



CONNECTION

WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER



HAPPY SUMMER!

STAY HEALTHY. STAY ACTIVE. STAY SAFE.



Celebrating Medicare and Social Security



Each year, in the early days of January, I'll flip through my wall calendar and mark down important dates I'm looking forward to in the coming year, including holidays, vacations, birthdays and anniversaries like my wedding (obviously!) and the day I became a USW member.

Since I retired in 2012, I've also gotten into the practice of marking down the anniversaries of Medicare (enacted in July of 1965) and Social Security (enacted in August of 1935) because, quite frankly, these two programs make it possible for me to celebrate all of these other milestones I'm marking on my calendar.

This is not an exaggeration. In 1935, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law, the average American was only expected to live 60 years. By 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson enacted Medicare, life expectancy had increased to 70 years. By 2018 the figure grew to 79 years.

Together, Social Security and Medicare were intended to address two significant needs among Americans who are vulnerable because of age or disability: 1) access to health care and 2) a monthly financial supplement intended to help Americans avoid poverty after they retire.

There are approximately 61 million Americans who access their health care through Medicare, and according to the recent Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS), 92 percent of recipients are satisfied with their overall care and access to health services through the program.

According to a recent report from AARP, sixty-four million Americans currently receive a monthly monetary supplement from Social Security, a program deemed necessary by 96 percent of Americans. The same report also found that a majority of Americans (56 percent) believe Social Security benefits have become even more critical during our post-pandemic economy (Source: www.socialsecurityworks.org).

For many Americans, the promise of Social Security and Medicare is the only thing that makes retirement possible. As a retiree, one thing I know is that it is nice to be retired. So, this July and August, I'll be celebrating the anniversaries of Medicare and Social Security. I hope you will as well.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

**Do it that very moment!
Don't put it off---don't wait.
There's no use in doing a kindness,
if you do it a day too late!
Kingsley**

A Pandemic and a Promise



One of the lesser-mentioned but not surprising outcomes of the COVID pandemic is the notable increase of early retirements. According to a recent report in the New York Times, retirements among Americans age 65 to 74 increased by nearly two percent since the beginning of the pandemic after experiencing a steady decline throughout the last 20 years.

Further, they reported that “the retirement rate rose during the pandemic for those 65 to 74, regardless of education level. But for those 55 to 64, the rate rose only for those without a college degree. In contrast, the retirement rate fell for 55 to 64-year-olds with a college degree.

While their survey did not explore why people retired, this finding leads me to believe that older blue-collar workers were more likely to consider retirement because they felt more exposed in their workplaces compared to white-collar workers who could work safely from home.

However, it is going to take time for us to fully understand how Steelworkers were impacted by the pandemic, and it is possible this trend will continue as workers and employers struggle to adjust to new workplace rules and a delicate economic recovery.

Regardless, the last 15 months have served to me as a reminder of the importance of our work to ensure the promise of a secure retirement for all workers. Our work to defend Medicare and Social Security is unending, and in the early months of 2021, we celebrated a massive victory when President Biden’s American Rescue Plan included the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act.

This concluded our decade-long fight to resolve the multiemployer pension crisis, and has had an immediate impact on more than 1.5 million workers, including 120,000 USW retirees.

We should never lose sight of the fact that our ability to retire often depends upon the decisions made by our lawmakers. So, THANK YOU for being a part of our work to ensure everyone’s right to a secure retirement.

Sources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/12/upshot/retirements-increased-pandemic.html>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/09/the-pandemic-drove-these-americans-into-early-retirement.html>

Julie Stein, SOAR Director

Discontentment makes rich men poor, while contentment makes poor men rich.

SOAR Chapter Connection

A bi-monthly publication of SOAR

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Phone: 866-208-4420

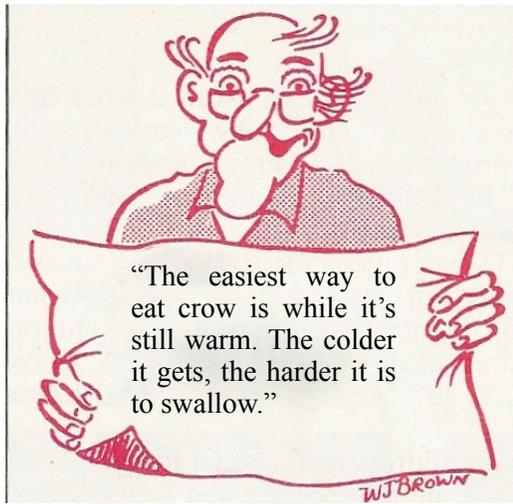
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Ole Charlie Sez:



Articles and Photos Requested

- The deadline for the next publication of the SOAR Chapter Connection newsletter is September 25. Email articles and photos to soar3@icloud.com
- The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be Oct 8, and articles should be emailed to the SOAR Director Julie Stein at jstein@usw.org

COVID-19 News

CINCINNATI (AP) — President Joe Biden expressed pointed frustration over the slowing COVID-19 vaccination rate in the U.S. and pleaded that it’s “gigantically important” for Americans to step up and get inoculated against the virus as it surges once again.

Biden, speaking on July 21 at a televised town hall in Cincinnati, said the public health crisis has turned largely into a plight of the unvaccinated as the spread of the Delta variant has led to a surge in infections around the country.

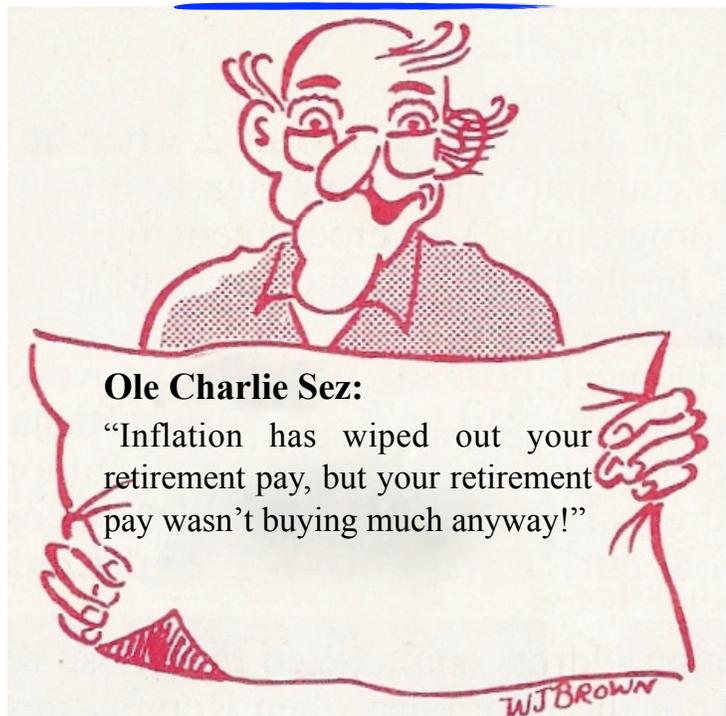
“We have a pandemic for those who haven’t gotten the vaccination — it’s that basic, that simple,” he said on the CNN town hall.

The president also expressed optimism that children under 12 will be approved for vaccination in the coming months. But he displayed exasperation that so many eligible Americans are still reluctant to get a shot.

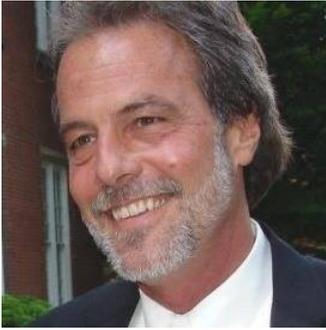
Source: AP News

NOTE

The next round of SOAR chapter dues refund checks will be mailed the third week of August. If you have any questions, please call the SOAR office at 1-866-208-4420.



Keep the Section 232 Tariffs in Place



The Alliance for American Manufacturing has reported on the Section 232 steel tariffs in previous issues of this newsletter, but we feel it is imperative to revisit this important trade action as it has ramifications for both USW members still working in the mills and our SOAR brothers and sisters.

Since the Section 232 tariffs were put into place in 2018, there has been a remarkable resurgence in the United States steel industry with many mills increasing production, hiring more workers and companies investing millions of dollars into their respective mills.

The Section 232 tariffs placed a 25 percent surcharge on all steel imported from other countries including the worst offenders of cheap steel dumping like China, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, Brazil and even the European Union.

This steel dumping caused thousands of American steelworkers to lose their jobs and was responsible for the closing or massive slowdown of many of our countries stalwart steel mills. This crisis threatened the long-term viability of the industry as well as U.S. national and economic security.

The Section 232 tariffs stabilized the industry as mills put their blast furnaces back online. Thousands of new jobs were created, and tens of billions of dollars have been invested in steel facilities.

But we are approaching a critical moment as many steel importers and foreign countries are lobbying the Biden administration to remove Section 232. This would be a major mistake as America would lose its bargaining leverage and global overcapacity of steel would surely return.

If the Section 232 tariffs were lifted now, before a multilateral, enforceable solution to the large overcapacity crisis was put into place, the U.S. market would once again be flooded with excess steel. This would be disastrous for America's steelworkers and companies and would certainly lead to layoffs and plant closures.

A strong and viable steel industry is not only important for our working USW members but also to our SOAR community. All USW members are in this together and a flourishing American steel industry helps support pensions and benefits that were so rightfully earned by our SOAR brothers and sisters.

Please take the time to call the White House at (202) 456-1111 and let President Joe Biden know that you support keeping these tariffs in place. The future of America's steel industry may just depend on it.

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

People forget how fast you did a job...but they remember how well you did it!

ALLIANCE FOR american manufacturing

Five Reasons Why We Must Stand Up for America's Steelworkers



For decades, U.S. steel mills have been shut down, one after another, leaving tens of thousands of workers without jobs and entire communities left with little hope for a better future.

But in 2018, "Section 232" trade action went into effect, which aimed to quell the steel crisis by placing a 25% tariff on some imports. And you know what? It worked.

Thousands of new steel jobs have been created in the years since, and tens of billions of dollars have been invested into America's steel facilities. But now, some importers and foreign countries are calling upon the Biden administration to remove Section 232, which would derail all of this progress.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing created a video explaining the 5 Reasons Why the U.S. Should Maintain Tariffs on Steel Imports. [Please watch the video](#) on YouTube and share it with your friends and family! (<https://youtu.be/2LcBtrWmbvU>)



The American steel industry is essential to our national and economic security. In addition, steel will play a critical role in rebuilding America's infrastructure and addressing climate change, as American-made steel is among the cleanest in the world (and steelmakers are working to further reduce emissions). And a steel industry job *is a good job*.

American steelworkers and companies can compete with anyone in the world, so long as there is a level-playing field. But right now, many steelmaking countries aren't playing by the rules. This is why it is so important to maintain Section 232 trade action. Until a global solution to the unresolved overcapacity crisis is reached, the United States simply must maintain Section 232 to defend America's steel industry and steelworkers.

Please take a moment to watch the video, and be sure to [check out our explainer page on how trade action saved America's steel industry](#).

<https://www.americanmanufacturing.org/section-232-is-working/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=63361c1c-07e4-45a8-a016-600e04026e9a>

Scott Paul is President of the Alliance for American Manufacturing

Legislation to Improve Long Term Care Will Help Seniors - and Their Caregivers

by Robert Roach, Jr.



Nearly 820,000 seniors and Americans with disabilities are on waiting lists so that they can receive the care they need at home, rather than in an institution. That makes little sense. Congress has taken steps to implement President Biden's plan to fix it.

The long waitlists are due to restrictions in how Medicaid dollars can be spent. But there is also a serious shortage of professional caregivers - workers that are underpaid and have few protections on the job. As a result families are left to cobble together solutions, which often involve family caregivers leaving the paid workforce to meet the needs of a relative.

The effect of family members being unable to work due to caregiving responsibilities is hurting our economy. It is estimated that more than a trillion dollars could be added to the Gross Domestic Product by 2030 if caregivers age 50-plus could stay in the workforce. It also hurts families' finances; 18% of caregivers report high financial strain, 30% have stopped saving and 25% have taken on more debt.

President Biden has made providing support for paid and unpaid caregivers a priority, and Sen. Bob Casey (PA), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, has introduced the Better Care Better Jobs Act (S. 2210) in the Senate to make those goals a reality. Rep. Debbie Dingell (MI) introduced the House companion bill (H.R. 1880).

The legislation not only strengthens and expands access to quality home care services but also supports the caregiving workforce. States would receive additional Medicaid funding to expand their home and community-based services (HCBS) to more people. The legislation provides funding to increase care workers' salaries, guaranteeing them a living wage, which reduces turnover and improves care.

We need the Better Care Better Jobs Act to become a law so that seniors can be financially independent, with the health care they need, and other family members do not have to put their own needs on hold to provide that care.

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.

He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not but rejoices for those which he has.



FRIDAY ALERT

Senate Democrats Announce Package to Expand Medicare to Include Dental, Hearing and Vision Benefits

On July 13, top Senate Democrats came to terms on a blueprint for a massive \$3.5 trillion budget resolution to pair with a proposed \$600 billion bipartisan physical infrastructure plan.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) confirmed that funding to add dental, vision, and hearing benefits to Medicare would be included in the resolution, addressing exclusions that have left millions of older Americans with dental problems and expensive bills for vision and hearing treatments. However, not every member of the Senate Democratic Caucus has endorsed the deal and full details of the plan have not been released.

With Medicare’s anniversary coming up on July 30, the addition of dental, vision, and hearing benefits would represent a substantial modernization and improvement of the program at an opportune time. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra said that the Biden administration is in support of this and any improvement Congress is willing to make to Medicare.

"While Medicare has been crucial to providing seniors with guaranteed health coverage for nearly 56 years, there are pieces that have been missing and must be added to provide comprehensive care," said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Older Americans look forward to building on the success Medicare has had over those 56 years and not having to worry that getting a dental check-up, a hearing aid, or a new eyeglasses prescription will lead to financial ruin. "He added, "Those benefits should be paid for by allowing Medicare to negotiate the lower drug prices that seniors so desperately need."

Source: Alliance for Retired Americans Friday Alert July 16, 2021



Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is more important than ever. The [Delta variant](#), a new variant of the virus now in the U.S., is more easily spread and can cause severe disease.

If you're fully vaccinated, that's great. The COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against this variant. But if you're unvaccinated, you're at risk.

Happy Birthday Dan McNeil, Emeritus Member



Dan McNeil began his work career at the STELCO Swansea Works in 1951.

Dan was a member of the Toronto Area Council and is a long-time member of the Toronto Labour Council.

He retired in 1984, and In 1985 he was asked by Lynn Williams to join SOAR to represent District 6 on the International Executive Board where he still serves.

In the late 80's, District 6 asked Dan to join the Ontario Federation of union retirees and he's still a member of the Council.

In the early 90's, Dan was asked to represent the Steelworkers in the formation of the CLC retirement organization, later called "The Congress of Union Retirees" (CURC) which is similar to the Alliance for Retired Americans in the United States. In 2007 he became President and now holds the position of Immediate Past President.

Dan is now an Emeritus Member of SOAR and is the longest-serving SOAR Board member, from the original Board.

Dan used to give us a good joke for our Connection newsletter. Other than the blond jokes and those considered to be a little risqué, we were able to publish most of them. His article was called the McNeil Report.

Dan's wife, Ruth was really the one who made Dan McNeil famous. Right by his side all the way, Ruth was always keeping him in line like most good spouses do.

Dan will soon be celebrating his 97th birthday.

There is no moment like the present. The man who will not execute his resolutions when they are fresh upon him can have no hope from them afterwards.

Edgeworth

SOAR REPORT from District 1 (Ohio)

Over the past year, fighting this pandemic has been a difficult time, especially for retirees. We lost members of our SOAR family, and many USW retirees have been hit hard by this deadly disease. We wish all these families our condolences, and encourage all of our folks to continue, heroically, to close ranks, and do everything possible to protect each other and we can do that by getting vaccinated.

We must understand who our friends and allies are, and recognize those who say they’re with us, but by their actions show they don’t care about our well-being! We must elect officials that care about the livelihood of their constituents. Those that ignore the pandemic ignore public safety and the lives of our people, while also urging workers to be forced to return to dangerous jobs without needed protections.

Ohio SOAR is waking up, beginning to get our legs under us, and none too soon. It is more important than ever to build our movement to fight for retiree rights. We are partnering with the Alliance for Retired Americans to defend our hard-won benefits and push to expand Social Security.

This month our union, alongside other unions, families, and friends, are mobilizing to push Congress to pass the Protect Our Right to Organize (PRO) Act. This long-overdue legislation would reestablish and strengthen our right to organize without illegal corporate influence on workers. It will include \$3.5 trillion to put people to work rebuilding infrastructure and reestablish the power organized labor had when our industry was fully unionized. Let your elected representatives know we are active, united, and we REMEMBER! (And we VOTE)! See the next two pages for information about the PRO Act.

SOAR Ohio has scheduled a SOAR sponsored “Leadership Meeting/Luncheon” for all Ohio SOAR Chapters at the Golden Corral, 8696 Brookpark Road, Cleveland, Ohio, on Monday, September 13, 2021, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. RSVP by calling 740-774-1043. Please join us! Let us know you’ll be there and how you are all doing!

Jeffrey DeLong – District 1 Executive Board Member

Bruce Bostick – District 1 Contributing Writer/Editor



Alliance
for Retired
Americans®

POSITION PAPER

APRIL 2021



PRO Act

The Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act, introduced by Representative Bobby Scott (VA) as H.R. 842, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on March 9, 2021. Senator Patty Murray (WA) introduced the companion bill, S. 420, in the U.S. Senate on February 24, 2021. This landmark legislation would remove needless barriers for workers to form a union, while protecting workers and strengthening retirement security.

A strong and growing labor movement is good for workers and for all Americans. The labor movement has been, and continues to be, the leading force in the fight to strengthen Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, ensuring a measure of retirement security for all Americans. Our country, our democracy and our people benefit when workers have a strong voice at work and are able to join together to build a more secure future for their families and their communities.

Alliance for Retired Americans Position

The Alliance for Retired Americans endorses the PRO Act and urges all senators and members of Congress to co-sponsor the PRO Act and work toward its enactment.

Union workers have higher wages and can negotiate for benefits such as health care, pensions and employer contributions to retirement plans, which leads to higher income in retirement. Union jobs often come with negotiated defined benefit pensions, which ensure lifelong retirement income.

What the PRO Act Does:

Protects and Expands the Freedom to Organize

The PRO Act streamlines the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election process so workers can petition to form a union and get a timely vote. It prohibits employer interference of any sort, including delaying the vote or forcing workers to attend mandatory anti-union meetings as a condition of continued employment. Should an employer break the law or interfere with a fair election, the PRO Act mandates that the NLRB require the employer to bargain with the union if it had the support of a majority of workers prior to the election. The PRO Act also requires employers to disclose the names and payments they make to outside third-party union-busters that they hire to campaign against the union.

Enables More Workers to Organize and Bargain for their Rights

When there is no union in a workplace, employers often misclassify workers as independent contractors or supervisors in order to deprive them of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA). The PRO Act cracks down on misclassification by employers, extending NLRA protections to more workers. This is an extremely important provision given the rise in contracting jobs and workers who have jobs with more than one employer.

Strengthens Penalties against Employers who Violate the NLRA

The PRO Act strengthens labor laws by instituting civil penalties for violations of the NLRA, including for corporate officers and directors. It also provides compensatory damages to workers. The bill allows workers to go to court to seek relief and provides job and paycheck protections while their case is going through the system.

Ensures First Contract Agreements when Workers Choose to Organize

While existing law requires that employers bargain in good faith when workers have chosen to join a union, the employer often drags out the bargaining process to avoid reaching a contract, discouraging workers in the process. The PRO Act establishes a process to reach a first contract, including the use of mediation and, if necessary, binding arbitration to reach a contract.

Protects the Right to Strike and Protest

Currently, if workers strike, employers can permanently replace them. The courts have also sided with employers and prohibited workers from boycotting secondary companies doing business with their employer. The PRO Act repeals the prohibition on secondary boycotts and prohibits employers from permanently replacing strikers with new workers.

**True friends visit us in prosperity only when invited,
but in adversity they come without invitation.**
Theophrastus