

## **STATEMENT REGARDING 2012 REVISION TO BLET FELA COUNSEL PROGRAM**

For nearly thirty years, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen has maintained a list of experienced personal injury lawyers so that the Union's members would have available to them competent, principled legal counsel to assist in the handling of their claims for personal injuries incurred during the course of their railroad employment. This list, commonly known as BLET's Designated Legal Counsel ("DLC"), was created and maintained as part of the Union's mission to "advance the working conditions, wages, benefits, job security, and quality of life for its present and future members and their families."

In 2010, the BLET Advisory Board revised its criteria for becoming a DLC, developed various Rules of Conduct with which DLCs would be expected to comport themselves insofar as it relates to their DLC status, and issued a formal Protocol to that effect. Now, after two years of experience administering that Protocol, the Union has decided to discontinue formally designating attorneys and instead to refer its members to the directory of the Academy of Rail Labor Attorneys ("ARLA"), an organization made up exclusively of lawyers who represent injured employees under the Federal Employers' Liability Act. By relinquishing the role of designator and referring employees to the ARLA directory, BLET is expanding the number of attorneys available to its members requiring legal representation. ARLA maintains its own Constitution which, along with the rules of conduct and ethics issued by the states in which ARLA attorneys practice law, assures BLET members, as well as BLET can, that the attorneys they choose to represent them will maintain the standards required by ARLA. Furthermore, this change relieves BLET from expending considerable time and resources necessary to administer the Protocol and the frequent controversies associated therewith.

With this announcement, BLET is issuing a separate set of inquiries that it recommends injured BLET members should use when deciding which personal injury attorney will best represent their interests. The Union is confident that with answers to these inquiries in hand, and the confidence that attorneys who belong to ARLA offer the knowledge of the industry that is essential to effectively presenting injured employees' claims, BLET members will be able to continue to receive the high quality of representation they previously have received under the formal DLC Program.

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