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ASLRRRA Scholarships Benefit Individuals – And Others Too

Experience is valuable, but it can also give a false sense of security that is dangerous in an industry like railroading. Training benefits individuals at all levels, something Florida Central Railroad (FCEN) Assistant Roadmaster Lionel Thompson knows well.



Lionel Thompson, an assistant roadmaster at ASLRRRA member Florida Central Railroad, received a Doug Golden Scholarship through the ASLRRRA Short Line Education Fund that helped pay for an important training course.

Thompson received a Doug Golden Scholarship through the ASLRRRA Short Line Education Fund, which helped him and FCEN pay for a University of Tennessee-Knoxville Railroad Track Inspection and Safety Standards Course last November.

"It's always good to freshen up on your regulations knowledge. This training reminded me why it's important to always go and reread the regulations and/or consult with someone in the profession. It is great for beginners and veterans in the field – I can guarantee that everyone leaves knowing more than when they first came in," said Thompson.

These scholarships and the training they subsidize are beneficial to more than individual employees. As an assistant roadmaster, Thompson leads a five-person track team responsible for repairing and maintaining 200 miles of track, as well as performing required inspections. The training he

receives includes information he can share with his colleagues – concrete knowledge that is supplemented by a renewed awareness of the importance of constantly reviewing regulations.

And, from a more practical perspective, funding opportunities like these support a small railroad's bottom line. As Thompson noted, "This scholarship definitely eased the burden of the cost for training, lodging and traveling expenses. We are a relatively small short line railroad, so any additional funding to help us get better is greatly appreciated."

Enabling railroad employees to attend training courses helps prevent complacency and can have a positive ripple effect on the company's operations. ASLRRRA is happy to support its members and their employees with the help of generous donors like former board member and retired Carolina Coastal Railway President Doug Golden. Learn more about ASLRRRA's Short Line Education Fund [here](#).

Save the Date: Railroad Day Set for March 9 and 10

The railroad industry will once again hold a virtual Railroad Day on Capitol Hill event on March 9 and 10. Stay tuned for more details about when and how to participate.



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS RESOURCES

Be Prepared! Download ASLRRA's member-exclusive templates and checklists to build or enhance your railroad's emergency response plans. Visit www.aslrra.org/disasterprep.



Virginia, Minnesota Rail Grant Programs Accepting Applications

In addition to the expected release of federal grant funding opportunities mentioned in [last week's Views and News](#), several state grant programs have announced their own programs are currently accepting applications.

Applications for [Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation \(DRPT\) grants](#) are due Feb. 1. Eligible recipients include freight rail operators, and eligible projects include

improvements to railways, railroad equipment, rolling stock, rail facilities and more.

The [Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Program \(MRSI\)](#) offers funding in six categories, such as grants for freight rail service improvements and loans for rail rehabilitation and capital improvement. [Applications](#) for the MRSI grant program are due by March 1. To help prospective MRSI grant applicants, program representatives will hold an [informational meeting](#) on Jan. 27.

ASLRRA encourages its short line members in Virginia and Minnesota to explore these funding options. To help members navigate the grant process, ASLRRA's [Member Discount Program](#) Preferred Providers [Bergmann, HDR, Inc.](#) and [Global Train Services](#) (GTS) offer grant-writing services at special pricing to Association members.

Supreme Court Grants Stay of OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard

On Jan. 13 the Supreme Court [ruled](#) on a request from a number of states, businesses and nonprofit organizations to stay the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) [Emergency Temporary Standard \(ETS\)](#). The court granted a stay of the ETS, which would have required companies with at least 100 employees to implement a policy requiring employees to either get vaccinated for COVID-19 or obtain a negative COVID test weekly and wear a mask each workday.

The Court stated that the applicants are likely to succeed on the merits of their claim that the OSHA Secretary lacked authority to impose the mandate. The Court reasoned that the OSH Act empowers the Secretary to set workplace safety standards, not broad public health measures. The Court

reasoned that although COVID-19 is a risk that occurs in many workplaces, it is not an occupational hazard in most, as COVID-19 can and does spread everywhere that people gather.

The Court concluded that, "Permitting OSHA to regulate the hazards of daily life – simply because most Americans have jobs and face those same risks while on the clock – would significantly expand OSHA's regulatory authority without clear congressional authorization."



Congressional Agenda Murky as Major Priorities Hit Roadblock

The Senate returned from the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday with Senate Democratic leadership focused on changing its rules, such as scaling back or eliminating the filibuster, in order to advance voting rights legislation.

But with Senators Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) holding out and preventing the Senate Democratic caucus from unifying behind such an effort, these rule changes are unlikely to happen. Meanwhile, the Democrats' Build Back Better bill remains stalled in the Senate, with discussion amongst Democrats turning toward the unlikely possibility of breaking up the nearly \$2 trillion bill into smaller pieces of legislation in the hopes of gaining unified Democratic support.

Should both legislative efforts fail to advance, it is unclear what the next major priority would be for the party that controls both the Senate and House, although there is a possibility of some additional COVID-related relief measure.

A bipartisan group of leaders in the Senate and House are re-engaging in negotiations about a full fiscal year 2022 spending measure. The current stop-gap bill expires on Feb. 18, and there is growing concern about the negative effects the short-term bill has on government and defense operations.

ASLRRA Staff Ramps Up Outreach to Hill Offices


In recent weeks, ASLRRA's government affairs team, Tom Lynch, Zach Radford and Crystal Gitchell, has held many in-person and virtual meetings with staff for key members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee.

The meetings allow ASLRRA to discuss important industry issues now that Congress has passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and its focus is shifting toward IIJA's implementation by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The meetings also lay the foundation for other policy areas beyond infrastructure where House representatives have influence and short line freight rail could find opportunities, such as agriculture, defense, small business and emergency management.

Offices that ASLRRA staff have met with already this year include:

- Rep. Colin Allred (D-Texas)
- Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.)
- Rep. Carolyn Bourdeaux (D-Ga.)
- Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.)
- Rep. Salud Carbajal (D-Calif.)
- Rep. Sharice Davids (D-Kan.)

- Rep. Mark DeSaulnier (D-Calif.)
- Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.)
- Rep. John Garamendi (D-Calif.)
- Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.)
- Rep. Sam Graves (R-Mo.) (lead Republican on the T&I committee)
- Rep. Michael Guest (R-Miss.)
- Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.)



Employee Health Insurance
The Coalition Health Plan is available exclusively to ASLRRRA members, designed to reduce medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for employees. [Click to learn more...](#)

ASLRRRA Members of Note

From the Northeast to the Midwest, Short Line Freight Railroads are Making Headlines

A trio of ASLRRRA-member railroads are making news this winter for achieving different milestones. New York's *Newsday* [recently profiled](#) New York and Atlantic Railway's (NYA) freight operations on Long Island, while *First & Fastest*, a magazine published by the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society, [describes the evolution](#) of the 105-year-old freight rail line in Indiana that is now known as the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad (CSS). And, elsewhere in the Midwest, the Napoleon, Defiance and Western Railway (NDW) [will serve](#) a new manufacturing facility that will create at least 17 new jobs in Defiance, Ohio.

The *Newsday* article looks at how NYA has expanded service and rail capacity, moving almost 32,000 carloads of freight a year and managing over a billion dollars' worth of goods. It also examines efforts to further increase freight shipments on Long Island, an effort advocates say can help take trucks off of congested roads and reduce urban pollution. Limited room for expansion and less access to rail network connections east of the Hudson River are two hurdles NYA must face.

The CSS profile, written by former CSS President and CEO Andrew Fox, follows the railroad from its beginning in 1916 as the South Shore Line. Fox explains how CSS survived a constantly changing environment, including changes in ownership and the transition away from its long-time primary commodity, coal.

News from Ohio focuses on Tessengerlo Kerley, a chemical company that will construct a multi-million-dollar liquid fertilizer facility to serve the Eastern Great Lakes region. The facility will focus on Tessengerlo Kerley's top sulfur-based crop fertilizer brands, as well as sulfite chemistries for industrial markets. NDW's parent company Pioneer Lines has spent over \$13 million rehabilitating the line that will serve this new facility, which is expected to begin operations in early 2024.



ASLRRRA members Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad (left) and New York and Atlantic Railway have both recently been featured in articles focused on their history and business achievements.

ASLRRRA Announcements

Coalition Health Plan with HUB Insurance Helps Members Reduce Premiums

The Coalition Health Plan is specifically designed for ASLRRRA members looking for a solution to reduce their medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for their employees.

As the fifth largest broker in the world with over 500 locations in North America, HUB International is well equipped to provide ASLRRRA members with a broad array of benefits experts and best-in-class resources anywhere in the U.S. When you partner with HUB, you're at the center of a vast network of experts who will help you reach your goals through risk services, claims management, and compliance support. Visit the ASLRRRA [Member Discount Program website](#) and select Employee Health Insurance to start saving today.

Severe Winter Weather Necessitates Proper Preparation

Snowstorms have already wreaked havoc on parts of the south and northeast, and winter is not nearly over. ASLRRRA's [disaster preparedness website](#) features numerous resources to help railroads plan for adverse events like winter storms and recover from them when they occur.

The Association has updated its disaster preparedness site to include some financial assistance resources for small business owners and individuals living within a designated natural disaster area.

This [new link](#) identifies different types of financial disaster relief for which some companies and their employees may be eligible.

Other resources on ASLRRRA's page include templates and checklists members can use to develop emergency plans, which can also be utilized as training tools. There are also instructions for filing emergency dockets, direct links to [ready.gov](#), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's disaster preparedness website, and links to ASLRRRA's [On-Demand Webinar library](#) featuring recordings that discuss topics such as crisis communications and hazardous materials incident reporting.

ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program Includes Grant Writing Services!

Visit [aslrra.org](#) to learn more!



ASLRRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Find Communications Webinars in ASLRRRA's On-Demand Library

With railroads moving goods through towns across the U.S., it is important for companies to be able to communicate with local governments and residents effectively. ASLRRRA's recorded webinars offer industry-specific tips to help railroads develop communications strategies for all kinds of occasions, including crises.

Explore the Communications category in ASLRRRA's On-Demand Webinar library to find titles like:

- Government and Community Relations Fundamentals
- Media Training Basics
- Crisis Communications Fundamentals for Railroaders
- Not in my Backyard: Responding/Reacting to NIMBYism in the Community
- Using Social Media as a Business Development Tool

The webinar library also includes other industry hot topics such as railroad retirement and unemployment, regulatory compliance, environmental issues and much more. ASLRRRA members can view recordings at any time for free, while non-members can purchase a subscription to access our library. Go to [aslrra.org/webinars](#) and log in to see what is available.

[Click here](#) for a calendar of ASLRRRA events.

Industry Events and Announcements

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

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