



SOAR ARA Affiliation



Our SOAR members, in New York State, have become the latest group to affiliate with the Alliance for Retired Americans. With District 4 SOAR members affiliating with the NY State Alliance, it brings the number of states we have now affiliated with to 22. This affiliation will allow us to gather and share information, as well as giving access to more people who share our issues and are willing to get involved in New York State. I want to thank District 4 Director John Shinn for his vision and willingness to help SOAR and also the other US District Directors who have paid the dues for SOAR Chapters in other Districts to allow SOAR to become more relevant in their States.

With the recent release of the proposed budget and the attack on seniors through Social Security and Medicare/Medicaid changes, it cannot be more clear that SOAR must do all it can to educate our members and the general public about the threat to ourselves and future retirees. Today, 61 million Americans receive Social Security benefits. Over 40 million retirees rely on these modest benefits for over half of their retirement income. Also, millions of seniors, who are in nursing homes, rely on Medicaid to pay for their care. We cannot allow our story to be told to only our members. We need to join groups like the ARA so that we can expand our numbers and grow our voice on these issues.

See your District Executive Board member for more information relating to a new or existing State affiliation with the ARA.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

It's important for SOAR Executive Board members to know if their District financially supports their state Alliance for Retired Americans. If you're not sure whether your state is affiliated, contact the SOAR office in Pittsburgh to find out. Many state ARA chapters provide an additional seat on their executive board of that chapter.

"If you keep swinging the bat, once in a while you hit the ball".

Bill Pienta

Afiliación SOAR ARA



Nuestros miembros de SOAR en el estado de Nueva York se han convertido en el último grupo en Afiliarse a Alliance de Retired Americans o Alianza para los americanos jubilados. Con los miembros de SOAR del Distrito 4 afiliados a la Alianza del estado de Nueva York, la cantidad de Estados con los que ahora estamos afiliados asciende a 22. Esta afiliación nos permitirá recopilar y compartir información, así como dar acceso a más personas que comparten los temas en los que la tierra está dispuesta a participar en el estado de Nueva York. Quiero agradecer al Director del Distrito 4, John Shinn por su visión y disposición de ayudar a SOAR y también a los otros Directores de los EE. UU. Que también pagaron las cuotas de los Capítulos de SOAR en otros Distritos para permitir que SOAR sea más relevante en sus estados.

Con los lanzamientos recientes del presupuesto propuesto y el ataque a los adultos mayores a través de los cambios del Seguro Social y Medicare / Medicaid, no puede ser más claro que SOAR debe hacer todo lo posible para educar a nuestros miembros y al público en general sobre la amenaza para nuestros y futuros jubilados. Hoy en día, 61 millones de estadounidenses o americanos reciben beneficios de la Seguridad Social. Más de 40 millones de jubilados dependen de estos beneficios modestos para más de la mitad de sus ingresos de jubilación. Además, millones de personas mayores que están en hogares de ancianos confían en Medicaid para pagar por su atención. No podemos permitir que nuestra historia sea contada solo a nuestros miembros. Necesitamos unirnos a grupos como ARA para poder expandir nuestros números y hacer crecer nuestra voz en estos temas. Consulte al miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva de su Distrito para obtener más información sobre una afiliación estatal nueva o existente con el ARA.

Bill Pienta, presidente de SOAR

Words Are Misleading

There's been a lot of talk lately by the media and others about capitalism and socialism; but, we shouldn't be distracted from what the issues in the upcoming elections should really be about and where the candidates stand on those issues that affect retirees.

Although Social Security may be a social insurance program, it works, and we all should be concerned about our earned benefits. Not only with Social Security; but, also with Medicare, the minimum wage, worker's rights, pension benefits, healthcare and a host of other issues. We have to try to abstain from referring to others as capitalists or socialists.

We need to pay attention to the fact that the current administration is proposing cuts of \$285 billion from Medicare, \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid and \$25 billion from Social Security. That's what's really important. Let's keep our eyes on those things.

Bill Gibbons, PACE Representative

Take Action to Protect Our Pensions



Because of a perfect storm of the Great Recession, changing industries, failed trade policies that have caused significant manufacturing job loss, and other factors outside of our control, the security of some multiemployer pension plans are at risk of going insolvent unless Congress takes action.

We know that a pension provides security to retirees after decades of hard work. A pension oftentimes makes it possible for us to care for an ill or aging spouse, or a disabled child or grandchild.

Congress has an opportunity to take swift action to

protect more than one million Americans who are at risk of losing their pensions. Our union supports H.R. 397, the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act. This legislation would extend long-term loans to financially troubled pension plans, granting security to pensioners.

We need to push our lawmakers to take action. Please write your Representative, and urge them to support H.R. 397. You can submit your letter using a tool we have made available on our union's Rapid Response website, which can be found at www.uswr.org or go to <http://usw.to/Pensions>

Julie Stein, SOAR Director



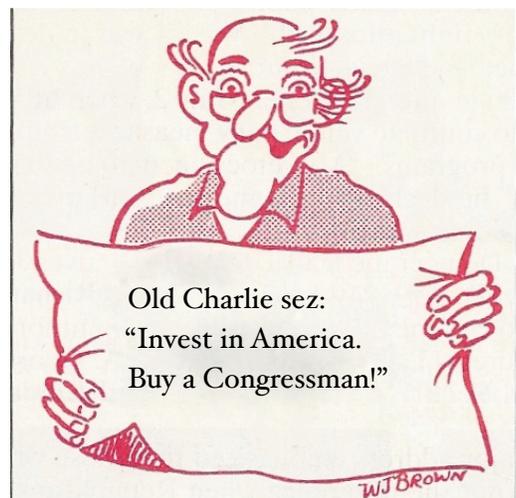
Granite City, IL. SOAR Chapter 7-34-2 members met with Illinois Congressman John Shimkus R-Collinsville asking his support for H.R. 397, the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act.

Left to Right are Doug May, Dennis Barker, Ron and Cynthia Overby and Chapter President, Jeff Rains.

"As for old age, embrace it and love it. It abounds with pleasure, if you know how to use it.

The gradually declining years are amongst the sweetest...and I maintain, that even where they have reached the extreme limit, they have their pleasure still".

-Seneca



Women's History Month



Much is being written about the historical role that women have played in our country. Women who were, and are famous. Many of the ladies in the labor movement who are being written about, are well known to union members and union retirees. But it's the women in our era that I'm most interested in writing about.

There are many women who, although are much appreciated by us all, are, at the same time, going about their everyday duties almost as unsung heroes. Not only do we have female leaders holding every position in the Steelworkers Union, SOAR Chapters, and on the SOAR Executive Board, including the Director of SOAR, but also, those who stand in support of the men in SOAR.

I am in awe when I think of how much my own wife has endured during my activities in my local union and with various jobs I've had over the past twenty years with SOAR. Elaine went with me picketing and to various demonstrations and rallies during a long eight-month strike. She has put up with my going to thousands of union meetings, conferences, and schools. Even today, she helps me in putting together our SOAR newsletter and stands by me in negotiating my travel to various union and SOAR events. That's right.....my good wife.

What in the world would I do without.....Elaine?

It's the ladies of today who are making history. They are the ones who deserve recognition for their support which sometimes is taken for granted.

Charlie Averill, SOAR Emeritus Member

"There's a direct relationship between the ballot box and the bread box, and what the union fights for and wins at the bargaining table can be taken away in the legislative halls."

-Walter Reuther

**"You got to get off the stage before somebody says, "You oughta get off the stage."
Source: Heard somebody say this but can't remember who.**

**SOAR Chapter
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Elaine Says...



Well, it's that time of year again, March Madness! I usually spend time sewing while the games are on tv. I started this quilt last March and finished it during football season! Charlie complains that I watch too much basketball. But, believe me, he spends ten times more hours watching MSNBC, CNN, Cops, Northwoods Law, etc., with no complaining from me!

McNeil Report

All SOAR Chapter presidents and SOAR Coordinators receive these issues of the SOAR Chapter Connection newsletter through the mail.

Many others have them emailed to them and many others download them from <https://www.usw.org/act/activism/soar/resources/soar-chapter-connection>

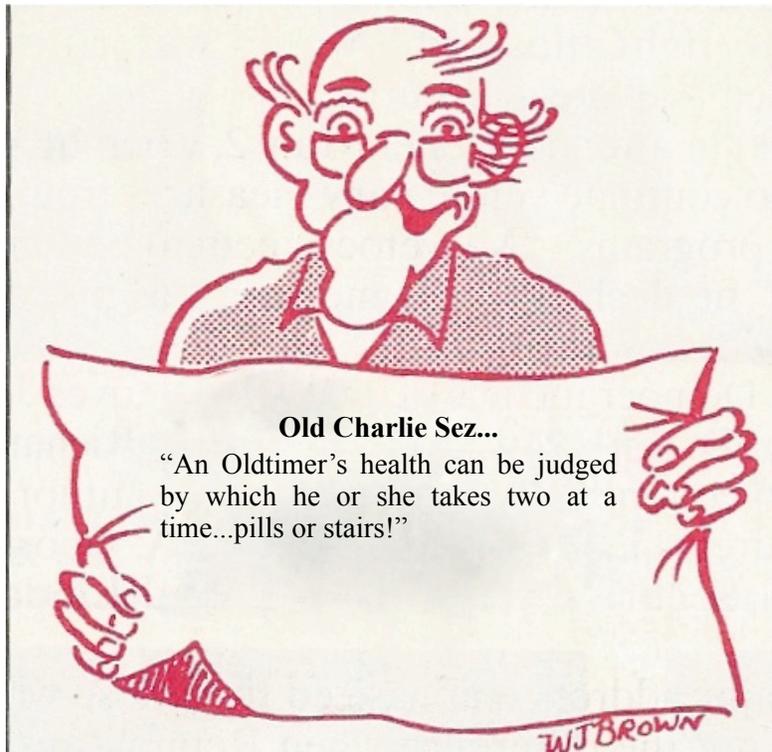
They are also passed out at many SOAR chapter meetings.

After reading them, how about passing them on to your neighbor or dropping one or more off at the Council on Aging or other suitable place. After all, we do have something to share and you just don't know who you might inspire to join us in some of our activities.

Thanks.
Charlie

FYI from Julie Stein, SOAR Director

Note: Chapter dues refunds will be mailed out during the last week in April.



New NAFTA Language Cannot be Approved in its Current Form

by Robert Roach, Jr.



Soon Congress will consider a revised NAFTA trade deal, also known as the USMCA. The administration and the governments of Canada and Mexico have negotiated the wording as it currently stands.

The revised deal would lock in high U.S. drug prices. It extends pharmaceutical corporations' monopoly rights, allowing them to block generic competition. Delaying the introduction of generic medicine means high prices for biologics, medicines that fight cancer and other critical diseases for even longer.

The agreement also ties the hands of future Congresses. It prevents any future changes that would lower drug prices for the drugs affected by this agreement.

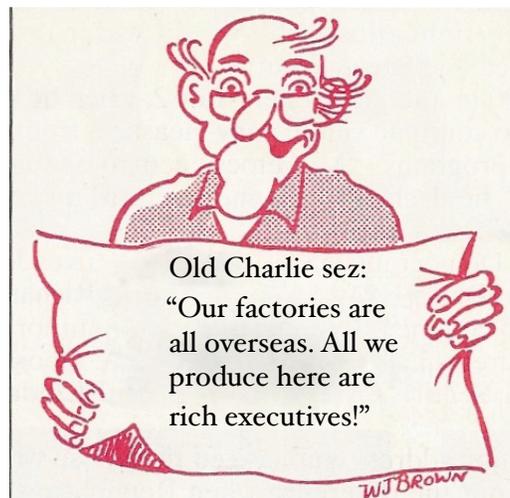
Mexico's Undersecretary for North America recently admitted this danger that the USMCA would make it "more difficult to get generic" medicines.

Americans pay the highest prescription drug prices in the world. One in five people say that they can't afford the cost of their prescribed medication. Many seniors have to choose between taking those medications and putting food on the table.

The last thing we need now is a trade deal that makes this problem worse. White House officials have not yet submitted the text for the bill, and Congress can make changes, or vote the agreement down.

We call on Congress to block these giveaways to Pharma and stand up for retirees and all consumers.

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.



What the Heck Should I do Today?

I'll bet you know someone who is lonely or someone who is dealing with Alzheimer's Disease and spends the day sitting in a lazy boy chair dozing off from boredom.

You might do yourself a big favor and go visit that person for a few minutes. We all experience loneliness so we know exactly what it's like. But believe me, after visiting someone who needs it, you'll be so glad you did.

Doctor Averill



Never Settle.



In 2011, then-District 7 SOAR Coordinator Gary Gaines presented the official charter to SOAR Chapter 7-PC-4. (Local 7-669 Retirees)

In the 1970's, Gary Gaines was working part-time at then-Granite City Steel and part-time as a police officer; but, when a friend recommended he put in for a USW-represented security officer job at the mill with better pay and benefits, Gary didn't hesitate.

He got the job, and through three changes in ownership of the mill, he found security in a union job in one of the first mills in the country to have a computerized hot strip. At the time, and still today, the USW represents the workers who operate the mill along with those in security.

After a few years on the job, Gary decided he wanted to run to be President of his local, USW 4063 in Granite City. He lost his first election by just one vote, but was successful on his second attempt. Additionally, he was

involved in his Central Labor Council, and served as a Peer Safety Trainer and Political Action Coordinator for his local union.

When he retired, in 2008, Gary got involved in his SOAR chapter (7-34-2 in Granite City, Illinois), and in 2011, then-District 7 Director Jim Robinson asked if he'd be willing to help establish a SOAR chapter for USW retirees from Honeywell in Metropolis, Illinois (Chapter 7-PC-4).

Steve Lech, who was the President of USW Local 7-669 at the time and within a year it was accomplished. "The enthusiasm of the core group was a pleasure. I just had to give them the "tools" and they took off," says Gaines looking back with pride.

"Our SOAR chapters are a great resource for our members and communities," Gaines asserts. "Jeff Rains (7-34-2 SOAR Chapter President) does a great job getting topics of interest at our monthly meetings. Our meeting this coming month is about pensions. He's brought in local elected officials and experts on Social Security and state-level issues. We've built a successful scholarship program that awarded five (5) \$2,000 scholarships to children or grandchildren of USW members, and we donate money to local food pantries and organizations that provide support to women who have left abusive relationships."

Following the decision by the USW International Executive Board to open up SOAR membership to "like-minded" retirees of the general public, Scott Marshall, (District 7 SOAR Board Member) has been encouraging SOAR members throughout the District to bring friends and family to their meetings.

"If we've learned anything over the last 30 years it should be that it is up to us to grow our union; and, that work can't end when we retire."

Kenneth Kovack, Legislative Director Retires



Buck Sargent Ken Kovack was discharged from the Army Air Corps in 1946. A year later he hired in at Inland Steel's 76-inch Hot-Strip Mill in East Chicago, Indiana. Soon after, he married Valerie, and they've been blessed with five children, nine grandchildren, and 12 great-grandchildren.

There's no doubt that Ken's forte was in organizing the organized. As a member of USWA Local 1010, he was soon made Chairman of the Occupational Safety and Health Committee, expanded the Local 1010 blood replacement program and started an on-and-off-the-job First Aid training program. He became active with the National Safety Council, the Hammond Safety Council and the Sub-District Council. Ken was also an Executive Board Member and Secretary-Treasurer of the Consumer Federation of America (headquartered in Washington, D.C.) for almost 21 years and he is now an Emeritus Board member of that organization. Ken also attended meetings of other national organizations and often lobbied members of Congress with their staff members.

While serving as the local's Recording Secretary, Ken was very active on the Legislative and Political Committee and was a member of the Local 1010 Community Services Committee during the Basic Steel Strike of 1959. Not long after that, he was selected by the Lake and Porter County Central Labor Union (now the Northwest Federation of Labor) to become the Labor Liaison for the East Chicago/Hammond United Way. Ken then began organizing a county-wide United Fund which is now known as the Lake Area United Way.

During his five United Way years, Ken organized fundraisers, an immunization program with the help of the Visiting Nurses agency in East Chicago, a health fair and a fundraiser to build a community recreation center. Ken then served one year as a Staff Representative representing nine Local Unions before being transferred to the Steelworkers Legislative Department in Washington D.C. Ken participated in two labor exchange programs. First, in Germany; and then, he toured Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Hong Kong.

He was given two international assignments. In 1990, he attended the Czechoslovakia jobs and migration conference and in early 1992, he was assigned to testify in hearings organized by Mexico's Labor Department in Mexico City. Several issues against NAFTA were related to Mexico's many unfair labor practices and environmental implementation policies.

Since his retirement in 1992, Ken has been active in SOAR, occupied his old office in the D.C. Legislative Department for several years and occasionally spoke at SOAR conferences. He remained active with the United Way annual campaigns for several years and served as an adviser to the United Way Of America national office in Virginia. Ken has testified before Congress, and wrote the Washington Wrap article for the SOAR magazine and legislative updates to our SOAR board members for distribution to SOAR Chapters nationwide.

Ken, at age 93, decided to retire as the Legislative Director of SOAR, a decision that was put off for several months.

Ken and Val remain as residents of Rockville, Maryland taking more time for each other and their family.

“A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame, a little less than his share of the credit”

-Arnold H. Glasgow

“Corporate Greed at its Worst”



Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) fought tooth and nail with General Motors president Mary Barra over the closing of the Lordstown, Ohio auto plant that ceased production on March 6. He knew that 1,400 permanent well-paying manufacturing jobs would be lost and would have devastating effects on the city that has been building cars for General Motors since 1966.

But Senator Brown was also aware of the ripple effect that would be caused by the loss of these jobs in the Youngstown area.

The Lordstown plant is just the first of five North American plants GM has scheduled for closing in the coming months. More jobs will be lost and thousands of jobs in the supply chain will also disappear.

The steel industry could be hit hard with United Steelworker slowdowns in the Mahoning Valley. It brings back memories of “Black Monday” when 41 years ago Youngstown Sheet and Tube closed its Campbell Works Mill laying off 5,000 steelworkers. During the next five years, almost 50,000 people would lose jobs in steel and related industries in the Youngstown area.

The main issue here is automobiles but Senator Brown, a champion of the steel industry, knows how hard the Lordstown plant closing will be on Ohio steelworkers.

Senator Brown described the closing as “shameful.” GM reaped a massive tax break from last year’s GOP tax bill but did not invest that money in American jobs and moved production to Mexico. Brown called the decision “corporate greed at its worst.”

Jeff Bonior, Staff Writer for the Alliance for American Manufacturing

Splice the Mainbrace



“Splice the mainbrace” is an order given aboard naval vessels to issue the crew with an alcoholic drink. Originally an order for one of the most difficult emergency repair jobs aboard a sailing ship, it became a euphemism for authorized celebratory drinking afterward, and then the name of an order to grant the crew an extra ration of rum or grog.

While serving on board a ship in the U.S. Navy, I only remember a good Captain announcing for the crew to “splice the mainbrace” three times. It was after the crew accomplished a difficult or dangerous task of some kind.

So, for all members of SOAR who have worked to establish justice for one and all in this wonderful country, please take a moment to “splice the mainbrace.”

Charlie Averill, SOAR Emeritus

Oral Health Care Remains an Important Missing Piece of Medicare

Oral health is an integral part of overall health. Medicare does not cover routine dental care, and the majority of people on Medicare have no dental coverage at all. According to a new Kaiser Family Foundation report, nearly 37 million Medicare beneficiaries lack dental insurance coverage and must pay out of pocket for dental care. The amount spent is significant; in 2016, 19 percent of Medicare beneficiaries who used dental services spent more than \$1,000 out-of-pocket on dental care.

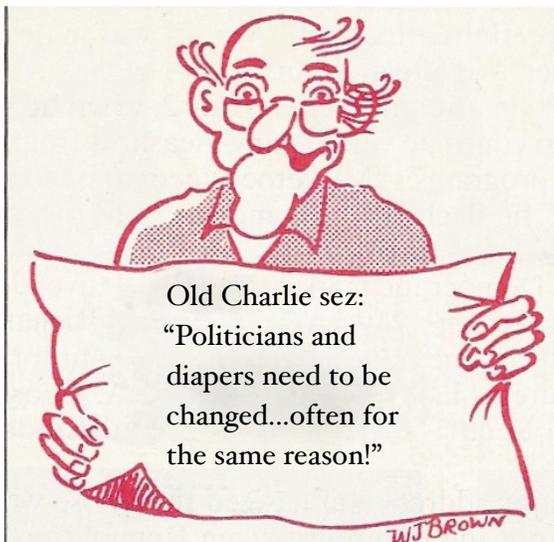
“Dental coverage should be included under Medicare. The Alliance is engaged with our allies on Capitol Hill to make that happen,” said Robert Roach, Jr., President of the Alliance. "When you combine having no dental benefits and paying too much for their prescription drugs, many seniors end up having to choose between food and medicine."

Untreated cavities and gum disease can exacerbate certain diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and lead to chronic pain, infections, and loss of teeth. Lack of routine dental care can also delay diagnosis of conditions, which can lead to potentially preventable complications, high-cost emergency room visits, and adverse outcomes.

Limited or no dental insurance coverage can result in relatively high out-of-pocket costs for some and foregone oral health care for others. Almost half of all Medicare beneficiaries did not have a dental visit within the past year (49%), with higher rates among those who are black (71%) or Hispanic (65%) and have low incomes (70%), as of 2016.

Source: March 15 Friday Alert - Alliance for Retired Americans

How You Can Help Social Security Protect Your Information



Protecting your information is an important part of Social Security’s mission. You work hard and make a conscious effort to save and plan for retirement. Unfortunately, fraud and scams are a part of our current reality. Scammers try to stay a step ahead of us, but our cyber-security programs help us protect the information entrusted to us. Despite the techniques we use to thwart scams, we can’t do it alone.

Social Security has a new nationwide Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign. This new PSA campaign addresses these telephone impersonation schemes in a series of video and audio ads. Watch for them.

Source: Social Security Matters

