



# Indiana State Legislative Board

April 2, 2018 (#2)

## Chairman Update

### Second Regular Session 120<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2018)



The first day of the 2018 legislative session began on Wednesday, January 3. The railroad lobby has been extremely active this year in their attempt to pass FELA legislation.

The session ended on Wednesday, March 14. There were two (2) Bills that I tracked this year. I will list them in greater detail below:

#### FELA Legislation (S.B. 436)

The National Division fired up the Mobilization Team, and most of you were contacted in some fashion to make calls to your Indiana Legislators in order to defeat this Bill. I appreciate all of your efforts, and I received feedback from lawmakers that your calls were noticed.

Unfortunately, the Bill was passed and signed by the Governor on March 15<sup>th</sup>, making this Public Law 107.

Ultimately, this could have been much worse for our members. The original Bill contained language that would have been detrimental to our coworkers, and at the very least there is an *option* for the court to bifurcate the trial for the injured plaintiff.

#### H.B. 1301

Language was added to H.B. 1301 that increases the liability coverage that contract carriers must provide while transporting railroad workers.

Current law mandates that these companies must provide a minimum coverage of \$1.5 million. This amount is divided among all occupants of the vehicle if an accident results in injury. The amendment that was added to H.B. 1301 increases the liability coverage to \$5 million.

The Bill passed out of both houses of the General Assembly, and I am pleased to report that the Governor signed it into law on March 25<sup>th</sup>, making this Public Law 208. Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, liability coverage will be increased to \$5 million for each vehicle used to transport railroad workers in Indiana.

#### BLET PAC

2018 is another election year, and now is the time more than ever to think about signing up for PAC contributions.

Whether you decide to give \$5, \$10, \$25, or \$50 per month, your voluntary contribution will go a long way in helping labor-friendly candidates get elected at the state and national level. For more information, contact your division legislative representative for an application.





# Federal Legislation

## Right to Work (for less)

The Senate (S. 545) and House (H.R. 785) introduced so-called “Right to Work” legislation during the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. The bill now has 28 cosponsors (all Republican) in the Senate, and 115 cosponsors (all Republican) in the House. Indiana has four Congressman who are listed as cosponsors – Larry Bucshon (R-8), Luke Messer (R-6), Todd Rokita (R-4), “Tennessee” Trey Hollingsworth (R-9), and Jim Banks (R-3). If you live in any of these districts, I suggest you call or write to express your opposition to this legislation.



## Safe Freight Act

H.R. 233 (Safe Freight Act) continues to grow support in Congress. There are now 86 cosponsors to this bill (73 Democrats, 13 Republicans).

In the Senate, S. 2360 was introduced by Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND). There are currently 11 cosponsors (10 Democrats, 1 Independent).

Please continue calling your members of Congress to show support for these Bills. If you live in a Republican district, I encourage you to call and ask that your Congressman sign on as a cosponsor. Since the Republicans are in the majority, it is imperative that we have them listed as cosponsors.

To contact your Congressman, call the United States Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121. The operator will help connect you with your representative. To find your representative, simply go to our website, [www.bletinslb.org](http://www.bletinslb.org) and click on the resources page.

## S. 1451 “RAILS Act”

Congresswoman Deb Fischer (R-NE) introduced S. 1451 on June 28, 2017. This bill is designed to reduce regulations related to railroad operations, and make it more difficult to introduce new ones.

The BLET is opposed to this bill, and I will keep you updated on any future developments. There are currently no cosponsors listed.

## S. 1774 “Employee’s Rights Act”

Senator Orrin Hatch has introduced a union-busting bill designed to make it burdensome for unions to remain certified within the companies in which they represent. To date, this bill now has 30 cosponsors (all Republican), including Indiana Senator Todd Young. The BLET opposes this bill.

## S. 1883 Sleep Apnea

Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ) introduced a sleep apnea bill that mandates action by the FRA to finalize rulemaking on this subject.

The BLET is opposing this legislation due to the root cause (fatigue) not being addressed in this bill. It is our Organization’s position that the railroads need to fix their scheduling of trains and provide accurate lineups in order to help mitigate crew fatigue. If these steps are taken by the Carriers, there will be less instances of sleep disorders.

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