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STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

CONNECTION

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WELCOMES BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

USW and SOAR Welcome Biden Administration



USW International President Tom Conway issued the following statement in response to Joe Biden's inauguration:

“The USW and SOAR congratulate Joe Biden on January 20, 2021, becoming the 46th president of the United States and welcomes his vision and experience as our country faces unparalleled challenges.

“From containing the pandemic to revitalizing our flailing economy, it's essential that we have strong, steady leadership that prioritizes working people.

“The new administration is extremely qualified to address these crises. President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris understand that all workers deserve fair wages, safe working conditions and a secure retirement, and they've assembled a cabinet that has proven that they're eager to work to create good, family-sustaining jobs and healthy, vibrant communities.

“Central to the success of this revitalization effort is a clear focus on building back our country's crumbling infrastructure. Aggressive investment in a modernized infrastructure will not only help rebuild our domestic supply chains and create badly needed manufacturing jobs now, but will also ensure long-term sustainable economic recovery for generations to come.

“President Biden has long been a friend of our union and of all working people. The USW is excited to work with his administration as together we put our country back on the path toward health and widespread economic opportunity.”

Front Cover Photo Caption:

On January 20, 2021, Joseph R. Biden, Jr. is sworn in as the 46th President of the United States by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts with new first lady Dr. Jill Biden, by his side, holding their 127-year-old family Bible. -- Photo Credit: Derivative of Saul Loeb/Pool Photo via AP

Insert Cover Photo Caption:

In perhaps the most historic moment of the day, Kamala D. Harris is sworn in as the country's first female, first African American and first South Asian Vice President of the United States by the U.S. Supreme Court's first Hispanic Justice, Sonia Sotomayor. The second gentleman, Douglas Emhoff, by her side, holds the Bible. -- Photo Credit: Saul Loeb/Pool Photo via AP

“To heal, we must remember...”

-Joe Biden

Time Marches On



As time marches on and we move into 2021, I would like to remind everyone that time does not stand still, and we should take time to enjoy life and be grateful for what we have.

I must start with being grateful for my time with Harry Hynd, SOAR VP Emeritus, who recently passed. I was fortunate to have called him a friend and to work alongside him to fight for worker and retirees' rights. Harry never thought of himself as being too important to roll his sleeves up and lend a hand to anyone who needed it. Many people had their life improved by things that Harry did, and his love for our Union could not be equaled.

At times the nostalgia makes us believe things were better "back then." Well, maybe they were and maybe not. I did a little research and found the following examples. You be the judge if we were better off then or now.

In 1980 there were 7,405 fatalities in private industry; in 2019, there were 5,333 fatalities in private industry. The percentage of workers in the private sector who have only a defined-benefit pension plan is 4 percent, down from 60 percent in the early '80s. About 14 percent of companies offer a combination of both defined-benefit and 401k plans.

Only 85% of full-time private industry workers have access to employer-provided health coverage. 15% have no ability to contribute or purchase health care from their employer.

For 2021, Social Security tax is withheld from the first \$142,800 of earnings; in 1980, Social Security tax was withheld from the first \$25,900 of earnings. (In 1966, when I started in the mill, the tax was withheld from the first \$6,600 of earnings, and I, for one, did not earn \$6,600 that year.)

Social Security has provided cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increases to the benefit for many years. In 1980 recipients received a 14.3 percent COLA increase. In 2020 that COLA increase was 1.3 percent. The average Social Security benefit received in 1980 was \$321. In 2020 the average benefit received was \$1,504.

I do not know if things were better in the old days, but I do believe that I was better off belonging to a union and received union wages and benefits that have allowed me to enjoy my years in retirement.

Hopefully, soon we will be able to renew our activism and become more involved in issues that impact SOAR and our Union. Stay safe and healthy.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

SOARing Into a New Year!



Well, it is 2021, and like most Americans I had a significantly scaled-back holiday season compared to what I'm used to.

While the holidays were uncharacteristically low-key, that certainly doesn't mean nothing happened since our last publication.

We have surpassed the harrowing reality of more than 400,000 Americans dying from COVID-19. Fortunately, vaccinations are finally in circulation and millions of Americans have already been inoculated.

On January 5, Georgians voted in a highly-contested runoff election that flipped the United States Senate to a narrow pro-union majority after the victories of Jon Ossoff and Reverend Raphael Warnock. Both candidates were endorsed by the USW.

On January 7, President-elect Joe Biden announced he will nominate Marty Walsh to be the next Secretary of Labor. If appointed, Walsh would be the first union member in nearly 40 years to hold the position. Walsh is currently the Mayor of Boston, was a proud, card-carrying member of the Laborers International Union (LIUNA) and headed the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council.

After the announcement, Walsh said, "Working people, labor unions, and those fighting every day for their shot at the middle class are the backbone of our economy and of this country. As Secretary of Labor, I'll work just as hard for you as you do for your families and livelihoods. You have my word."

Lastly, Congress certified the results of the November 2020 election in spite of an unprecedented and violent attack by Trump-loyalists on the U.S. Capitol leaving at least six people dead. I don't know when I'll be able to put my sense of disbelief about it all into words. Right now, it just feels surreal and incomprehensible.

I believe it goes without saying that in the wake of the last four years America is ripe for change and healing. Countless Americans are suffering, and our only way out of this is together.

Much needs to be accomplished, and without delay. Stay tuned because there is going to be plenty of work ahead.

Wishing you all peace, safety and solidarity in the early months of this new year.

Julie Stein, SOAR Director

"There is more healing and pleasure in a good afternoon nap than in any amount of alcohol."

-Charlie

The Future Will Be Made in America



Joe Biden was sworn in as America's 46th President on January 20 and he has wasted little time in setting a positive course for American workers and those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Against a backdrop showcasing a logo of "The Future Will Be Made in America," Biden signed an Executive Order on Jan. 25 supporting manufacturers, businesses and workers to ensure that our nation's future is made in America by all of American workers.

The Executive Order fulfills President Biden's promise to make Buy American an actual real preference and close loopholes that allow companies to offshore production and jobs while still qualifying for domestic preferences.

President Biden's executive action will ensure that the federal government is investing taxpayer dollars in America's businesses, both small and large. These investments will help create well-paying, union jobs and build our economy back so that every American has an opportunity to become part of the middle class.

President Biden indicated he would appoint a senior leader in the Executive Office to oversee the government's made-in-America policy approach. A bold strategy to increase made-in-America spending requires leadership and accountability, not just rhetoric like we have heard in the past four years.

"We strongly support efforts to strengthen Buy America and other domestic content preference policies and we are pleased that the president is initiating a process in the first week of the administration to do so," said Alliance for American Manufacturing President Scott Paul. "It's essential to close loopholes, reduce waivers, broaden coverage to more federal spending and more manufactured products and strengthen origin standards for determining whether a product is produced in the United States.

"The law should mean what it says: an American product should be truly made in America."

Our United Steelworker brothers and sisters know this all too well and President Biden has sent a signal that he is serious about sourcing products made by American hands. He realizes the importance of steel to our economy and infrastructure and we believe we have a new President that considers what is best for both American business and its dedicated union workforce.

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

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

John F. Kennedy [Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961]

SOAR Chapter Connection

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Ole Charlie Sez:



It's activism but it sure does make a fellows glasses fog up and I never can determine if the person I'm speaking with is smiling or sticking their tongue out at me.

I'm sure you'll agree that it sure will be nice to be able to leave the darned thing at home.

Elaine Sez:

After four years of chaos and turmoil, plus a year of dealing with COVID-19, I am inspired by these words:

Hate no one, no matter how much they've wronged you.
Live humbly, no matter how wealthy you become.
Think positively, no matter how hard life is.
Give much, even if you've been given little.
Forgive all, especially yourself.
And never stop praying for the best for everyone.



Articles and Photos Requested

- The deadline for the next publication of the SOAR Chapter Connection newsletter is March 25 and items should be emailed to Charlie Averill at soar3@icloud.com
- The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be April 9, and articles should be emailed to the SOAR Director Julie Stein at jstein@usw.org

Photos should have a short caption included.
Thanks so much.

Charlie

New Administration Must Make up for Lost Time on Pandemic Policy

by Robert Roach, Jr.



The day that he was inaugurated, President Joe Biden signed 17 executive orders. Several of them were designed to undo some of the previous administration's policies so the nation can properly address the coronavirus pandemic, and they came not a moment too soon.

The stakes are high: COVID-19 has led to the largest single-year life expectancy decline in the country in 40 years. The coronavirus pandemic will shorten Americans' life expectancy at birth by 1.13 years, to 77.48 years, and seniors, Blacks and Latinos have been disproportionately affected.

Some of President Biden's advisers were appalled by the lack of a national vaccination plan by the previous administration and its failure to share crucial information about supplies and vaccine availability with the transition team.

There is widespread agreement that the president is correct when he warns that the pandemic will get worse before it gets better. That is why his first action was to impose a mask mandate on federal property and all interstate travel. The White House staff is expected to comply with far more strict safety precautions.

President Biden swiftly began fulfilling his promise to spearhead a coordinated federal response informed by science. He named Jeff Zients to oversee the White House's efforts to distribute vaccines and medical supplies and halted the United States' departure from the World Health Organization to help with the international response to the crisis.

These changes by the new Administration, along with workplace safety improvements, increased COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, and plans for the production of additional personal protective equipment, are a welcome relief. But the strategy requires Congress to approve additional funds to ensure it can work. The Senate needs to pass another round of stimulus relief quickly.

President Biden has asked Americans to commit to wearing masks for at least 100 days to help slow the spread of the pandemic. We must all do our part to support him in this effort.

It is well past time for a national strategy that acknowledges the severity of this pandemic and uses science and increased financial resources to tackle the problem appropriately.

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.



FRIDAY ALERT



Alliance for Retired Americans

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www.retiredamericans.org

Spanish version: www.alianzadejubilados.org

January 22, 2021

Hope for End to Coronavirus Pandemic Rises as Joe Biden and Kamala Harris Take Office

President Joe Biden immediately got to work on Inauguration Day, signing [17 executive actions](#) and then releasing a detailed plan for fighting the coronavirus pandemic. In a break from the previous Administration, his first action was to impose a mask mandate on federal property and all interstate travel.

President Biden also installed a coronavirus response coordinator to oversee the White House's efforts to distribute vaccines and medical supplies nationally and launched an effort to vaccinate 100 million Americans in 100 days. The United States has rejoined the World Health Organization and **Dr. Anthony Fauci** will be the nation's representative.



“It is well past time for a national strategy that acknowledges the severity of this pandemic and uses science and increased financial resources to tackle the problem appropriately,” said **Robert Roach, Jr.**, President of the Alliance. “The new administration is keenly aware of that, and we must all do our part to support them in this effort.”

Following the inauguration of Biden as President and **Kamala Harris** as Vice

President, Democrats sealed their control of the legislative branch of government by [swearing in three new senators](#). Georgia's **Raphael Warnock** and **Jon Ossoff** were sworn in following their runoff victories earlier this month, and **Alex Padilla**, who had been California's Secretary of State, took the seat of Vice President **Harris**. The Vice President will now cast any tie-breaking votes needed with a 50-50 Senate.

Continued on next page

Report Finds Pensions Make a Significant Contribution to the Economy, Not Just to Beneficiaries

A new report finds that economic gains attributable to private and public sector defined benefit pensions in the United States are substantial. Retiree spending of pension benefits in 2018 generated \$1.3 trillion in total economic output, supporting nearly seven million jobs across the nation. Pension spending also added nearly \$192 billion to government coffers at the federal, state and local levels.

[Pensionomics 2021: Measuring the Economic Impact of Defined Benefit Pension Expenditures](#), released January 6, 2021 by the **National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS)**, calculates the national economic impacts of U.S pension plans, as well as the impact of state and local plans on a state-by-state basis.

Because retirees with a pension receive a stable income every month, they can continue spending at the same level even if a recession hits. The same cannot be said for retirees relying heavily on savings, who may be fearful to spend their 401(k) funds during an economic downturn. This allows pensions to serve as economic stabilizers, similar to Social Security and unemployment insurance.

Pension spending also supports jobs and the local economy where retirees reside and spend their benefits. These purchases, combined with those of other retirees with pensions, create an economic ripple effect.

“Pension expenditures are especially vital to small or rural communities, where other steady sources of income may not be readily available if the local economy lacks diversity,” said **President Roach**.

Biden Fires Trump Appointee at National Labor Relations Board

President Biden [fired](#) the National Labor Relations Board’s general counsel, **Peter Robb**, on Wednesday evening after he refused to resign. The move comes as Biden begins to carry out a campaign pledge he made to be “the most pro-union president you’ve ever seen.” Robb was told he should step down by 5 p.m. on Inauguration Day or he would be fired. Throughout his tenure Robb took positions that were counter to the Board’s mission to defend workers’ rights to organize.

“In dismissing Mr. Robb on his first day in office, the president has shown he will defend the freedom of workers to form a union,” said Alliance Secretary-Treasurer **Joseph Peters, Jr.**

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.

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Tim Vaughan is a member of SOAR Chapter 30-18, made up primarily of retirees of USW Local's 12775 & 13796, and he is also a member of Detachment 1348 Michiana Marines of the Marine Corp League. Each year, these Marines, a Sailor, and other volunteers ring the Salvation Army Bell and work for Toys for Tots by collecting toys for needy children. The group has been doing this for 15 years, starting with just four people, and now has about 30. Because of the pandemic, they made an adjustment this year by giving all the collected toys to two different Salvation Armies and notified their clients where they could go to pick up their toys. Tim is the one kneeling in the front row.



**CELEBRATING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only
light can do that. Hate cannot drive out
hate; only love can do that.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

JANUARY 18, 2021



January 25, 2021

The PRO Act is Back!

It's time to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act.

On February 6, 2020, nearly a full year ago, [the House passed the Protecting the Right to Organize \(PRO\) Act on a bipartisan basis by a vote of 224-194](#). (<http://usw.to/3mx>) Unfortunately, the Senate did not bring the bill up for a vote in their chamber, so it did not move forward. It's now a new session of Congress, and it is a priority to move what we know is the most comprehensive pro-labor legislation since the establishment of the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

The PRO Act will:

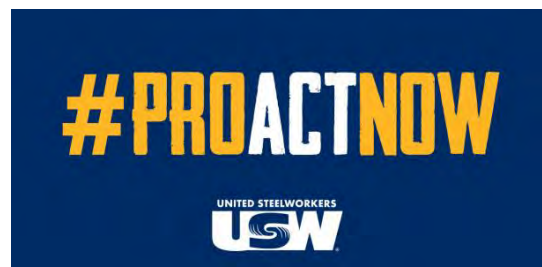
- Establish stronger and swifter remedies to stop employers from breaking the law.
- Make companies recognize contractors as part of the collective bargaining process so they can no longer continue to whittle down our membership by subcontracting.
- Ensure an employer reaches a first contract in a timely manner with a newly organized group of workers. No more dragging out first contracts.
- Reverse so-called Right to Work, regardless of state laws.
- Prohibit employers from forcing employees to attend anti-union meetings.
- And much more!

The Committee on Education and labor plan to reintroduce the PRO Act in the coming weeks and this critical legislation could get a vote in the U.S. House soon after. We need to urge our Representatives to become an original cosponsor of the bill so we can expand protections for workers to exercise their rights to join a union and bargain collectively for better wages and working conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that far too many workers do not have access to basic workplace safety protections, health care, or paid leave. Protecting the right to organize is therefore essential for ensuring a just recovery.

Please help us build support [by emailing \(http://usw.to/3my\)](http://usw.to/3my) and making a call to your Representative today.

Action Instructions:

- Click [HERE \(http://usw.to/3my\)](http://usw.to/3my) to send an email to your Representative.
- Dial our toll-free number to the U.S. House: 866-202-5409. You will be automatically routed to your Representative's office.
- Tell the office who you are and where you are from, and ask your Representative to be an original cosponsor of the PRO Act.



Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett Praised as Key Scientist Behind COVID-19 Vaccine



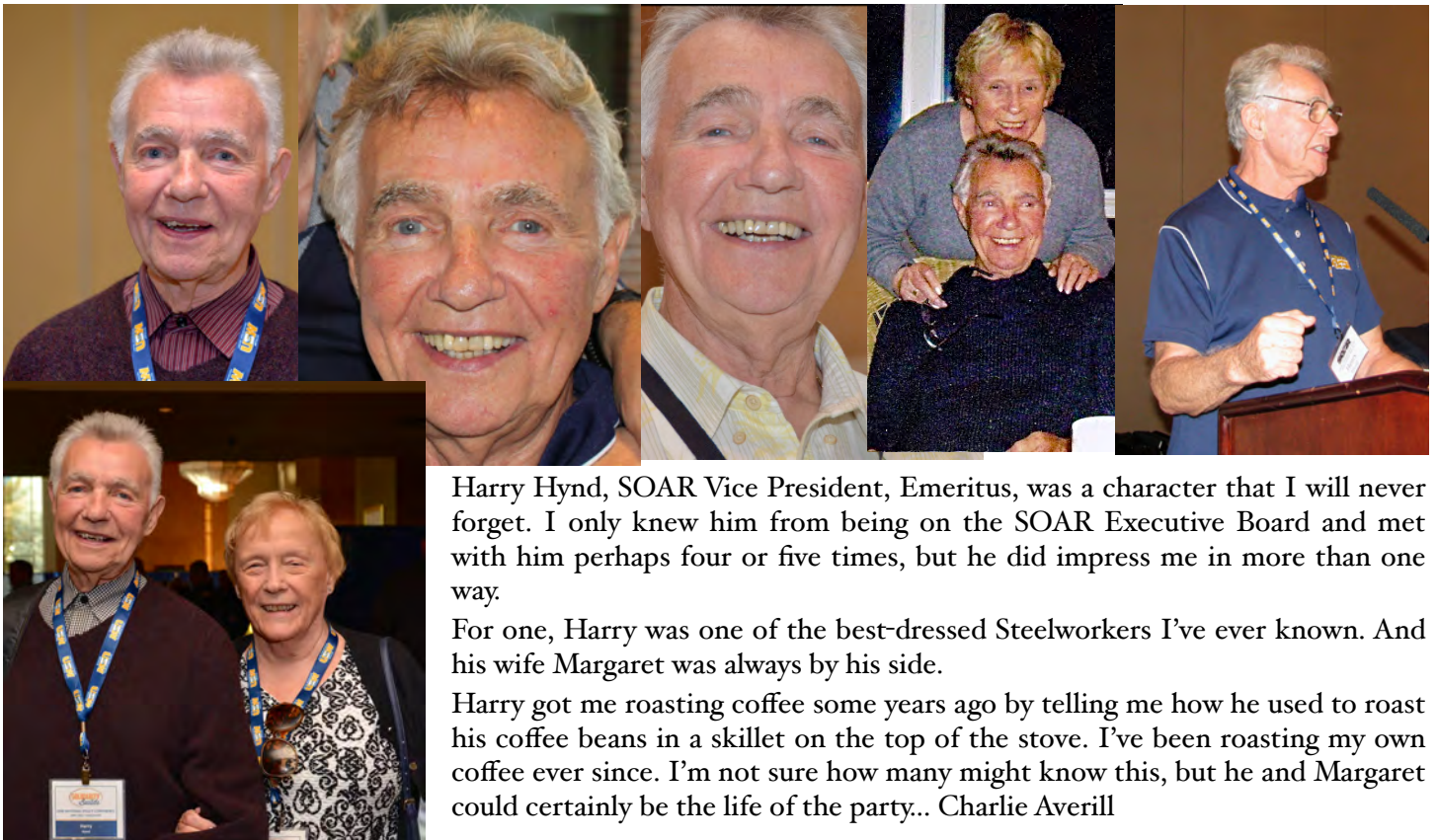
Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, a research fellow and scientific lead at the National Institute of Health, is on the frontlines working with a team of scientists, studying Moderna's vaccine, one of the two COVID-19 vaccines shown to be effective by more than 90 percent.

"The reason that I started to work in coronavirus was not to ever develop a vaccine, but really to have such a strong understanding of vaccine immune responses that we could potentially develop one," she said.

Note: As of the date of this printing there have been 429,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States.

Phone the Senior Flash Hotline for legislative updates at 1-800-998-0180 sponsored by National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

In Memoriam of Harry Hynd



Harry Hynd, SOAR Vice President, Emeritus, was a character that I will never forget. I only knew him from being on the SOAR Executive Board and met with him perhaps four or five times, but he did impress me in more than one way.

For one, Harry was one of the best-dressed Steelworkers I've ever known. And his wife Margaret was always by his side.

Harry got me roasting coffee some years ago by telling me how he used to roast his coffee beans in a skillet on the top of the stove. I've been roasting my own coffee ever since. I'm not sure how many might know this, but he and Margaret could certainly be the life of the party.. Charlie Averill

Ken Kovack on Social Security on a Birthday of Social Security



My name is Kenneth Kovack. I'm a retiree of the United Steelworkers of America, but I remain active with the Alliance for Retired Americans and also with the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees. Why do I like Social Security? I like it because it's stable. It's never-ending while you are alive, and you're eligible and qualified...and above all, something very few people realize is that when you retire, it's the only investment you make where your retirement is doubled because of your employer's contribution.

No Wall Street investment can give you a 100 percent return on the first day that you take out your stocks or bonds. Only Social Security does that, and you do it through your investment with your employer's participation.

It's a wonderful thing. Secondly, it's one of the best-administrated programs in the country, if not the world. Think about it...actually according to the Board of Trustees of Social Security, they are able to operate at about 1 to 1 1/2 percent of administration costs. They're the envy of private-sector employers in that regard, whether it's Wall Street giants or ordinary Main Street employers.

It's a wonderful thing when you can say the government can do something...it can do something right...it has done something right...and it's done it for seventy-five years, and that's why I'm glad to celebrate the birthday here with Alliance members at this time and place of my life.

Source: A Youtube video, August 26, 2010

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January 25, 2021

Pro-Worker Changes at the Department of Labor

The Biden-Harris administration has already made significant moves that will benefit working people throughout cabinet agencies. Some of the most significant changes involve the new slate of people in critical roles at the Department of Labor (DOL).

Steelworker Overseeing OSHA

Our union strongly supports President Joe Biden's selection of Jim Frederick to serve as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Frederick served as the assistant director and principal investigator for the USW's Health, Safety and Environment Department, retiring in 2019 after nearly three decades of service to our members.

During Frederick's time with the USW, he helped our union advance significant improvements to workplace safety, including better standards for workplace exposure to beryllium, silica and other dangers. Celebrating the announcement, USW International President Tom Conway said, "There is no stronger advocate for worker safety in this country than Jim Frederick. He brings to OSHA not just a deep commitment to safer workplaces for all Americans, but the expertise and experience to get the job done right."

The USW also hailed the selection of Joseph T. Hughes Jr. to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Pandemic and Emergency Response for OSHA. Hughes was previously the director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Worker Education and Training Program, which provided grants to unions, companies and nonprofits to train rank-and-file workers on occupational health and safety.

Click [HERE](#) for the USW's full statement on these appointments.

Biden's Labor Secretary Nominee a Proud Union Member

The labor movement is celebrating President Biden's nomination of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, to be the next Secretary of Labor. Walsh would be the first union card-carrying labor secretary in decades. In fact, since the position's creation in 1913, only seven of the 28 people holding it have been union members at some point in their lives.

In 1988, Walsh joined Laborers Local 223 at age 21. He worked his way up the ranks, served as president of his local union, and in 1997 he was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives where he served seven terms. In 2013, he ran for Mayor where he served two terms and was credited with creating more than 135,000 jobs and raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Upon the announcement of his nomination, Walsh said, “Working people, labor unions, and those fighting every day for their shot at the middle class are the backbone of our economy and of this country. As Secretary of Labor, I’ll work just as hard for you as you do for your families and livelihoods. You have my word.”

Walsh will be one of many nominees who will need to be confirmed by a majority vote in the U.S. Senate in the early days of the Biden administration. Read more about Biden’s picks for labor and commerce secretaries [HERE](#).

Why Biden’s DOL Picks Matter

The significance of having fellow union members overseeing the DOL and leading OSHA cannot be overstated. As head of the DOL, the labor secretary’s responsibilities include:

- Protecting the wages and safety of workers;
- Enforcing current laws and recommending new ones;
- Strengthening and promoting workplace safety and health standards;
- Overseeing the distribution of unemployment compensation benefits;
- Helping workers develop new skills, and assisting unique segments of the workforce, including veterans and workers with disabilities;
- Overseeing and responding to workforce trends and testifying before Congress;
Generating legislation and presenting it to Congress through the president.

Various agencies responsible for workers’ issues fall under the umbrella of the DOL including OSHA, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Bureau of International Labor Affairs. President Biden’s selection of union members and our allies to head key agencies like the DOL presents an opportunity for significant improvements to the laws and policies that impact our worksites, as well as how they are enforced.

Thoughts About OSHA by Charlie Averill

Reading this article and seeing that OSHA is about to get new leadership supported by our union and knowing that good things are bound to be taking place in the future makes me remember my working at a coal-fired electric generating station in Northern Indiana.

It had a positive-pressured boiler, which allowed every stinking leak to belch out noxious flue gas, which filled the station, making workers sick. The company didn’t seem to care one iota. Then one day, I noticed a big bright yellow poster tacked to the union bulletin board with bold print, “**Williams Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970**,” informing us that this law protected anyone complaining about unsafe work conditions from being disciplined by the company. Complaining about that flue gas was my first grievance with that company. It took some years, but the problem was fixed.

Thank You John and Elaine DeVaney

How nice it would be if the retired members of our SOAR Chapter had all worked in the same town or the same plant, but that's just not the way it is. Members of our two local unions live not just in Indiana but in nineteen other states making it impossible to meet with one another at a SOAR Chapter meeting.

We used to produce a newsletter and mailed it to all of our members, but we began that practice in 1998 when our chapter began, and since then, you can imagine how much postage has increased since then with our SOAR dues remaining the same. We just couldn't do that anymore.

We also used to have a retirees reunion, but of course, those who attend our monthly meetings are getting older and we live so far apart from one another that for the last several years, we have not had any of those.

But...we continue to help our communities by donating virtually all of our treasury to needy not for profit agencies who agree with our goals and principles.

I'm sure that wherever our members reside, they do their best to share experiences and help each other with Medicare questions as well as lookout for one another.

Below is such a group of members who, for the most part, worked in the Service Department at the company we worked at and have been meeting for many years. Many thanks to John DeVaney and Elaine DeVaney for giving so much time and effort in keeping these retirees together. They sure do deserve our thanks.

Charlie Averill, President SOAR Chapter 30-18



SOAR Chapter 30-18 consists primarily of retirees from USW Local's 12775 & 13796. Most retired from the gas and electric utility in Northern Indiana. Our chapter members live all over the state of Indiana and in 19 other states. Our monthly meetings are held at a centralized location in Plymouth, Indiana. This, of course, does not make it easy to keep our retirees together, but we do have groups around the state and in other states which get together to reminisce and keep in touch. One of those groups has been led by John and Elaine DeVaney for many years. This photo shows just one previous Christmas get-together. Last year they didn't meet due to the pandemic. Kudos to John and Elaine for all they've done over the years to help keep our retirees together. In the photo, John and Elaine are sitting in the front row, third and fourth from the right.