

# BMWED Legislative Issues - 112th Congress

## *BMWED Journal - May/June 2012*

### **GOP Attacks Railroad Retirement**

Brothers and Sisters, I am writing in response to Republican Congressman Jeff Fortenberry's (NE-1<sup>st</sup>) letter in response to Brother Jerry Francke making his concerns known to Congressman Fortenberry about the House passing a continuing budget resolution, (Ryan Budget) that included a "pay for" that would dismantle our Railroad Retirement. Here are the facts in a condensed form.

The Budget Committee does not have any appropriation authority and has no authority to take away our retirement. However, **(and this is critical)**, The Budget Committee puts out the actual legislation which is a budget continuing resolution then they attach a House Report to the bill which is what they believe needs to happen to pay for the budget they have proposed. In other words, the House Report is attached by the Budget Committee as a "road map" of what they feel needs to happen in order to pay for the budget they have proposed. As Representative states in the House Report: The budget supports maintaining essential funding for highways, aviation and safety, offset by reductions in other transportation activities of lower priority to the Federal Government. As is true elsewhere, actual policy decisions will be determined by the committees of jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the options below suggest one set of policies that can help meet the budget's levels.

**1) Fuction 600 of the House Report states: Conform Railroad Retirement Tier 1 Benefits to Social Security Benefits.** Tier 1 benefits for railroad retirees are supposed to mimic Social Security benefits, but they are more generous than Social Security in many ways. This option would conform Tier 1 so that its benefits would equal those of Social Security, with an estimated savings to taxpayers of \$2 billion over 10 years. You can find this language by going to [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov) then clicking on search by bill number then in the box below type in H Con Res 112. After the bill comes up click on where it says House report and look for Function 400 then 600 on the table of contents then click on either of those and read through each one.

**2) Representative Fortenberry voted in favor of the Ryan Budget H. Con. Res. 112 with the House report attached, and was well aware of the proposed "how to pay for the budget", including our loss of Tier 1 as we know it. No more retiring at age 60 with 30 years of service would be just one of the losses to our retirement benefits, as well as, a reduction in our retirement amount benefits, etc. We would be put under social security rules for purposes of being able to retire, even though we supplement Tier 1 with Tier 2 contributions to have as Representative Ryan put it: "**are more generous than social security**".**

**3) The House passed the Ryan Budget with knowledge of the attached house report by a vote of 228 yeas ([228 Republicans](#)) to 191 Nays, ([181 Democrats and 10 Republicans](#))**

**4) In Representative Fortenberry's letter he also states that there's no threat to our retirement because there has been no "reconciliation". In a word, this may be the most disingenuous part of his letter. There has been no "reconciliation" because the Senate voted against consideration of the Ryan Budget with 41 yeas ([41 Republicans](#)) and 58 Nays ([51 Democrats, 5 Republicans](#))**

and 2 Independents). (269 Republican US Senators and US Representatives think you deserve to have your retirement taken away!) Zero Democrats share their opinion.

**5) Bottom Line:** If the US House and/or US Senate and The White House were controlled by today's Republicans, **(a majority of today's Republicans are not even close to the type of Republicans we grew up with)**, we could kiss our retirement and our contributions goodbye!!!! **It's our right to be Democrats, Republicans, Independents, (even Undeclared in some States!)** However, as railroad employees we have to hold any politician accountable when they make a move or even a suggestion that would rob us of our long self-paid benefits.

Consider this: if someone busted in the door of your house while you were there with your family, would you ask them if they were a D or an R before you defended your family? Not a chance! When the 9/11 terrorist attacks took place did you ask how many D's were killed and how many R's were killed? Not a chance! Wouldn't it then make sense that we should vote based on being Railroad working Americans regardless of our party affiliation? We have to get the facts and understand who is trying to steal our retirement as well as collective bargaining rights and vote on that basis.

**6)** Representative Fortenberry is correct on one item. There is significant opposition because when the bill and "pay for" report came out, the BMWED, along with the other rail unions stormed the Hill, sent our members postcards which in turn generated thousands of calls to our congressional leaders, and there was massive opposition. But that will only last if we do the right thing in November and vote based on the facts.

**7)** President Obama's proposed budget that House Republicans would not even consider had no attacks on BMWED members or any organized labor.

**8) Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney has publicly endorsed the Paul Ryan Budget!!!!** Think about that when you vote this November and look at who voted for the Ryan Budget and then vote in your best interest.

**9)** Just one more of the many attacks contained in the Ryan budget are against AMTRAK. **Fuction 400 of the House Report states in part:** *"Eliminate Funding for High-Speed Rail.* High-speed rail projects and any new intercity rail projects should be pursued only if they can be established as self-supporting commercial services. The threat of large, endless subsidies is precisely the reason governors across the country are rejecting federally funded high-speed rail projects. The budget supports continued reforms for Amtrak--including requiring overtime limits for Amtrak employees--and reductions in headquarters and administrative costs for agencies.

**10)** I'd love to be politically neutral to avoid any attacks on my character that will come from those who are more dedicated to their political party of choice and feel attacked by the preceding facts, but my job is to protect my brothers and sisters by giving them correct and factual information. How we vote is our personal choice.

**11)** Between my Granddads, my Dad and myself we have about 103 years of service with several Carriers and have paid into Railroad Retirement during our years of service. **I don't**

**care if a politician is a Republican, Democrat, Independent or alien from another planet, keep your hands out of my retirement!!**

## **More GOP Attacks on Unions**

### **Mitt Romney Addresses the ABC, (Non-Union Associated Builders & Contractors) - Says NO to PLAs, Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wages and Unions**

Mitt Romney quotes: "I don't need to tell you all he (President Obama) does for organized labor. Even before his stimulus went into effect, one of the first things he does is sign an order forcing the government to use only union labor on construction projects. He bailed out the automakers, but not in the ordinary way through bankruptcy, but instead he gave the automakers to the UAW – again the people who supported his campaign. He fought for card check. Not getting it, he put in labor stooges at the National Labor Relations Board and their action is to make every decision in favor of unions. Their decision on Boeing in South Carolina was one of the most extraordinary and egregious efforts we've seen in a long time. By virtue of moving more and more of the orientation of this president to the people who gave money to his campaign, the unions, he flies in the face of what it takes for entrepreneurs and innovators to hire people. I don't think he understands how these [labor] policies are hurting America."

"When I was the governor of Massachusetts, I didn't get as much done as I would like. We had a legislature that was 85% Democratic. They passed a card check bill. Can you believe that? I vetoed it. We also had Davis-Bacon like restrictions in our contracting. I was able to remove those. I prevented state employees from getting paid while doing union work. I also stopped the process of the state collecting dues from paychecks and stopped these due from going to political action committees."

"If I become President of the United States, I will curb the practices we have in this country of giving union bosses unfair advantages in contracting. One of the first things I will do is end project labor agreements and I will fight to repeal Davis-Bacon (standing ovation). I will also make sure workers in America have a right to a secret ballot. And will fight for right to work laws. We can't have union bosses taking money out of the paychecks of their workers to go into a political action committee, which is then directed to the cause or candidate chosen by the CEO of the union. This is an un-American practice which has got to end."

## **BMWED Registered Voters**

As of today we have 35,905 active members in the BMWED/IBT. Only 66% of our members are registered to vote. We have 6,158 registered Democrats, 3,294 registered Republicans and 14,976 registered Independents and/or no party on file. The issue here is that 34% of our membership don't care enough about their own livelihoods to vote. We have to address that with education and a boots on the ground get-out-the-vote effort. We are planning our efforts

now and will have more on that later. In the meantime, put a little peer pressure on your brothers and sisters about voting and voting in their best interest.

As I said before, it's no sin to be a Democrat, Republican or Independent. The sin is in voting against your own and your family's best interest and future wellbeing or, worse yet, not voting at all!!!!

### **State Battles**

As state legislative battles wrap up, the BMWED/IBT was successful at stopping Right-To-Work legislation in Maine, Missouri and Minnesota.

In Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker (R) survived the recall election but the Wisconsin State Legislature picked up enough Democrats to help stop Governor Walker's anti-union agenda.

### **DRIVE-(Democrat-Republican-Independent-Voter-Education)**

Over 12,000 cards have been signed so far this year, many of which are BMWED/IBT members. But there is more to do. We encourage every system, division and local lodge to schedule a DRIVE campaign if you haven't done so already. Together, working as a legitimate Brotherhood/Union, we can make a difference with our PAC fund donations.

