There is Still Time to Register for Railroad Day on Capitol Hill

This year’s Railroad Day on Capitol Hill is March 4, and there is still time to register to attend. Railroad Day brings together representatives from railroads of all sizes, as well as suppliers and other stakeholders, to meet with government officials and discuss important industry topics.

Those already registered for the event are encouraged to sign up for an instructional webinar, which will cover the day’s schedule, explain how to conduct a congressional meeting, and identify primary talking points. Each webinar will cover the same information, so participants only need to register for one. The first webinar will take place tomorrow. The next will be Feb. 28, and the last on March 2.

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill begins with breakfast and check-in at the Columbia Ballroom in the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill. Appointments on Capitol Hill run from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and an evening reception at Union Station caps off events. Reception attendees will include representatives from all areas of the railroad industry, as well as congressional members and staff and representatives from federal government agencies.

Nominations Sought for ASLRRA Associate Member Board Seat

ASLRRA is seeking nominations for individuals wishing to run for election to the board of directors representing Associate Business Members.

The nominating committee co-chairs for this year are two former board members, Steve Friedland of Short Line Data Systems and Beth Garguilo of Lincoln Transportation Insurance Brokers. They will be assisted by ASLRRA’s Vice President of Membership & Business Development Kathy Keeney, who serves as staff liaison to the Supplier Committee.

There are two board seats representing associate members that are filled via election from the membership and there is one board vacancy that we will need to fill at the annual convention in Grapevine, Texas. The term for JoAnne Miner from GE Transportation, a Wabtec company, has expired. Shea McLaughlin from CDL Electric holds the other associate board member position.

The term for a director is two years. The board responsibility involves two in-person board meetings annually and several conference calls throughout the year. Board members are also expected to attend the annual convention and fall regional meetings, and urged to attend Railroad Day on Capitol Hill. The newly elected board member will also serve on the Supplier Committee and work to provide agenda items to benefit the membership.

We are reaching out to gather nominations at this time. The nomination period will remain open until close of business on March 6, and any member wishing to suggest themselves or nominate a candidate should contact one of the nominating committee leaders by then. Candidates need to supply the committee with a short bio, photo and a few sentences about why they would like to serve on the
ASLRA Board of Directors. This will be used to create a ballot that will be distributed to the primary contact of every associate member company in good standing.

Please contact Garguilo or Friedland with any questions, to nominate yourself or to suggest another candidate. Garguilo can be reached on Beth.Garguilo@lincolnins.com or (315) 768-6110 and Friedland can be reached on sfriedland@sdsrocs.com or (973) 769-6505.

Tips from the RRB Can Help Customers Avoid Fraud

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) is advising customers to exercise caution and use common sense so as not to become a victim of a telephone or email scam.

In a recent press release, the RRB reminds readers that its typical method of communication regarding account information is a letter sent via U.S. Postal Service (USPS). Such a letter will have contact information specific to the written notice.

The RRB emphasizes that if a caller insists on getting a payment or personal information over the phone, the recipient should assume the call is fraudulent and hang up. The RRB’s article also provides a number of other tips for avoiding phone and email fraud, particularly since scammers generally increase activity during income tax season.

Funding Notice for BUILD Grants Published in Federal Register

The Notice of Funding Opportunity for this year’s Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants program has been published in the Federal Register. Applications for BUILD grants are due May 18.

For fiscal year 2020, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) will award $1 billion for investments in surface transportation infrastructure. According to the notice, up to half of available funds, or $500 million, shall be awarded to rural projects. Likewise, up to 50 percent of funding can be awarded to projects in urban areas. The notice points out the definitions of rural and urban areas are the same as last year, but that those definitions for fiscal year 2019 were different from previous years.

For members interested in applying for a BUILD grant, ASLRA’s Member Discount Program features grant-writing services with carefully chosen preferred providers available to assist companies in the submission of grant applications.
ASLRRA Compliance Assessments

“Keeping up with federal rule-making and regulatory interpretation is difficult at best, so the ability to review all of our regulatory programs with the knowledge base of the ASLRRA was invaluable.

Visit www.aslrra.org to learn more!”

Make a Statement at Railroad Day – In Person or Via Twitter

The myriad interests advocated by the constituents of any given U.S. senator or representative can make it difficult for individuals and ideas to stand apart from the crowd. It is for that reason that Railroad Day on Capitol Hill was conceived – to enable a large group of like-minded railroaders and industry stakeholders to advocate in Washington, D.C., bringing attention to the issues that matter most to them.

While anyone who can attend is encouraged to do so, today’s technology enables those unable to meet to raise their online voices. Social media, especially Twitter, is relevant on Capitol Hill, and participating that way is also meaningful.

In a poll by the Congressional Management Foundation, 70 percent of congressional offices said that social media makes them more accountable to constituents, and 71 percent of offices said multiple messages by different constituents affiliated with a specific group or cause would have “some” or “a lot” of influence on an undecided lawmaker. In this day and age, a tweet from a constituent can have the same impact as an email, letter, fax or phone call.

The ASLRRA website has a number of tips and tricks for those eager to join the cyber-conversation, including hashtags to use, profiles to tag, and even message ideas for the not-so-Twitter savvy. The conversation is not confined to the halls of Congress, and we are eager to hear from you.

ASLRRA Announcements

Reserve a Booth at ASLRRA’s Connections Expo Before They Sell Out

Our Connections convention Expo Hall at the Gaylord Texan is Texas-sized, but it is filling up quickly. More than 75 percent of booth space in the Expo Hall has been sold for ASLRRA’s annual convention. There is still time to reserve your space, though. Please contact ASLRRA’s Kathy Keeney via email or on (202) 585-3439 for more information today. Not sure if your company has a booth already or if your competitors are exhibiting? Please click here to see a list of exhibitors.
Complete All FRA Reports by February 29 to be Eligible for ASLRRRA Jake Awards

ASLRRRA is gearing up to announce 2019 Jake Award winners! To be eligible for a Jake Award, railroad and switching members must complete the required Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) accident/incident reports for every month of 2019. Any reports submitted after Feb. 29 will not be considered. For more information, please see the FRA’s guidance on accident/incident reporting or contact Fred Oelsner at foelsner@aslrra.org.

Last Call for Veterans Award Feb. 28, Murray Scholarship Nominations Due March 13

Nominations are still being accepted for ASLRRRA’s Veterans Engagement Award and the Susan C. Murray Scholarship. Veterans Engagement Award nominations are due Feb. 28, while scholarship nominations are due March 13.

The Veterans Engagement Award recognizes employers who demonstrate positive policies toward United States Veterans and who implement unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support, and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community. Submit a nomination online here, or contact Sabrina Waiss at swaiss@aslrra.org with any questions.

The Susan C. Murray Scholarship, sponsored by PocketList.com and IHS Markit, is awarded annually to a daughter or granddaughter of an ASLRRRA member in recognition of Murray’s life and professional success. Interested students can download an application packet here.

Winners of both the award and scholarship will be honored at ASLRRRA’s 2020 Connections convention, held May 2-5 at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, Texas.

ASLRRRA Webinars

Get Smart About Railroad Retirement Benefits With ASLRRRA’s On-Demand Webinars

Understanding issues related to retirement and other benefits is important to our members, which is why ASLRRRA partnered with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) to present three webinars discussing several key topics, including general eligibility, employee, spouse and survivor benefits, and working after retirement.

Each of the three webinars is available as a recording in ASLRRRA’s On-Demand Webinar library, and all are free to short line railroad employees. Read a description of each webinar below, and follow the link to access it directly.
RRB General Eligibility and Employee Benefits: The first webinar session reviewed general eligibility requirements and employee retirement and disability benefits.

RRB Spouse Benefits and Working After Retirement: The second session discussed eligibility requirements for Spouses and Divorced Spouses and reviewed work limits after retirement.

RRB Survivor Benefits and General Information: The final webinar reviewed survivor eligibility requirements and additional information relating to all benefits.

In addition to on-demand webinars, ASLRRA is always working to provide its members with top-notch education, bringing industry and subject-matter experts right to your desk. Find out about our upcoming live webinars below, and use the links to learn more or register.

**Upcoming Webinars**

**Emergency Docket Waivers - March 11, 2020**

The FRA administrator can activate an emergency relief docket if extreme conditions constitute an emergency event to railroad operations. This webinar will explain emergency dockets and provide instruction on how to file a waiver petition for temporary relief from certain safety regulations. ASLRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang and Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar will conduct the webinar.

**Employer Training Resources: Registered Apprenticeships - March 19, 2020 (Note new date)**

SPRING President Michele Malski and FASTPORT Executive Director of Military Engagement and Apprenticeships Dave Harrison will explain the benefits of establishing a federally registered apprenticeship program and how to start one.

[Click here](#) for more ASLRRA events.

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**Industry Events**

[Click here](#) for a listing of industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, editor, with questions or comments.