

National Freight Railroads Bargaining Update

October 6, 2011

Obama Establishes Presidential Emergency Board

Strike Averted For At Least Another 60 Days

Today President Obama intervened in the ongoing contract dispute between Rail Labor and the National Freight Railroads by issuing an “Executive Order” establishing a “Presidential Emergency Board (PEB).” The PEB will hold hearings, expected to begin within the next two weeks, and make settlement recommendations to the White House and the involved parties in an effort to resolve the disputes in a peaceful manner. An initial 30 day cooling-off period was set to expire at 12:01a.m. Friday October 7th, at which time the railroads and the unions would have been free to resort to self-help. The appointment of the PEB forestalls any self-help action for at least another 60 days. The PEB usually has 30 days to hold the hearings and make their recommendations, followed by another 30 day cooling-off period (time limits may be extended by mutual agreement between all parties involved). At the end of this 30 day cooling off period the parties would then again be able to resort to self-help, and also at this point Congress could intervene in the dispute and legislatively impose agreements on the unions and the railroads.

“We are pleased to see President Obama get involved in this dispute,” stated IBEW President Hill. “We are hopeful that the PEB members will give serious consideration to the record-setting profit situation of the railroads and recommend that Rail Labor’s proposals be adopted. Not only will his intervention spare the country of a serious disruption in the day to day business of commerce in this country, it will also provide a path for the disputes to be resolved without financial harm to our members.” Hopefully the process should conclude right around the end of the year.

As stated in our last update, the IBEW bargaining coalition and the Rail Labor Bargaining Coalition (RLBC) have joined forces to move forward to a PEB. Our bargaining coalition is made up of the American Train Dispatchers (ATDA), the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen (BRC), the International Association of Machinists (IAM), the IBEW, the Transportation Communications Union (TCU), and the Transport Workers Union (TWU). The RLBC is made up of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers – Teamsters (BLE-T), the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees – Teamsters (BMWE-T), the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen (BRS), the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB), and the Sheet Metal Workers International Association (SMWIA). A copy of President Obama’s Executive Order is attached.

Again, thanks to all of you for your patience during this process. As stated before, our goal is to obtain a contract for you, our members, that is fair and equitable and that gets you your hard-earned share of the record profits these railroads are making today.