



RAIL LABOR BARGAINING COALITION

George Francisco, Jr.
Chairman

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News Release

Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition Reaches Tentative Agreement with the National Carrier's Conference Committee

American Train Dispatchers Association
F. L. McCann
President

(Washington, DC) After almost two and a half years of negotiating, the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) reached a tentative agreement with the National Carrier's Conference Committee (NCCC).

Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen/IBT
Don M. Hahs
National President

The RLBC represents seven rail labor unions whose contracts cover nearly 85,000 rail workers or 65 percent of the carriers' employees. The unions participating in the RLBC are the American Train Dispatchers Association, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, National Conference of Firemen and Oilers/SEIU, and the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association.

Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes/IBT
Freddie N. Simpson
President

The NCCC is the carriers' bargaining coalition representing the nation's major railroads in national negotiations, including Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Norfolk Southern, CSX, Kansas City Southern, that transport most the rail freight in the country. The tentative agreement is the first step that begins the ratification process for the unions who are members of the RLBC.

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen
W. Dan Pickett
President

International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Building, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers
Alan M. Scheer
Director, Railroad Division

The tentative agreement includes general wage increases totaling 17 percent (18.2 percent compounded over the life of the agreement) which will remain effective until December 31, 2009.

National Conference of Firemen and Oilers, SEIU
George J. Francisco, Jr.
President

"This agreement represents a historic achievement for rail labor," said Fred Simpson, President of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes (BMWED), "For the first time in a generation, a major portion of rail labor negotiated in solidarity. Together we busted the carriers' 'divide and conquer' strategy, in which they would pit one union against another to achieve the lowest common denominator."

Sheet Metal Workers International Association
Dewey B. Garland
Director, Railroad and Shipyard Department

"The carriers started this process two years ago believing they could divide rail labor. They were sadly misinformed," said Don Hahs, President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). "The carriers' dangerous proposal to reduce train crew size to one person was stopped in its tracks. The carriers hoped to pit the two operating crafts – UTU and BLET - against one another but they failed. The UTU and BLET refused

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to succumb to their divisive tactics. Instead, we focused on solidarity and together with the support of the RLBC stopped the rail carriers' outrageous locomotive crew reduction proposal because it imperiled the safety of rail workers and the communities they serve."

"The NCCC opening proposal in 2005 was nothing short of a union busting initiative. At the time, the Republicans were firmly in control of the White House and both houses of Congress, and the carriers launched an all-out assault upon the wages, benefits, and work rules of the nation's railroaders," said Dan Pickett, President of the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen (BRS). "The RLBC remained united through very difficult negotiations. We stopped the carriers in their union-busting tracks and achieved the best contact we've gotten in decades."

"It was the carriers' fervent hope and fondest wish to splinter the RLBC. They wanted to decimate work rules, reduce wages and dangerously reduce crew size while at the same time their level of profits is comparable only to the major oil corporations," said John Murphy, Teamsters International Vice President and Director of the Teamsters Rail Conference with which the BLET and BMWED are affiliated. "They failed on every account. The RLBC members are to be recognized for sticking together through a very difficult, multi-year process. Holding together we succeeded where in the past we had failed separately. This tentative agreement doesn't bring us the full distance to recover what rail labor has lost in past rounds of bargaining, but it is a remarkable first step. When negotiations open up again in 2010, rail labor will be stronger and more united, and we will be positioned to achieve even greater gains for our members."

"From day one, the NCCC was looking for a quick release from negotiations to secure a Bush-appointed Presidential Emergency Board (PEB)," said George Francisco, coordinator of the RLBC and president of the National Conference of Firemen and Oilers (SEIU). "The extraordinary solidarity demonstrated by the RLBC prevented the carriers from prematurely truncating bargaining."

The tentative agreement gives up no work rules, raises net wages over 16 percent after cost sharing for Health & Welfare (H&W), caps employee H&W contributions at 15 percent, expands access to in-network medical benefits for the 25 percent of rail employees previously denied them, and provides no concessions on contracting out or the carriers' work exit demands.

"A primary concern of ours was the skyrocketing costs of health care," said Leo McCann, President of the American Train Dispatchers Association. "And in this agreement we were successful in putting a cap on employee contributions."

The unions within the RLBC will perform the ratification process in accordance with their bylaws and will be submitted by each to their respective memberships for ratification.

The RLBC unions hope to conclude the ratification process in June, 2007.