



Rep. Visclosky to Enjoy Well-Deserved Retirement



The American steel industry is losing one of its staunchest allies in Congress at the conclusion of the current session.

U.S. Representative Pete Visclosky (D-Ind.) announced in early November that he will not seek re-election in 2020 after serving 35 years in Congress representing the popular steel mill district of Northwest Indiana just south of Chicago.

Visclosky was born in Gary, Indiana and has been in office since 1986, making him the longest-serving member of Indiana’s Congressional delegation. He has fought tirelessly for the betterment of the American steel industry and USW members.

Visclosky represents Indiana’s Congressional District 1, which is the largest steel-producing district in the country. U.S. Steel’s Gary Works and ArcelorMittal’s plate mill in Burns Harbor are in Visclosky’s district and the congressman has always stood front and center during the trying times in America’s steel industry.

Over his long Congressional career, Visclosky has represented thousands of USW members and could always be counted on to voice the concerns of our union brothers and sisters.

Visclosky was a leader of the Congressional Steel Caucus for many years and he fought for tougher trade enforcement rules. He has been a crucial voice in combating China’s “dumping” of cheap, state-subsidized steel into the U.S. He realized that steel production was the foundation of Northwest Indiana and the foundation of our national defense and national security.

And he fought to provide and keep the well-paying, benefit-friendly steel mill jobs in the part of Indiana known as The Region. America’s steelworkers will be hard-pressed to find another ally in Congress as effective as Visclosky.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing wants to thank Rep. Visclosky for his stellar career in support of steelworkers and manufacturing. We hate to see you go Pete; but, enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

Jeff Bonior is a staff writer at the Alliance for American Manufacturing



As long as I can remember, Pete Visclosky as always been a genuine friend of workers and especially Steelworkers. We have always been supported by Pete and wish him the very best..... *Charlie Averill*

Active and Retired Workers are Watching



Tuesday, November 5 marked another momentous election for union-endorsed candidates, with the two most notable demonstrations of the labor movement resurgence coming from Kentucky and Virginia.

In Virginia, the labor movement and our union, specifically, will remember this election as a significant victory in our work to reverse the many ways Virginians have been hurt by the state's so-called "Right to Work" law and the persistence of an anti-worker majority in the State House (1997-2019) and State Senate (2015-2019).

Our union committed significant resources in this campaign with a core group of activists who knocked doors in addition to a targeted "Get-Out-The-Vote" mailing that hit mailboxes just before Election Day. USW activists accounted for more walk shifts than any other affiliate that participated in the AFL-CIO program, which helped lift six union-backed candidates to victory in legislative districts previously held by anti-labor lawmakers (two in the State Senate and four in the House).

This new pro-worker majority in the state legislature will be a welcome addition to the labor-friendly Governor, Ralph Northam, who we helped elect in 2017.

In Kentucky, USW activists led the way in a labor-led victory for Andy Beshear, defeating incumbent Governor Matt Bevin who earned the ire of teachers and first-responders when he supported legislation that would force them to work longer before even being eligible for retirement, and enforce deep cuts in benefits for future retirees. Additionally, Bevin reversed the state's tradition of respecting union rights when he signed the so-called "Right to Work" law in 2017.

On the promise to fight on behalf of retirees and workers in Kentucky, Andy Beshear pledged to work with labor to protect pensions, strengthen public education, and expand access to good jobs and health care.

With 2020 on everyone's mind, we should understand one thing very clear: **Active and retired workers are watching.**

Julie Stein, SOAR Director

Source: <https://www.kentucky.com/news/politics-government/article208518614.html>



We need relief on the cost of prescription drugs. The needed legislation is being polished up in congress. The bill is H.R.3. -- Say it three times out loud with me right now.....HR3, HR3, HR3. Now, please call your congressperson and tell him/her to pass HR3.....*Charlie*

SOAR Active and Involved



Recently, SOAR has been involved in two USW sponsored conferences: During the third week of November, SOAR had an information booth and participated in a workshop at the first-ever Next Gen Conference, in Pittsburgh. During the last week of October, SOAR participated at the Rapid Response Conference, in Washington, D.C.

At the RR Conference, 46 SOAR activists were involved in a rally and participated in lobbying our elected representatives on issues of importance to active and retired workers, as well as attending District meetings and general sessions of all those in attendance.

Many seasoned SOAR members were teamed with first-time attendees and helped them navigate through the process of lobbying. Many of the SOAR attendees were there because of the generosity of their District Directors. Without their help and support, our numbers would have been greatly reduced. All of the SOAR members who attended the RR conference should make a point of thanking their local union or district director for providing the support to allow their participation.

Participation by SOAR at the Next Gen Conference proved to be both energizing and educational. I believe SOAR and Next Gen have much to offer each other and can learn from each other if we choose to talk to, instead of talking at, each other. A number of our issues are different; but, we have common ground on many, and we should work hard to find the issues on which we can agree and work together on those issues.

Four years ago, no one was speaking about SOAR and Next Gen and Rapid Response working together to address issues; and now today, we cannot think about conducting activities without the input and involvement of these resources.

I think that is what I like most about this Union. The policy of the USW of inclusion and working together to help others is something we can and should all be proud of.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



At left is a photo taken of the SOAR members attending the Rapid Response Conference, with USW International President, Thomas M. Conway pictured front and center.

Those Next Generation members that President Pienta mentioned above are really great. I wonder sometimes if I would be able to find my way around the capitol without their assistance.

I met some really nice Next Gen members and just wish they could come up with a pill to make me 60 years younger.....*Charlie*

SOAR Chapter Connection

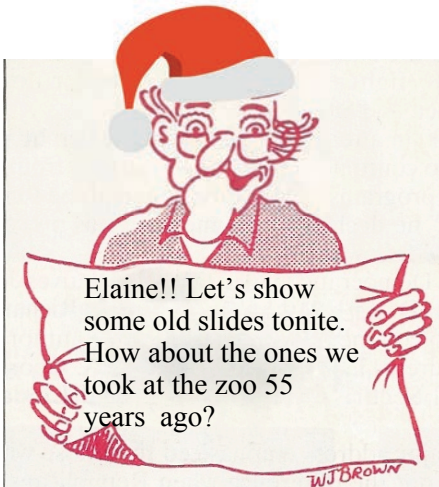
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Old Charlie Sez



McNeil Report

Oh boy!! We're going to get a 1.6% increase in our Social Security checks next year! That's about 24 bucks!

Don't forget to get your Flu shot and/or one of those Pneumococcal shots.

Elaine Says... Memories up in smoke.....



This photo shows me tossing at least a thousand slides into the fire. Last winter, our goal was to sort through our slides as well as slides we inherited from our dads. We all were avid slide photographers.

The back story...when I was in elementary school, I received a Brownie camera as a gift. That camera started it all, my love of photography. I took my camera to school and shot photos of my friends jumping rope and swinging on the playground. I would take my roll of film to Walgreens and wait the week it took to develop. What a thrill to see the pictures (I still have many of them). I graduated to 35mm film and had my own darkroom to

develop film and make prints. For many years, I even made my own Christmas cards. I loved it!

Then came digital, that was an entirely new world for me. I know many of you can relate to having a computer full of photos. And the ease of editing was unbelievable! I had a lot of fun with that. Then came the iPhone and everyone was a photographer.

Back to my slides, we needed to get rid of the hundreds of slide trays filled with memories. Sorting took many months. But, we got it done! Sadly, slides of the zoo, fall leaves, and strangers bit the dust. I now have room to store quilting fabric. Woohoo!



Season's Greetings from the SOAR Office

During this holiday season, our thoughts turn gratefully to those that help us build SOAR. Simply and truly, we thank you.

On behalf of the entire SOAR organization, we wish you a joyous holiday season, to be followed by a safe, happy and healthy New Year. May it also bring plenty of opportunities to stay active and involved with SOAR.

In solidarity; and in the spirit of the season,

Julie Stein and Alysse Rico



APPENDIX A

SOAR CONFERENCE DELEGATES - NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS: RULES OF PROCEDURE

ARTICLE II AUTOMATIC DELEGATES AND OBSERVERS

Section 1. SOAR Officers, Executive Board members and Coordinators (one (1) Coordinator, who is a SOAR member and not on the USW staff, per District selected by the USW District Director) shall be considered automatic delegates to the SOAR Conference. SOAR Coordinators who are not automatic delegates or who are not elected as District Representatives and SOAR Coordinators who are employed by the USW may attend the SOAR Conference as observers.

ARTICLE III ELECTION OF SOAR CONFERENCE DELEGATES

Section 1. SOAR Chapters with more than 250 dues paying members. These SOAR Chapters shall elect their allotted delegate(s) at their regularly scheduled chapter meeting six (6) months prior to the date the International Conference is to be held. If a SOAR Chapter does not have a regularly scheduled meeting in that month the election may be held in either the month before or the month after, upon notification of such variance to the District Executive Board Member. The SOAR in Action magazine shall contain information alerting the membership to the upcoming election of delegates in an issue to be published no later than seven (7) months prior to the date the International SOAR Conference is to be held.

Section 3 Allocation of Delegates.

- (a) The number of delegates allotted to each District shall be one per every 500 dues paying members or a majority fraction thereof; provided that each District shall have at least one representative.
- (b) The number of delegates allotted to each SOAR Chapter of more than 250 members shall be as follows:
 - One delegate for each Chapter of 251 to 750 members
 - Two delegates for each Chapter of 751 to 1250 members

The Director of SOAR shall furnish each SOAR Chapter with a report on their current membership and the number of delegate(s) they are eligible to elect at their SOAR Chapter meeting no later than seven (7) months prior to the date the International Conference is to be held.



Alliance for Retired Americans

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www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

November 15, 2019

Medicare Part B Premiums to Rise 7% In 2020

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has announced new premiums for Medicare beneficiaries, including a [7% increase in Part B premiums in 2020](#).

Premiums will rise to \$144.60 a month, up from \$135.50, for about 70% of beneficiaries. The announcement comes nearly a month after the Social Security Administration announced a modest 1.6% cost-of-living adjustment to Social Security benefits in 2020, which works out to approximately \$24 a month for the average retired worker.

Medicare Part B 2020 premiums

Individual taxable income	Joint taxable income	Monthly premium
\$87,000 or less	\$174,000 or less	\$144.60
\$87,000 to \$109,000	\$174,000 to \$218,000	\$202.40
\$109,000 to \$136,000	\$218,000 to \$272,000	\$289.20
\$136,000 to \$163,000	\$272,000 to \$326,000	\$376.00
\$163,000 to \$500,000	\$326,000 to \$750,000	\$462.70
\$500,000 or above	\$750,000 and above	\$491.60

Source: Medicare.gov

“For many Americans, their 2020 COLA will not be large enough to cover the increase in their Medicare premiums and out-of-pocket costs,” said **Joseph Peters, Jr.**,

Secretary-Treasurer of the Alliance. “We need to expand Social Security, increase benefits and ensure that COLAs reflect the cost of things that retirees spend their money on.”

The Alliance for Retired Americans is a national organization that advocates for the rights and well-being of over 4.4 million retirees and their families.

Alliance for Retired Americans Hosts 2019 Pension Seminar

by Robert Roach, Jr.



More than two dozen speakers from unions and government agencies, as well as bankruptcy attorneys, young workers and others, shared strategies recently to address the growing pension crisis and the effects of corporate bankruptcy on millions of Americans. During the two-day event, attendees also discussed other pillars of retirement security, including Social Security and Medicare.

Multiemployer pension plans, which are collectively bargained pension plans maintained by a labor union and more than one employer, were a focus of the event. More than one million Americans who depend on multiemployer pension plans for their retirement income are at risk of losing their pension due to corporate bankruptcies that have threatened the solvency of these plans. Without Congressional action, more than 100 multiemployer pension plans in critical and declining status are likely to fail within the next 20 years, jeopardizing the retirement income of the workers and retirees.

Highlights of the seminar included: Rep. John Larson of Connecticut spoke about steps that should be taken to protect the retirement benefits that workers have earned after a lifetime of hard work, including his legislation to expand Social Security benefits.

Also, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka spoke about the need to protect pension benefits when companies declare bankruptcy, stressing that bankruptcy laws are not designed to protect retirees who worked hard their entire lives - instead, they protect the millionaires and CEOs.

Elizabeth Shuler, Executive Vice President of the Alliance and Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, called for passage of two pieces of legislation pending in Congress to provide immediate relief to millions of workers at risk of losing their earned pension and health benefits: the American Miners Act of 2019 and the Butch Lewis Act. We are grateful to all who participated.

Robert Roach, Jr. is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans. He was previously General Secretary-Treasurer of the IAMAW. For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org.



FedEx Ends Pensions for New Hires

Meanwhile, 425,000 FedEx employees learned that their pension plan is being slashed and newly hired workers won't get a pension plan at all. The announcement comes after the company this week defended its \$0 income tax in 2018 by touting its 'best-funded' pension plan. FedEx had defended its \$0 tax bill, in part because of its voluntary contribution of \$1.5 billion to its pension fund.

Source: Nov. 22 edition of the ARA Friday Alert

Grab Your Wallets, Pocketbooks and Hold Tight!



Mitt Romney is aiming to get back on the national stage, and this time Little Lord Fauntleroy is threatening our Social Security and Medicare to accomplish his goal.

Earlier this month, the Republican Senator from Utah, convinced three other members of the Senate to join him as co-sponsors of his TRUST (Time to Rescue United States Trusts) Act. The bill is falsely aimed at reducing the federal deficit. “Falsely” because even as the guru of trickle-down economics, Ronald Reagan once declared, “Social Security has nothing to do with the deficit.” The Gipper went on to say that the retirement savings trust is a pay-as-you-go program, which is supported by payroll contributions made by workers and their employers. It has never added a penny to the national debt, but for some reason many right-wing politicians run with the false narrative that the answer to fixing the national debt is found in reducing Social Security.

But truth be damned, Romney charges on telling anyone who will listen to his baseless claim that, “If you ever want to see a balanced budget, if you ever want to get out of debt, you have to deal with these trust funds. The trusts that the Senator refers to are: Social Security Old-Age and Survivors Insurance, S.S. Disability Insurance, Medicare Hospital Insurance, and the Highway Trust Fund.

Most Steelworkers are aware of the Social Security trusts. However, some may be unfamiliar with the Highway Trust. The fund is a federal program that is funded by fuel and other related excise taxes. It is actually two accounts. One account provides dollars to support mass-transit expansion and development; while the other supports improvements of surface transportation and infrastructure repairs.

So, how would the Romney TRUST Act work? If the bill is passed, the U.S. Treasury Department would have 30 days to prepare and deliver a report to Congress on the status of the trusts. Congressional leaders would then form a “rescue” committee for each trust fund. Those committees would be made up of at least two members of each political party. They would meet to develop legislation to repair the funds’ solvency and identify other improvements.

Finally, any qualified legislative proposals arising from the committee process will get expedited consideration before the House and Senate. Critics are concerned that the expedited process is akin to “FAST TRACK!” They fear that proposals would get hammered out in closed-door sessions. Once they were approved by the rescue committee, they would be sent for a floor vote of yes or no. There would be no hearings, no debate, and no amendment. If that process sounds familiar, it’s the same process used to pass every failed trade agreement the country has ever entered into, and we have all seen how well that worked out!

Romney’s TRUST Act is a ploy being perpetrated in the name of bi-partisanship. Its real goal is to cut benefits, raise the retirement age, and ultimately privatize the trusts working-class families have come to rely on. These trusts have been disguised as fiscal responsibility. Don’t be fooled by gimmicky marketing, now is the time to expand Social Security and Medicare -- not to cut them!

Jay McMurran, District 2 SOAR Board Member



‘SOAR’-ing in Retirement

IRON RANGE — The first Wednesday of every month, a group of local silver-haired activists known as the Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees — known simply as SOAR — gets together for donuts, coffee and to dish on politics. “We have roughly 300-plus members, and they come from U.S. Steel, [former] EVTAC, Hibbing Taconite, and around the area,” SOAR President Sam Ricker recently told the Hibbing Daily Tribune. “It’s just about getting people together and to find out about political campaigns.”

The local SOAR chapter is part of a larger organization that was first established in 1985 to help strengthen the Steelworkers union by bringing together retirees to act as advocates, activists and volunteers in the communities where they lived. The members are comprised of former miners, their spouses and, according to Ricker, they’ve also opened up membership to non-Steelworkers who embody the same principals and values their group upholds.

According to usw.org, SOAR leaders encouraged chapter formations in 2011 to foster more direct communication between chapter leaders and their local unions. The idea was to help gain insight on negotiation issues regarding retirees. As the website states, “With the establishment of SOAR, our union solidified its focus on the unique issues impacting USW retirees and their spouses. Further, SOAR has been engaged in countless efforts to assure security for current and future generations of retirees, regardless of whether they belong to a union or not.”

Before Ricker became president of his local SOAR chapter, he was employed for 36 years at the former Eveleth Taconite Co. — aka “EVTAC.” The 1961 Nashwauk graduate was working in Minneapolis for Honeywell before he returned to the area and began working at EVTAC in the late ‘60s as a maintenance mechanic. Two years later, he became a machinist and would stick at that job for the next 34 years.

“It seemed to change over the years, as new management came in,” Ricker said, reflecting how the atmosphere shifted from “more personal” to “more business” during his time there. Ricker then retired in January 2003, mere months before the plant shut down which resulted in 450 employees getting laid off. Eventually, the closed plant would be purchased by Cliffs and would reopen as United Taconite, which celebrated 50 years of iron ore production at the Eveleth site in 2014. “I got involved with SOAR two years after I retired,” Ricker told the HDT. “A friend of mine mentioned they were having these

meetings, and I was the president of Local 6860 for approximately 12 years. For the 36 years I worked, at least 30 I was in some kind of office or leadership-type role.” And in less than two years, he would be president of his SOAR chapter. Ricker noted that there are two other groups nearby — in Aurora and in Marble — but the Eveleth chapter meets at 10 a.m. the first Wednesday of each month in the Local 6860 office. Twenty “regulars” attend most meetings, though that number tends to increase the closer it gets to an election. A little, anyway. For the most part, the group engages in casual debates with discussions focusing in on which candidates to get behind the closer they get to ballot casting time.

“We do have our own endorsing system,” Ricker said. “When you meet with the active [Steelworkers], you may have a majority vote and it may happen to be the candidate we support. Ninety-nine percent of the time it’s the same, but there are sometimes that it could be a different selection.” When that happens, he said, SOAR members will default to the active union members’ majority vote so they can remain unified.

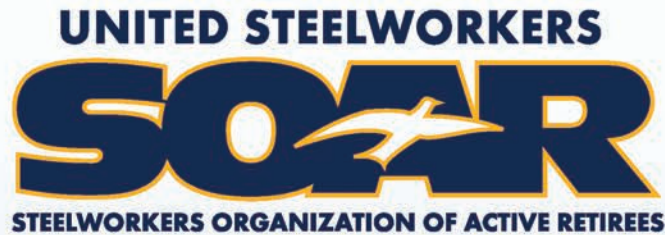
As for their activism on the local level, Ricker said that mainly comes down to making phone calls. “There aren’t too many who do that, but I guess I would be one of them,” he chuckled. “Otherwise, it’s just getting the word out and talking to people when attending different functions. Especially when the Steelworkers have a contract conflict — we’ll attend those meetings and hold a banner. We try to provide any assistance we can when they ask for it.”

Each July, the members from all three local SOAR chapters get together for a picnic. They take turns deciding who will host and extend invitations to local politicians. Their last event took place in Pengilly, where state Senator David Tomassoni and other politicians made appearances for the roughly 50 or so people in attendance, Ricker said. The group also walks in parades and shows up for their active Steelworkers when called upon. Mostly, however, Ricker insists their get togethers are of a casual nature — his favorite part being the conversations, which “never get too heated.”

“It’s more of a social club,” Ricker said, describing it as a place to chew about local news, politics and whatever is happening in their lives. “When there’s nothing going on politically, we bring up things that have happened in the past, joking around in a nice format.” They also use the hour-long meetings to acknowledge and honor any members who have passed away. “Overall, it’s been pretty peaceful. Everyone pretty much as their own beliefs, and they’re all welcome,” Ricker added.

As for membership fees, Ricker explained that the first year is usually paid by the Local the retiree is from, after that it’s \$12 for the member, and \$3 for the spouse annually. Anyone interested in joining the Eveleth chapter of SOAR can contact Ricker at 218-744-4668. “They’re entirely welcome to come and voice their opinion and join in the conversation and enjoy some coffee and donuts.”

Carrie Manner, Staff Writer at the Hibbing Daily Tribune



From: Julie Stein, Director
 Re: Suggested Motion to Pay First Year SOAR Dues

Respectfully, I call your attention to review the SOAR Resolution that was unanimously passed at the 2017 USW International Convention. **(Attached - Resolution No. 8)**

More specifically, please refer to the third resolve, which I've included below:

- (3) We will assist SOAR in its goal of expanding membership. **We will encourage local unions to support SOAR by providing first-year membership in SOAR to all retirees** and making it a priority to negotiate the check-off of SOAR membership dues.

Please be advised, that in support of Resolution 8, the USW Executive Board recommends that local unions sponsor a SOAR chapter and pay for the first year SOAR dues for retirees.

Below is a suggested motion to be introduced at your Local Union Meeting:

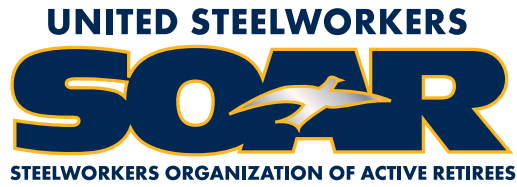
SUGGESTED MOTION TO PAY FIRST YEAR SOAR DUES

This motion can be introduced at the Local Union Meeting by the Local Union President or any member of the local in good-standing.

With the utmost respect and consideration for our local union's retirees, to honor those for their contribution to our local and to thank them for obtaining our improved wages, benefits and working conditions, I would like to introduce the following resolution:

Our Local Union shall pay the retired members' dues for their first year of membership in the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR).

2020



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