employee crews”).

As a direct response, Railroad Operating Crafts United (ROCU), a group that preceded Railroad Workers United, was formed in an attempt to build unity among the operating crafts. ROCU set about educating the union membership of the rail carriers’ intentions. Under pressure from ROCU and the rank & file, the presidents of the BLET and UTU finally responded (albeit 15 months later), pledging to oppose single employee operations, stating that “crew size reduction has gone far enough”.

But since that time, the rail carriers have won agreements that slowly but surely are whittling away at the standard two-employee crew. More and more, RCO jobs are being operated by a lone employee. On-property agreements at both CSX and BNSF have opened the door to over-the-road single employee operations. On BNSF, the BLET reached agreement to give the BLET represented crew member the sole right to control RCO in road operations (implying therefore that this is a legitimate concept). On CSX, the UTU approved language that allows for road “utility conductors”, implying that one conductor on rubber wheels may “attach” to various road crews as needed.

While the carriers were not able to achieve their goal of universal single employee train crews in the last decade, make no mistake – this issue is of prime concern to the carriers. As such, it is vital that railroad workers – especially train and engine crews – be vigilant and ready to fight back against any and all efforts to further this practice. And it is vital that our union leadership embrace the call to oppose single employee crews.

It is to these ends that RWU wrote to the presidents of the UTU and the BLET, first in May, and then again in August of this year, asking them to publicly state their position on this vital issue. Unfortunately to date, neither Mike Futhey of the UTU, nor Dennis Pierce of the BLET has seen fit to respond. As mentioned, the previous presidents stood shoulder to shoulder and decried the idea in 2006. Is it not reasonable to expect the current union leadership issue a statement of opposition to the practice of single employee crews? Thousands of rank & file engineers and trainmen, together with RWU, believe that they should.

Therefore, RWU asks all railroaders represented by either of the unions of the operating crafts to take action. Please contact Presidents Pierce and Futhey and ask them to issue a statement of opposition to the practice of single employee crews. Simply go to the RWU website and click on “Ban Single Man Ops” at the top of the Home Page.

RWU Latest Safety Survey Results

The latest RWU survey results are in. In this latest survey RWU hopes to glean information about what rank & file railroaders on the frontlines think about various safety issues, current safety programs, union participation, and other questions. The survey contained 24 questions.

Safety programs are in place sometimes for questionable reasons. Our unions have participated and sometimes lead the way, but unfortunately, on most properties “behavior based” models are in place. The problem with these programs is that they focus solely on worker behavior and fixing blame rather than hazard elimination.

RWU conducted the survey in concert with our Railroad Workers Memorial Day campaign. We asked rail workers what they thought of their safety programs. The results show that in general, railroaders are very frustrated with the programs that are in place.

Here are just a few of the responses when asked, “what would make the programs better?”

- Focus on fixing conditions not individuals
- Address the actual reason an occurrence happened instead of focusing on rules violations.
- Many times there are more than one situations that came together to create an accident. Don’t focus on just one reason.
- Better and constant communication

If you are interested in reading the entire results of this survey, please see the RWU website and check the Home Page “Head End”. And be sure to look for more surveys to voice your opinion in the near future!
UTU Contract and the Danger of “On-Property” Agreements

J.P. Wright, BLET #78 Louisville, KY RWU Steering Committee

On property agreements and the legalese that they are written in can confuse members who might not have a full understanding of what some of the contract language actually means. There are many arguments for going “on property,” but if one of the conditions is not being able to vote on the national agreement, then we need to investigate just what are these on-property agreements doing to our collective bargaining power? The public sector unions in Wisconsin and Ohio have seen laws passed that have now limited their bargaining rights. Are we limiting our own power when we sign on to these agreements?

COMMENTARY

UTU members who work for CSX did not get a vote on the last national contract. Why? Because they had an on-property contract forced on them that included language that mandates that they not vote on the national agreement. (Note: This same language just also happens to be in the BLET CSX “Single System Agreement”. In addition, the BLET agreement at BNSF has this contract language in their on property agreements as well).

Side Letter #8 of the CSX - BLET Single System Agreement of 2007: “We agreed that the parties would maintain their powers of attorney with their representatives at the national level to resolve any and all Section 6 notices related to Health & Welfare issues including any and all Health & Welfare eligibility requirements. When a national agreement for Health & Welfare is consummated, it will be applied to the parties signatory to this agreement. Pending settlement of the National Agreement, the current Health & Welfare Benefits will be maintained.” This is the paragraph that takes away your rights. You will be represented… but you will not get a vote.

The UTU trumpeted that their National Agreement was ratified 60/40. But across the nation, who all is “On-Property”? If all the UTU brothers and sisters who had previously chosen (or had forced on them) these on-property agreements had been allowed to vote, could this have added up to the missing 21 percent that might have swayed that 60/40 vote in the other direction?

When our unions are trying to sell the tentative agreement they go all out. We are given charts and graphs along with list of all the good parts of the contract. If your section of the railroad is ever faced with going “On-Property” I advise you to be very careful. There is a war on the workers going on and our healthcare is what the corporations are trying to kill. This war is being waged on many fronts. We are already divided by craft and union, greatly diminishing our collective strength. The carriers are pushing our unions hard to make concessionary agreements. We must be vigilant to guard against further erosion of our power and solidarity! Don't loose your voice!

Rail Labor Should Support the Occupation Movement

Ron Kaminkow, BLET #51 Reno, NV. RWU General Secretary

What started in September with a handful of protesters “occupying” Wall Street has mushroomed into a full-blown movement, spreading to cities and towns across the U.S. The “99%” are fed up, disgusted and pissed off that the “1%” are reaping huge benefits in pay, bonuses, stock option and profits, while the vast majority suffer under an economic system that favors only the rich to the detriment of everyone else. Finally, Americans are saying “enough!” Unions have begun to endorse and participate in the struggle. The movement holds promise to unite the working class under a powerful anti-corporate banner. Railroad Workers United has adopted a resolution in support of the Occupation Movement (see our website), and we encourage all railroaders to get involved and to play a role.

COMMENTARY

By the looks of things, we all might be out on the picket line ourselves before the year is out (see Page 1 and Page 3). Rails would be wise to stop down to the local “occupation” and lend a hand. You will find your friends and neighbors there, folks worthy of your support, and folks who are likely to side with striking railroad workers if and when we come to need their support later this year.

For that matter, this is a golden opportunity for our union leaders to make a public appearance and pledge the support of our unions to the cause. Solidarity is of course, a two-way street. With a national rail strike a distinct possibility, it would behoove our leaders to get out of their offices and into the streets. Now is the time for Action!
Why Rails Must Support the Longshore Workers

This summer, members of International Longshore and Warehouse Workers (ILWU) Local #21 in Longview, WA. came under fierce attack by corporate giant EGT. Contracted to operate the Port of Longview, EGT decided to take on the union that has represented longshoremen up and down the west coast for the last 75 years. While only a small number of jobs are at stake, the union sees this attack as an attempt by the company to get a foot in the door and begin to operate west coast ports with non-union labor. The way they see it, the longshoremen are in the fight for their lives.

EDITORIAL

So where is the rest of organized labor? The leadership is conspicuously silent now. Back in the spring, when the labor lieutenants saw an opportunity for a quick and simple photo op, they paraded off to Wisconsin, Ohio and other Midwest states to proclaim their support for the working class, collective bargaining and an end to the “war on workers”. Now that a real battle is being waged in the streets (and on the tracks), not just in the squeaky clean halls of the legislature somewhere, the labor leadership is nowhere to be found.

Labor unions were not legislated into existence. We did not win all we have won through voting and lobbying. In fact, much of what has been won has come in spite of the legislative process, not because of it. Strikes and job actions are what it took originally to build our unions. The railroad in particular was an industrial battlefield for the latter half of the 19th century and much of the 20th. The Great Strike of 1877, the operating crafts Strike on the CB&Q (1888); the Great Northern Strike (1893), The Pullman Strike (1894), the Great Southwestern Strike (1888); the Shopmen’s Strike of 1922; and the post war strike of 1946 to name just a few. There are too many to name here. In those strikes we counted on allies from other sectors of the working class and the community. Now it is time for us to support some fellow workers – the longshoremen – in their struggle.

We call on the leadership and rank & file of all rail labor to make it clear that we will not move one kernel of grain that is destined for a struck port. Longview is really a test of whether we are still a union or not. Railroaders need to consider the whole question of moving struck goods anytime for any reason, anywhere. Our union leadership should fly into places like Longview and stand shoulder to shoulder with the local union leadership, call a joint press conference and announce to the community that they stand in solidarity with the longshoremen. They could call for a joint rally of railroad workers and longshoremen, and truckers too for that matter, and put the bosses on notice that transport labor is united and determined to defend our jobs and our working conditions. They could address their own membership, demanding that they act like good union men and women and refuse to cross a picket line or otherwise aid or abet EGT and the stevedore companies, pointing out to the members that the full force and power of the union is behind them in their right to refuse to cross a picket line. They could do all this and more … but to date they have done nothing. They have remained silent on the question. RWU has written an open letter to both presidents of the operating craft unions expressing these ideas. To view the letter go to the RWU website at www.railroadworkersunited.org.

While our union leaders ignore the action in Longview, Railroad Workers United has adopted a resolution to stand squarely in solidarity with the longshore workers in their struggle (see the website). In the resolution we call for all railroad workers to stand with these brothers and sister, to refrain from crossing any and all picket lines, and to lend support and assistance in whatever ways they can.

With the help of railroaders and other workers, these longshoremen can win their fight. And some time down the road, when we are locked into battle with the rail carriers, the longshoremen will be there for us too. That time may be rapidly approaching, as the major carriers have failed to reach agreement with the unions and a number are now moving toward the prospects of “self-help”. (See Page 1 and Page 3). So let’s support our natural allies – the longshoremen – and get a little practice in on the picket line in the meantime.

Longshore workers in the Pacific Northwest are determined to win their battle with multinational giant EGT. Here they swarm onto the tracks near the grain terminal in Longview, WA. They need and deserve the solidarity of every railroad worker in North America.
Railroad Workers United

Membership Application

Railroad Workers United needs you! If you believe that our unions should fight the carriers and not each other, then RWU is for you. If you believe that the carriers “Behavior Based Safety” Programs do more harm to us than good, and if you want real union-based safety committees built upon cross-craft solidarity and rank-and-file control, then RWU is for you. If you want to fight back against single employee operations, and if you wish to see an active, informed, unified and mobilized union membership -- of all rail labor -- then RWU is for you!

Name _____________________________________________   Date _______________________
Address _________________________________________________________________________
City _______________________________________ State _______________ Zip ______________
Phone _________________________________  Cell Phone _______________________________
Email Address ____________________________________________________________________
Union _______________________ Local # ____________ Employer ________________________
Terminal ________________________  Craft _______________________ Years of Service ______
Union Position (if any) ______________________________________________________________

I’d like to join for (check one):       ___ I year $50.00    ___ 2 Years $90.00    ___ 3 Years $120.00

Clip and mail together with your dues to:
Ron Kaminkow, RWU Secretary  P.O. Box 2131  Reno, NV. 89505
OR join on-line at www.railroadworkersunited.org

Get Your RWU Union-Made-in-the-USA T-shirts and Hats

T-shirts are available in Black or Gray in S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL, or 4XL. Large RWU logo is on the front, with the slogan “Unity -- Democracy -- Solidarity” on the back.

Hats are available in Black, Gray or Red, one-size fits all. RWU Logo on the front is stitched embroidery.

Both T-shirts and hats are union made in the USA, 100% cotton and include the RWU 4-color logo.

T-shirts and hats cost $20.00 each (15.00 for RWU members)

See the RWU website for other items including jackets, an RWU DVD, plus books and CDs by our members!

Postage Paid By RWU if mailed to addresses in the U.S.

Make your check to RWU and mail with your order to:
Ron Kaminkow, RWU Secretary  P.O. Box 2131  Reno, NV. 89505

OR

Order and pay with your paypal or credit card via our website at www.railroadworkersunited.org