



# WELCOME TO THE BMWED-IBT!

*A new member's guide to the Brotherhood  
of Maintenance of Way Employees Division,  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters*

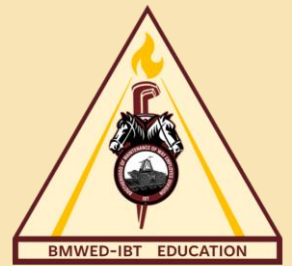


Name:

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Lodge:

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[bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)

# Notes on Revision

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## Proponency

BMWED Education Department

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BMWED Education Department

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**Approved for Unrestricted Release**



WELCOME TO YOUR UNION, THE  
BROTHERHOOD OF MAINTENANCE OF  
WAY EMPLOYEES DIVISION,  
INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF  
TEAMSTERS!

# WELCOME TO THE BMWED-IBT!

As a new **Maintenance of Way (MOW)** worker on your railroad, and as a new member of our Brotherhood, we know you have a LOT of questions! You may come from a union background, or this may be your first experience as a union member. Your new career as a railroader is filled with strange new rules, unfamiliar terms, and a lot of expectations, too.

As your brothers and sisters, we are here to help you navigate all this and feel your own power as a worker and as a member of one of the oldest unions in America.

In the end, unions are men and women, just like you. We are people who work together, and we are people who stand together to make our lives better.

We're glad to stand with you!

## So, let's get to work!





Welcome, from  
BMWED-IBT  
National  
Division  
President Tony  
Cardwell

*Member of  
BMWED Lodge  
1054 since 2001*

In 1887 John T. Wilson, our founder, brought together other rail workers to support one another and our families. While our work has grown along with our membership, we are still guided by the vision of those men who realized "Enough is Enough!" and that we are all stronger together.

All of us in the Brotherhood started just where you are now. We all do our part to keep one another safe, to preserve our rights, and to make our lives better. You will learn a lot as you come to understand your craft, your railroad, your brothers and sisters, and the power you have as a union rail worker. I am glad you're with us.

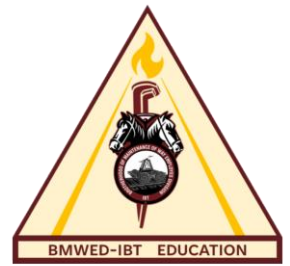
As you learn, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of your BMWED brothers and sisters if you have questions, issues, or need assistance. Whether it's at your local Lodge or our National Division, we are here to help you and continue the work our founder began in 1887.

**In Solidarity!**

Tony Cardwell,  
President, BMWED-IBT



# WELCOME TO THE BMWED-IBT!



[bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)



## Who We Are

Our union began in 1887, when John T. Wilson organized fellow rail maintenance workers to provide mutual aid to each other and our families. Over time, this fraternal organization grew to take on the work we perform today as a collective bargaining organization representing railroad maintenance of way workers across the country!

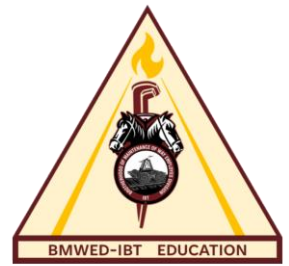
As we began the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our Brotherhood merged with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), joining our strength with over a million fellow Teamsters to fight harder! Together with our fellow Teamsters and as members of the IBT Rail Conference, we stand at the forefront of rail labor, advancing our rights, our quality of life, and our dignity at work!

You can read more about our union's history by visiting our website. There you can find articles, digital copies of our official history, videos, and learn more about our Brotherhood's past. With a firm understanding of where we have been, we can all chart a clear direction for where we want to go, together!

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/history](http://bmwe.org/history)

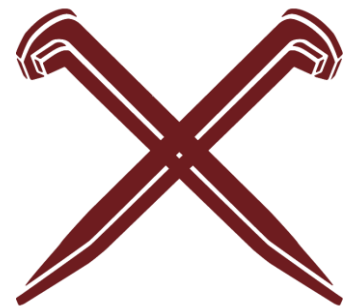
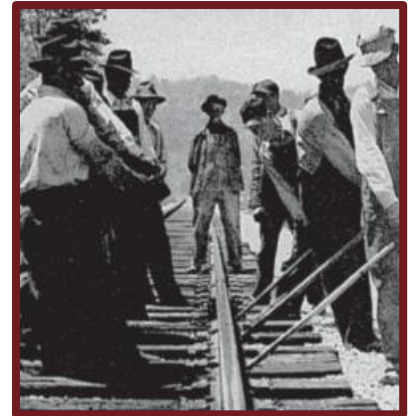


# The Power of Organized Labor



[bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)

When rail workers unite to fight for better conditions, wages, or rights, we have a unique power to affect the entire American economy. This was proven historically in the **Great Railroad Strike of 1877**, a strike over excessive wage cuts made by B&O Railroad. What started as a local strike spread across the country and to other industries. Rail workers just like you stood together and stood beside their fellow workers in mines, factories, and shops, shutting down the infrastructure that our economy needs to keep factories and businesses operating.



After 1877 the US Government has passed many laws that regulate our ability to exercise our collective power but that also protect certain rights we fought to gain. You will learn about things like the **Railway Labor Act**, the **Federal Railway Safety Act**, the **Railroad Retirement Act**, and many others. Each of these were passed by Congress because they understand and respect the power we have. As rail union workers, it is up to each of us to understand the nature of our collective power, its limitations, and how we sustain it to keep up the fight, preserving our rights and passing them to the next generation!

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/history](http://bmwe.org/history)



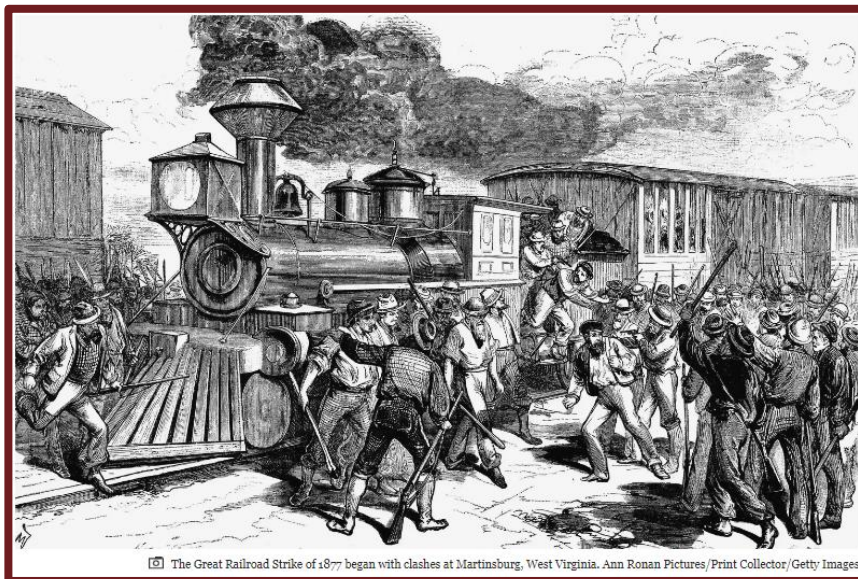
# Union Achievements



## Do You Enjoy:

- 8-hour workdays?
- Overtime pay?
- A pension and retirement benefits?
- Holiday pay and paid vacations?
- Rules to ensure you are safe at work?
- Protection from retaliation or discrimination at work?
- Job security?
- Health benefits?
- And **more?**

**Then thank a Union railroader!  
We Fought & Bargained for Our Rights!**

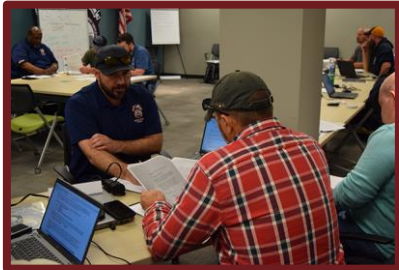


© The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 began with clashes at Martinsburg, West Virginia. Ann Ronan Pictures/Print Collector/Getty Images

**Learn more at [bmwe.org/history](http://bmwe.org/history)**



# So, What Does a Union Do?



Across our country, every day, your Brotherhood is involved in work that supports you, your family, and your union brothers and sisters!



At BMWED, we:

- **Bargain** with employers for better wages, benefits, and working conditions.
- **Protect** our existing contracts through claims, grievances, and formal arbitration processes.
- **Represent our members** involved in disciplinary investigations.
- **Organize** workers to give them a stronger voice and secure fair contracts with their employers.
- **Educate** our members on our rights, our benefits, and how we maintain and build our strength as a union.
- **Advocate** in front of government policymakers to secure safer work environments and fair conditions on the job.
- **Support helpful legislation** at the state and federal level, and oppose laws pushed by greedy railroad lobbyists that would diminish our rights!
- **Work with our allies and partners** to create winning strategies across rail labor and working America.
- **Focus on our members** and commit to **ACTION!**

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/latest](https://bmwe.org/latest)





# How Do BMWED Lodges Work?



*Some members of BMWED Lodge 783. Our families are also an integral part of our Brotherhood and vital to our mission!*

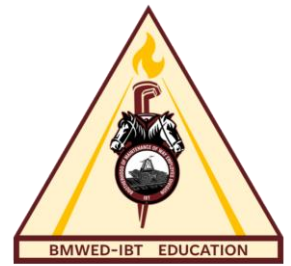
As a **Member** of our Brotherhood, you belong to a local **Lodge**. Your Lodge is where the action is! There you can discuss union business with brothers and sisters who live or work near you. Your Lodge is where you can learn about local violations to your Agreement, get more information on union events, and add your voice to determining the work we do. Your Lodge is the place where you can have the most impact in our union, right at the start!

Your Lodge is in one of BMWED's **System Divisions** or **Federations**. Your specific **Agreement**, the rules and pay rates in effect on your railroad, are policed and protected by your System or Federation officers. Your **General Chairperson**, a union member like you elected to lead your System or Federation, is the final authority on your Agreement. A member from your Lodge (often the Chairperson of your Lodge Grievance Committee) is also a member of your System or Federation's **Joint Protective Board (JPB)**, its main governing body. Some members are also elected to an **Executive Board**, which governs when your JPB cannot meet in a full assembly or convention.

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/structure](https://bmwe.org/structure)



# How Does BMWED Work Nationally?



[bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)

Our Brotherhood brings together rail workers from all across our country, with the MOW workers on each railroad or route bringing their own history, culture, and traditions to the BMWED.



*Some of our dedicated BMWED National Division staff in Novi, MI showing solidarity with our CP members during their 2022-2023 bargaining round!*

Our union is led by our **President**, our **Secretary-Treasurer**, and an **Executive Board**. These officers are elected every 4 years by an assembly of delegates our members send from all over the country during our **National Convention**. We also elect 5 **Vice Presidents** who cover specific regions or particular focus areas of our work. Our Vice Presidents support our senior leaders at the National Division and the General Chairpersons of our System Divisions and Federations. Our elected leaders also supervise our **National Division** staff, brothers and sisters who work full-time performing specialized jobs for our entire union.

National bargaining research, strategic coordination, top-level arbitration of claims and grievances, organizing or action campaigns, media relations, membership support, administration, education, legislative and regulatory work, and building alliances with other unions—all this happens at our National Division!

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/structure](http://bmwe.org/structure)



# BMWED Structure



International  
Brotherhood of  
Teamsters (IBT)



BMWED  
National Division



President

Secretary-Treasurer

Vice Presidents (5)

Executive Board

Regional Assoc.

Nat. Div. Departments

BMWED System  
Divisions &  
Federations



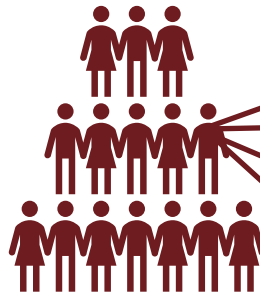
General Chairpersons

System or Federation officers

Executive Boards

Joint Protective Boards (JPBs)

BMWED local  
Lodges



Lodge Officers

Grievance Committee

Audit Committee

BMWED Members  
like YOU!



## Learn more at [bmwe.org/structure](http://bmwe.org/structure)

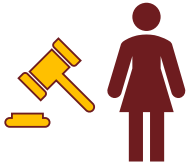


# Officers in Your BMWED Local Lodge



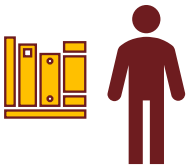
**Lodge President**

Runs your Lodge meetings and is responsible for overall Lodge business.



**Lodge Vice President**

Assists your President.



**Secretary-Treasurer**

**and/or Recording  
Secretary**

Maintains your Lodge's finances and records. Receives official correspondence & sends out meeting cards.



**Local Chairperson**

**often also your JPB  
Delegate  
(check your Sys/Fed  
Bylaws!)**

Leads your Lodge's Grievance Committee in developing claims that protect your Agreements. Will work closely with your Sys. or Fed. officers in this job.



**Audit Committee**

Reviews Lodge's Quarterly Audit Reports to maintain accountability for Lodge finances & reporting.



**Grievance Committee**

Works with your Chairperson to develop the facts needed to submit successful claims to protect our Agreements.

## Learn more at [bmwe.org/structure](https://bmwe.org/structure)



# Your Agreement



*Where can I work on my railroad?*

*When is my railroad required to pay me overtime?*

*How does my "seniority" work?*

*How do I get reimbursed for work-related travel expenses?*

*What rates of pay can I receive for doing different jobs on my railroad?*

*What are my rights if I have an accident while at work?*

*If my supervisor violates my rights, what can I do to correct the issue?*

The answers to all these questions, and more, are found within your **Agreement**. This contract, bargained collectively by our Union for you and other MOW workers on your railroad, regards your rights, rates of pay, working conditions, and other details specific to your railroad. Your System Division or Federation officers can teach you more about your rights and responsibilities under your Agreement.

You will learn how to bid on jobs based on your seniority, how to ensure you're properly compensated for travel expenses, how you earn vacation, and other rights you have within your agreement.

**Reach out to your System Division or Federation officers to learn more about your agreement!**



# The Basics of Bargaining



The rights you enjoy as a union worker did not come from your railroad's generosity! Your wages, your vacation days, your overtime pay, your right to work in specific areas—all these things were won through action by your union brothers and sisters!

At the very start of the labor movement, that action often came through violence. To curb the violence, promote stability for workers and railroads, and to keep the American economy from shutting down due to a rail work stoppage, the US Congress passed a law that sets conditions for how we **collectively bargain** to improve our wages, work conditions, and rights on the job. This law, the **Railway Labor Act (RLA)**, defines steps we must take in our work to reach a fair contract for you and all our members.

When our members tell our leaders it's time to update or amend an existing contract, we formally open **bargaining** with a railroad or group of railroads as laid out in the RLA. Our union forms a bargaining team of officers and members to meet with the railroad and negotiate changes to the contract. ***During bargaining, the current contract remains in place! Rail labor contracts do not expire!*** The RLA gives us the steps we must take in the bargaining process before we can go on strike (or the railroad can lock its employees out).

If we can reach a tentative agreement, it's sent out to members like you to review, discuss, and ratify (or reject). If we cannot reach an agreement, Congress has the right to impose agreements on us.

Understanding the RLA and bargaining will take more training and time, but don't worry! We have more tools, videos, and resources available to help you learn how we work together to secure better contracts for you and for all our members.

**Reach out to your System Division or Federation officers to learn more about your agreement!**



# Railroad Retirement



Railroad workers, once vested, do not receive retirement benefits through Social Security. After their first year at work, they are also no longer eligible for unemployment benefits from their state programs. Instead, retirement, disability, sickness, and unemployment benefits for railroad workers are handled by the **Railroad Retirement Board (RRB)**.

The RRB is a federal agency that administers the benefits rail workers are eligible to receive. These include retirement and disability pensions, unemployment benefits, and sickness benefits. Railroad benefit programs exist under the **Railroad Retirement Act** and **Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act**.

The major difference you will notice is that your paychecks will not have any withholding for Social Security. Instead, you will see **Tier 1** and **Tier 2** deductions taken for Railroad Retirement. The different Tiers correspond to different parts of our retirement pensions; Tier 1 is similar to what someone would receive through Social Security, while Tier 2 is an additional pension benefit you receive upon retirement.

RRB pensions can also provide benefits to your spouse or survivors. There are a lot of details to the different programs and how to apply for benefits under each. Your best resource for learning more about RRB and our benefits programs is to reach out to the RRB themselves! RRB maintains a website full of information, as well as several field offices around the United States. There you can find more information, contact experts, or initiate and follow up on any claims.

## Learn more at [rrb.gov](http://rrb.gov)



# Your Union Dues



We work together to defend our rights and to create a better quality of life for our members. This happens every day, across our country. Sometimes that work takes place right between the rails. Sometimes, it's happening on a picket line, at the bargaining table, in the courtroom, or in the halls of Congress. To accomplish our goals, we must support our brothers and sisters who make union work their full-time jobs. We must also meet our financial obligations to cover administrative, legal, transportation, and other costs that come with representing members around the country.

Each member of the BMWED is assessed a monthly obligation, known as their **Regular Dues**. These dues are determined through a calculation laid out in our BMWED Bylaws and your System Division's or Federation's Bylaws. Your dues are distributed to your local Lodge, your System Division or Federation, our BMWED National Division, and part goes to the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. For members who are unable to work due to furlough, illness, or injury, they can pay a reduced, **Non-Working Dues** rate and maintain all their membership benefits.

Your timely payment of dues (often through payroll deduction) helps you maintain **Good Standing**. This is necessary for you to take part in union business and cast your vote on matters like contracts, officer elections, and similar business. If you want to become a union officer, you must also maintain **Continuous Good Standing**, meaning that you have met your dues obligations, on time, for the 24 months prior to the month you seek a union office.

You can find out how your dues are being spent, or have a say in that spending, by being active in your local Lodge. You can also reach out to your union officers to learn more about your BMWED dues and how we put them to work for you.

## To learn more, contact your BMWED officers!





# Member Rights & Responsibilities



As a Full Member of the BMWED in **Good Standing**, you have a **RIGHT** to:

- Vote in elections or referendums of the BMWED.
- Attend all regular and special meetings of your Lodge, participate and deliberate in your Lodge's business, vote, and express your opinions on any business properly before your Lodge.
- Admission as a visitor to any meeting or session of any other Local Lodge of the BMWED.
- Freely assemble with other members of the BMWED.
- Other rights and privileges as provided within our Bylaws, Constitution, rules, and regulations.

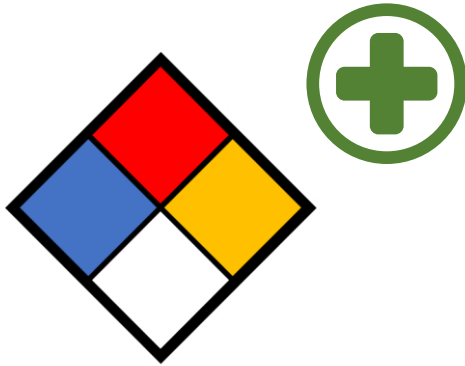
As a Full Member of the BMWED in **Good Standing**, you have a **RESPONSIBILITY** to:

- Promptly pay all your dues obligations, including any special assessments or properly levied fines.
- Attend meetings of your local lodge regularly, unless prevented by sickness or other just cause.
- Comply with our Bylaws, Constitution, and any other rules and regulations of our union.
- Assist in enforcing our Bylaws, Constitution, rules, regulations, and terms of our collective bargaining agreements.
- Recognize fellow members and never knowingly harm another BMWED member.
- Never discriminate against other fellow workers.
- Never interfere with the union's performance of its legal or contractual obligations.

**To learn more, contact your BMWED officers!**



# BMWED Safety Department



The work you will do as a railroader is hazardous, and it's unforgiving. You will work in all weather, at all hours, and near fast-moving trains or heavy equipment. Railroad work exposes our members to toxic hazards, physical and environmental dangers, and the same risks faced in the construction industry.

Our BMWED Safety Department advocates for our members' safety. Our Director of Safety sits on or works with many committees and agencies focused on worker and railroad safety.

Our Safety Department helps create positive change to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regulations. We advocate for increased access to protective equipment or procedures for our members at our workplaces and investigate incidents alongside the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) or the FRA. BMWED Safety ensures our members understand the importance of exercising our whistleblower rights when confronted with unsafe situations at work. Our Director of Safety also testifies before regulatory, policy, and lawmaking bodies on behalf of our members. Our Safety Department remains dedicated to ensuring you get home safe every day, our communities are defended, and the American rail network is as safe as possible, a responsibility shared by all BMWED workers!

The BMWED Safety Department is here to support you.

## Learn more at [bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)



# BMWED Safety Department



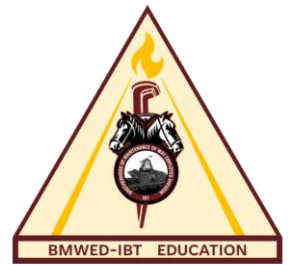
## BMWED Safety Department Work

- Active and voting member of the
  - Federal Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC)
  - Surface Transportation Board Advisory Committee (STSAC)
- Advise Federal agencies such as
  - the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
  - Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
  - National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
  - US Coast Guard
  - Transportation Security Administration
  - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- Monitor and file comments to the Federal Register on various topics, such as:
  - Notices of Proposed Rulemakings (NPRM).
  - Waivers of compliance or deviation from regulatory requirement.
- Assist BMWED members and officers in addressing safety related matters.
- Improve the health and safety conditions under which BMWED members work.
- Participate in the work of the FAMES (Fatality Analysis of Maintenance of Way and Signal Employees) Committee.
- Support the exercise of BMWED members' whistleblower rights and protections under FRSA §20109 regarding protected activities in safety-related work.
- Coordinate BMWED Safety and Health research or reports.
- Collaborate with BMWED Education, IBT Training and Development, and other stakeholders in hazardous material training.
- Maintain an active accident and incident investigation team ready to bring BMWED's professional experience to any FRA or NTSB investigation.

**Learn more at [bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)**



# BMWED Armed Forces Council



[bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)



*The BMWED armed Forces Council promotes the values, skills, knowledge, and sacrifices that BMWED service members contribute to the United States of America and the railroad industry. We strive to enhance and highlight service members' contributions in the workplace and the added value BMWED service members bring to their railroad employers. We seek to enhance the lives and provide support for BMWED members and their families who serve or have served in the armed forces.*

Many of our brothers and sisters are veterans of our country's armed forces. Many currently serve, offering their skills both to our country's defense and our union's strength.

We honor the dedication and sacrifices our members and families make, and BMWED has formed a council of veteran members who work to find ways to support the unique needs our veterans face, advocate for their issues, and highlight their service.

If you are a veteran or actively-serving member of our US Armed Forces, the BMWED Armed Forces Council is here for you!

**To learn more, visit [bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org) or email the BMWED Armed Forces Council at [armedforces@bmwe.org](mailto:armedforces@bmwe.org)!**



# BMWED Committee on Diversity



The BMWED Committee on Diversity is honored to be a division of the most diverse union in the world. We acknowledge that the BMWED represents an extensive membership and that every member has distinctive qualities such as race, age, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disabilities, or national origin that are worthy of dignity and respect.

Composed of BMWED members just like you, our Committee on Diversity will ensure direct approaches to erase discrimination and prejudice our members may face within our workplaces. They strive energetically to cross the barriers of division that weaken us as a union, involving our members and cultivating a greater understanding of our different cultural and physical qualities. Our Committee on Diversity will advance our unity and foster communication between our members, honoring our diversity and preserving our strength for current and future BMWED Teamsters.

**To learn more, visit [bmwe.org/diversity](https://bmwe.org/diversity)!**





# BMWED Education



As railroaders, there is always more we learn about our craft! The same is true as union members. Just like you will learn how to repair a frog, replace a bridge cap, or install a plug rail from your brothers and sisters on the job, you will learn about our Union by doing, and by listening to your fellow members.

The BMWED Education Department supports your learning by providing tools and by facilitating those conversations, helping you learn or practice skills in an environment where you can safely make mistakes. We develop materials our members can use themselves, access remotely, or share with each other, since we all learn from and teach one another.

- **Online events to discuss topics, ask questions, or share knowledge with other BMWED members.**
- **Guidebooks, fact sheets, informational pamphlets, and other material you can keep with you to refresh your understanding or learn new skills.**
- **Educational videos, accessible wherever you are, to highlight major topics and share with your fellow members.**
- **Hands-on “Learning Labs” where you will put skills to work in challenging, scenario-based sessions that simulate how you would use those skills in real life.**
- **A library of resources for self-guided learning or to help you teach other members about who we are and what we do together.**
- **Tools that use a “whole member” approach and include informing and empowering our families!**

***BMWED Education – ON OUR WAY!***



To learn more, email [education@bmwe.org](mailto:education@bmwe.org)!



# BMWED Organizing



As a new member of our union, and possibly as someone who has never been in a union before, it's important to understand two principles:



## Unions are people!

It's never "they," it's "**we.**"

## Unions ACT!

Whether we're lending a hand or raising hell, action is the foundation of how we make things better for one another.

To honor these principles, we must each understand that **we are all union organizers!** From a brand-new member to our union's President, we all have a job to do organizing our brothers and sisters. That means we all take part in:



**Informing and Educating Each Other** – When we all know what's going on and have the same vision, we can build more power together.



**Engaging Each Other** – It's not enough to just know what's going on, we have to then find ways to make things better. That means making plans to DO things that improve our quality of life and dignity at work. Helping workers gain union representation, rallying to inform the public about our issues. We have to know how to ask for, and offer one another, support to get the work done!



**Empowering Each Other** – Organizers don't replace member power, we **amplify** it! As an organizer you will help your brothers and sisters raise their voices higher and louder!

**To learn more visit [bmwe.org/organizing!](https://bmwe.org/organizing)**



# BMWED Organizing



Organizing work can be thought of in two ways. BMWED Members conduct both **EXTERNAL** and **INTERNAL** Organizing at all levels of our union.



Whether you're taking part in an informational picket, educating fellow members on bargaining issues, or working with your officers to reach out to potential new members, you play a vital part in BMWED Organizing!

Our **External Organizing** focuses on helping workers in non-union workplaces gain the right to form a union, bargain collectively, and have representation to preserve their rights. Our external organizing work is coordinated by our National Division Organizing Department, but involves members at all levels of our Brotherhood!

**Internal Organizing** means making our own union stronger! The work of education, communication, and empowerment is never done; it's something we all do, every day. It is standing up for your rights between the rails, giving a brother or sister a ride to the Lodge meeting (and convincing them to come!), taking your place at an informational rally or on the picket line. Our internal organizing work is done at every level, and your System Division or Federation may have unique programs or campaigns you can join.

**To learn more visit [bmwe.org/organizing](https://bmwe.org/organizing)!**





# BMWED Communications



When our members are well informed, they are more powerful! Since our beginning, BMWED has prioritized getting information and news out to our members.

Today, with a wide array of media platforms, communications tools, and nationwide campaigns and initiatives, our Communications team is hard at work!

You can find our Communications Department keeping our members and the public informed in a variety of ways, including:

## *Articles, Advisories, and Releases to media outlets*



## *Our BMWED Journal*



## *News interviews on regional and national programs*



**BREAKING NEWS!**  
THE NATIONAL MEDIATION BOARD PROFFERS ARBITRATION TO BMWED/SMART-MECHANICAL AND COORDINATED BARGAINING COALITION  
BMWED DELEGATION UNANIMOUSLY VOTES TO REJECT ARBITRATION AND ASKS FOR PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY BOARD



## *Our website and social media*



# Learn more at [bmwe.org](http://bmwe.org)



# BMWED Communications



## *Links to BMWED Communications and resources online:*

### *BMWED Website*

<https://www.bmwe.org>

### *Facebook*

<https://www.facebook.com/BMWEDIBT/>

### *Instagram*

[https://www.instagram.com/bmwed\\_ibt/](https://www.instagram.com/bmwed_ibt/)

### *Twitter*

<https://twitter.com/BMWEDIBT>

### *YouTube*

<https://www.youtube.com/@BMWED>

### *Your System Division or Federation website:*

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### *Your System Division or Federation social media platform:*

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## Learn more at [bmwe.org](https://www.bmwe.org)



# Strategic Coordination & Research



We work together as a union and in coalition with other unions and organizations. We don't stand alone! As members of the Teamsters Rail Conference, as one of many rail unions, and with many other unions and organizations on our side, we effectively coordinate our strategic work, our bargaining, and our other work in a strong coalition with our allies.

Within our National Division, our **Director of Strategic Coordination and Research** performs this vital work for all our members. Sometimes, that means working with labor economists and other experts on putting together forecasts of our industry and our economy that inform our bargaining strategies. We may work with legal counsel to navigate specific conditions within existing laws or to address potential railroad mergers and realignments.

As a union, we are stronger together. As one of many unions in America, we can amplify our members' power in coalition with our brothers and sisters in all crafts and industries across our country. Our Strategic Coordination & Research Department ensures we can do that effectively on behalf of our members while also ensuring their voices are heard.

While this part of our work is often "behind the scenes," our members' lives are impacted by this dedicated support. Strategic Coordination and Research helps us understand our battlefield, our allies, and those who would try to undermine our members' strength.

## Learn more at [bmwe.org](https://bmwe.org)



# BMWED Legislative Department



Our government takes a close interest in how railroads operate. Many laws and regulations affect both the work we do between the rails and the work we do together as a union. Our members must stay informed and engaged with what is going on in Washington, DC and in our various state legislatures.

Whether we are protecting your retirement pension, advocating for better safety regulations, testifying on rail merger hearings or before Congressional committees, or keeping an eye on which politicians are receiving large political contributions from the railroads, our Legislative Department is a vital part of what we do together.

As a new member you can get involved right away with the important work we do within the Legislative Department. You can work with your local Lodge Legislative Rep. to identify local or statewide issues. If you know of pending legislation, regulations, or local leaders who need our support (or opposition) let your Legislative Department team know!

Politics in our country are often the game of the very rich, as billion-dollar railroads attempt to buy their way with laws, politicians, and policymakers. We have a voluntary, non-partisan political action fund, Teamsters **D.R.I.V.E.**, where you can contribute. Our dues **NEVER** go to funding political campaigns, so our D.R.I.V.E. contributions offer our members a chance to level the playing field against railroad lobbyists and make our voices heard loud and clear on Capitol Hill.

**To learn more, visit [bmwe.org/legislative](https://bmwe.org/legislative) and [teamster.org/about-drive/](https://teamster.org/about-drive/)**



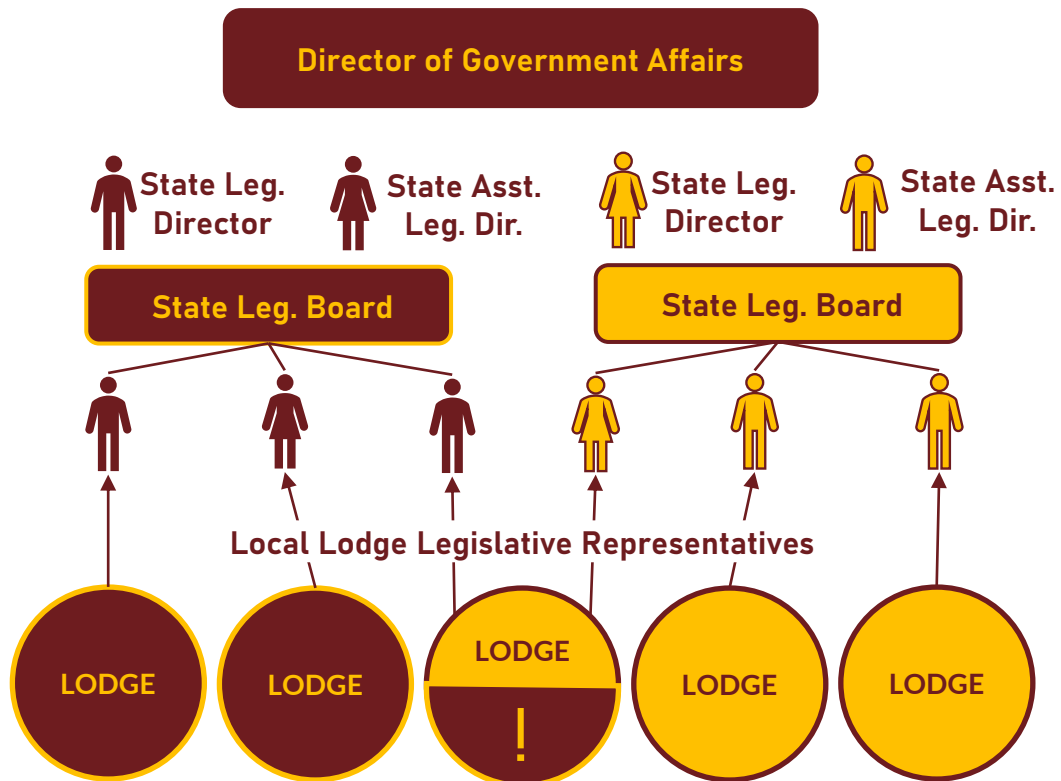
# BMWED Legislative Dept. Structure



Each BMWED local Lodge elects a **Legislative Representative** who is part of their state's **Legislative Board**. If a Lodge represents members in more than one state, that Lodge will elect Legislative Representatives for each state they have members.

**State Legislative Boards** come together in Convention each year after the National Convention and elect a State **Legislative Director** and **Assistant Legislative Director**. If no one is elected, these offices may be appointed by the BMWED President.

The appointed **Director of Government Affairs** oversees our nationwide Legislative advocacy, education, and outreach work.



To learn more, visit [bmwe.org/Legislative](https://bmwe.org/Legislative)



# D.R.I.V.E. Political Action Fund



## Democrat, Republican, Independent Voter Education

The railroads our members work on spend huge amounts of money to buy influence in Washington, DC. Even as far back as the days of the Transcontinental Railroad and the Crédit Mobilier scandal of the 1860s, railroad robber barons have always figured that our lawmakers are theirs to buy.

Facing this fact in our industry and our politics, our voluntary D.R.I.V.E. Political Action Fund (PAC) is a vital tool to support our work advocating for our members' rights and safety on Capitol Hill. **Our members' regular dues are NEVER used for political campaigns!** This is not only BMWED policy, it is **illegal** for a labor union to use membership dues for political campaigns. To support lawmakers who are on our side, educate those who don't understand our challenges, and oppose those who are bought and paid for by the billion-dollar railroads, our voluntary PAC is an important part of our arsenal.

Our members' D.R.I.V.E. contributions are used by our union to support lawmakers and campaigns that will improve our members' quality of life, safety, and dignity at work. These contributions will also help keep our members and our families informed about the issues that affect our future, including voter guides that report on the records of those Senators and Representatives whose votes can dramatically impact our work and our union.

D.R.I.V.E contributions are completely voluntary, and you can have a voice in how they are used by taking an active role within your union, starting at your local Lodge and in our Legislative Department.

**To learn more, visit [bmwe.org/legislative](http://bmwe.org/legislative) and [teamster.org/about-drive/](http://teamster.org/about-drive/)**



# Why Our Legislative Work Matters



**Make no mistake, Congress has a large say in how we work, how we are compensated, and how we can function as a union! Your state legislatures can also impact your safety and your workplace rights!**

- **Railway Labor Act**
  - Governs Organizing, Bargaining, and Dispute Resolution
- **Federal Railroad Safety Act**
  - Governs rail safety issues and establishes whistleblower protections against retaliation or intimidation by railroads when employees take protected, safety-related actions.
- **Railroad Retirement Act**
  - Governs our retirement and disability pensions.
- **Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act**
  - Governs our unemployment and sickness benefits.
- **Occupational Safety and Health Act**
  - Governs workplace safety where the Federal Railroad Administration doesn't exercise its jurisdiction.
- **Department of Transportation Act of 1966**
  - Created the FRA, which governs much of our on-track safety regulations while at work.
- **H.J. Res. 100 (2022)**
  - Congress imposed a contract on railroads and unions in national bargaining, based on the recommendations of PEB 250. This ended our last national bargaining round and prevented a railroad strike using Congress' Constitutional authority under the Commerce Clause.
- **Grade Crossing Safety laws in several states**
  - Provide legally defined liability for incidents when motorists collide with our members on or near highway grade crossings.
- **And many more!**

**To learn more, visit [bmwe.org/legislative](https://bmwe.org/legislative)**



# The Railway Labor Act



*The Railway Labor Act (RLA) governs how we form unions in the railroad industry, how we engage in collective bargaining for our contracts, how we ensure those contracts are honored, and how we resolve disputes with the railroads.*

The RLA was passed by Congress in 1926. This law, supported by both rail unions and railroads, provided more stability to our industry and economy, building a framework that prevented the turbulent (and often violent) disputes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Key concepts of the RLA include:

- The RLA's primary purpose is to prevent disruptions to rail commerce. **It is designed to prevent strikes and lock-outs** in rail disputes from shutting the economy down.
- Under the RLA, our **railroad contracts never expire!** They can be amended, and the RLA lays out the process for railroads and union to negotiate those amendments.
- The RLA also governs how we resolve **Major Disputes** and **Minor Disputes** in our industry, setting up a **National Mediation Board** and the **National Railroad Adjustment Board** to resolve claims, grievances, or other disputes that we cannot settle "on property" with the railroads through good-faith negotiations.
- When bargaining for wages, work conditions, or other issues in our contracts, the RLA establishes "**Cooling Off**" **Periods** and other conditions where we must maintain **Status Quo**, working under the terms of our existing contracts.

We have many different tools to help you understand the RLA. It is a complex topic with more detail than we can fit on a single page. Please look at our other RLA resources (including videos, handouts, or other material) on our website, or reach out to your BMWED officers for more information.

## To learn more, contact your BMWED officers!





# Strikes, Informational Pickets, & Actions



Even if you have never been a union member before or know little about organized labor, you probably know that one of the most visible tools of union action is a **Strike**. A strike occurs when employees stop work, withholding their labor, until their dispute with their employer is resolved. Strikes have occurred over wages, work conditions, safety, and other issues.

The **Railway Labor Act** is designed to prevent strikes by rail workers, also referred to as **Self Help**, since a rail strike can shut down the entire US economy. The RLA also restricts the railroads from Self Help, which they can take in the form of locking out workers (Lock Outs) or unilaterally imposing changes to a contract. The RLA creates a process of negotiation and arbitration to resolve disputes before a union can strike or a railroad can lock out its employees.



*This informational picket, for our BMWED members on Chicago's Metra railroad, was **NOT** a strike, but it was still an effective tool to apply pressure to that railroad and work with our union on a fair contract!*

While our ability to strike is subject to specific limitations under the RLA, we also conduct **Informational Pickets, Rallies**, or other **Actions** that focus public attention to rail labor issues and disputes. When well planned and coordinated, these actions exert a lot of pressure on railroads and their shareholders to work with our union and resolve a dispute they may have otherwise ignored.

## To learn more, contact your BMWED officers!