

# INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

AFL-CIO



LEGAL DEPARTMENT

## TITAN

TO: IBT Joint Councils

FROM: Patrick J. Szymanski, General Counsel

DATE: March 16, 2004

RE: Affiliation of BLET Local Divisions with IBT Joint Councils

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In early December 2003, the members of the International Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (IBLE) voted overwhelmingly to merge into the IBT. As a result, the IBLE affiliated bodies in the United States became the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a division within the newly formed IBT Rail Conference, and the IBLE affiliates in Canada became the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference. The merger was effective January 1, 2004, and as of that date the 35,000 members of the IBLE became members of the IBT. We welcome our new brothers and sisters and have pledged that we will provide them with the same aggressive representation that our members have come to expect from the Teamsters Union.

The International Union has received several inquiries from Joint Councils about the procedure and terms under which BLET Local Divisions may affiliate with the Joint Council in their geographic area. First, some background on the structure of the IBLE/BLET. The Local Division is the bottom level, first line unit of the BLET. A Local Division (LD) may have as few as 12 members and often consisting of engineers domiciled at a single rail yard or single geographic locations or area for a single carrier such as Union Pacific or Burlington Northern-Santa Fe. There are approximately 600 BLET Local Divisions throughout the United States and Canada. The Local Divisions are organized into General Committees of Adjustment, which negotiate contracts and handle grievances for either entire carriers (railroads) or particular regions within a carrier. There are approximately 50 General Committees. The BLET also has State Legislative Boards in most states. The representatives on these boards are elected by the Local

Divisions within the state and have the responsibility of furthering the interests of the BLET membership with state government and assisting the BLET National Legislative Representative with respect to federal issues and lobbying.

With respect to the affiliation of Local Divisions with Joint Councils, the Merger Agreement provides:

6.13. Joint Council Affiliation. BLET Local Divisions and other affiliates will not be required to be affiliated with IBT Joint Councils. Officers of BLET Local Divisions and other affiliates will be invited to attend meetings and other functions and events conducted by the Joint Council having jurisdiction over the geographic area in which the Local Division or other affiliate is located. BLET Local Divisions and other affiliates may enter into agreements with the Joint Council having jurisdiction over the geographic area in which the Local Division or other affiliate is located on mutually agreeable terms, subject to the approval of the BLET President (or the TCRC President) and the IBT General President (acting [with respect to agreements in Canada] on the recommendation of the President of Teamsters Canada).

Thus, although not required to do so, BLET Local Divisions have the option of participating in Joint Council affairs on terms that are agreeable to the Joint Council and the BLET Local Divisions. These terms should be discussed between representatives of the Local Divisions and the Joint Council, should be reduced to writing and must be approved by the President of the BLET National Division and the IBT General President or, for those Joint Councils and BLET affiliates located in Canada, by the President of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference and the IBT General President acting on the recommendation of the President of Teamsters Canada. Copies of any such agreements should be submitted to me at the Legal Department at the same time they are submitted to the appropriate officers. No agreement need be submitted if the Joint Council simply allows officers of BLET Local Divisions to attend meetings and other Joint Council functions.

The purpose of the provision allowing Local Divisions and Joint Councils to formulate their own arrangements is to encourage Teamster Joint Council officers and BLET Local Division officers to meet, discuss and formulate arrangements that would work best for everyone involved. We want to encourage cooperation between Teamster Joint Councils and Local Unions and the BLET Local Divisions. We urge Joint Councils and Local Unions to offer Local Divisions, General

Committees and State Legislative Boards the use of their Union halls, meeting facilities and offices. It is important to the success of the merger that we develop close cooperation between Joint Council and Local Union officers and members and BLET officers and members.

Arrangements between Joint Councils and Local Divisions could take many forms ranging from simply allowing Local Division officers to attend Joint Council meetings and functions to full voting and per capita participation. As noted above, any arrangement other than simple attendance and informal participation must be approved by the BLET and the International Union.

One difficulty with allowing BLET Local Divisions full voting participation is the wide difference in size and officers between an IBT Local Union and a BLET Local Division. Consider the circumstances of one mid-sized Joint Council and the Local Divisions within its geographic jurisdiction. The Joint Council has 50,000 members and 14 Local Unions. There are 9 Local Divisions within its geographic jurisdiction. The smallest Local Division has 60 members and the total membership in all 9 Local Divisions is approximately 670. It makes no sense to allow each Local Division seven delegates to the Joint Council. One arrangement that might make sense is to allow the 9 Local Divisions to be considered as a single local union. The Local Divisions could elect seven representatives as delegates to the Joint Council and would pay per capita on the total membership in all the divisions. By offering this example, we do not mean to suggest that other arrangements will not be approved. Any arrangement submitted to the International Union and to the BLET will be carefully considered.

A roster of the Local Divisions within the geographic jurisdiction of your Joint Council can be obtained from BLET National Secretary-Treasurer William Walpert at the BLET (1370 Ontario Street, Cleveland, OH 44113, (216) 241-2630). Any questions concerning the matters discussed in this memo should be directed to General Counsel Szymanski.

cc: James P. Hoffa, General President  
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