

Act Now! Ask your Senators to end cuts to Railroad Retirement unemployment & sickness benefits



Brothers and Sisters,

Attached is a Mobilization message for immediate distribution to your networks regarding Senate Bill S.1274 — The Railroad Unemployment Equity and Fairness Act (“REEF Act”). This legislation would ensure that unemployed railroad workers receive fair and equal unemployment benefits by removing the harmful cuts known as sequestration, which single out railroad workers. It is especially important to address this issue now. Please distribute this to your Mobilization contacts, and ask them to go onto the BLET Website and use this Take Action link (<https://ble-t.org/take-action/>) to get our message directly to their Senators.

Dear Senators,

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), North America's oldest active union, and a Division of the Rail Conference of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters is the duly designated and recognized collective bargaining representative for over 31,000 active locomotive engineers and trainmen. We represent highly-trained and hardworking rail operators who have been suffering an unnecessary hardship due to effects of budget sequestration on railroad sickness and unemployment benefits.

Our most vulnerable members, who are out of work due to illness or unemployment have seen a reduction of the benefits for which they have paid. The funding for these Railroad Retirement benefits comes out of members' paychecks and contributions from railroad employers. Our members deserve to access the full value of the benefits that they have paid for and earned.

This program is funded entirely by the railroad industry — it receives no taxpayer dollars — so reducing our benefits does nothing to help the federal government. Currently, Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) benefits are the only federal unemployment insurance and sickness benefits program subject to sequestration. Every other American's unemployment, disability, or sickness benefits are not subject to these cuts.

Railroaders who rely on RUIA benefits now lose nearly \$100 per two-week benefit period (total after taxes) from an already modest stipend of \$85 per day. Without Congressional intervention, these cuts will remain in effect until September 30, 2031.

Since we last wrote to you, more than 200 locomotive engineers and Teamsters have traveled from across the country to Washington, D.C. to visit with members of Congress to urge swift passage of the Senate Bill S.1274 REEF Act, and countless more have called, emailed, and visited district offices. The RUIA benefits are a lifeline for the most vulnerable railroaders, and we once again ask Congress to pass the REEF Act and remove the cuts that arbitrarily target these hardworking American railroaders.

Fraternally;
L. Randy Fannon Jr.
BLET National Vice President
Department Head Mobilization

A message from the BLET Mobilization Team