

NATIONAL BARGAINING UPDATE
Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition Invokes Mediation

As national negotiations enters its second year, representatives of the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC), which includes Teamster Rail Conference members BMWED and BLET, and the National Carriers' Conference Committee (NCCC) met on January 6 and 7, 2011 to continue bargaining over their respective Section 6 notices. The current focus of bargaining continues to concern issues related to the health insurance benefits members and their families receive under the July 1, 2007 National Agreement. No major progress was made on any health insurance issues during these meetings.

On January 11, 2011, after a year of meetings with the National Carriers' Conference Committee, the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition applied for the services of the National Mediation Board. Sources indicated that the NCCC would not object to the mediation application.

A response from the National Mediation Board was received on January 12, 2011 and Senior Mediator Terri Brown was assigned to mediate.

The RLBC and NCCC have tentatively scheduled additional bargaining sessions for February 9 and 10, 2011 and anticipate the participation of federal mediator Brown. The February meetings will continue with a discussion of health insurance issues as well as certain "craft-specific" issues such as BMWED's proposals regarding improvements in allowances for employees required to work away from home.

Meanwhile, the bargaining coalition comprised of TCU, IAM, IBEW, TWU and ATDA continue bargaining under the supervision of the NMB. Health insurance issues comprise a large part of those talks as well.

The remaining union, the UTU, remains outside the process of mediation.

Under the Railway Labor Act (RLA), Section 6 notices are resolved one of three ways; first, through voluntary negotiations and agreements, second, through mediation conducted by the NMB that leads to a voluntary agreement and finally, through self-help after the parties have been released from mediation by the NMB. A strike cannot occur until the NMB has released the parties from mediation and they have observed a 30 day "cooling off" period. While the TCU coalition had already entered mediation, there is no assurance that the TCU coalition will obtain a release before the RLBC.

For breaking news on bargaining, please regularly check the BMWED website at www.bmwe.org.