From the Director’s Desk
End Obama Care but leave the Affordable Care Act Alone!

Weird title right, I’m hoping most people who read this column understand that Obama Care is the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Because, if you had read my emails and taken the phone calls I have received, it’s clear that there is a large number of folks out there that just don’t get it!

This is especially troubling since the Senate leadership has taken the first steps to repealing the Affordable Care Act. Repeal of this vitally important law will eliminate health care for over 30 million Americans who depend on it, not to mention 57 million seniors and disabled persons, who benefit every day from the ACA’s improvements to Medicare.

Prior to the (ACA), Medicare allowed for a one-time free check-up when seniors first joined the Medicare program. The ACA has provided free annual wellness exams for seniors since 2011.

Thanks to the ACA, Medicare beneficiaries have not been required to pay for any portion of Medicare-covered preventive services recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and rated A or B. The ACA also waived the Medicare deductible for colorectal cancer screening tests.

Prior to the ACA, when beneficiaries fell into the doughnut hole, they had to pay 100% of the costs of their prescription medications. The ACA provides drug discounts and subsidies to help fill in the doughnut hole. In 2017, the doughnut hole will be between $3700 and $4950. Under the ACA, seniors and disabled beneficiaries who fall in the Part D drug doughnut hole will receive a 60% discount on the price of their brand name drugs and a 49% subsidy toward the purchase of generic drugs. By 2020, the doughnut hole gap will be closed. However, if the ACA is repealed, seniors will lose these discounts and subsidies.

The ACA prohibits insurance companies from discriminating against people with pre-existing conditions.

Prior to the ACA, insurers often charged seniors five times more than they charged a young person for their health care. The ACA limited what insurers could charge to no more than three times what they charge a young individual for comparable coverage.

I understand that people are fed up with big government. I get that, but not all government programs are bad! The ACA is one of the good ones! Let’s make informed decisions and not get caught up in divisive rhetoric. However, it seems to me that a large percentage of American citizens are hell bent to “throw the baby out with the bath water” in their quest for smaller government.

Jim Centner, SOAR Director

We always have time for the things we put first
Report from the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM)

President Donald Trump has promised to “Make America Great Again” by ending United States participation in “unfair” free trade agreements. He has formally withdrawn the U.S. from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and wants to restructure the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) or abolish it altogether.

Along with this shift in U.S. trade policy – a radical maneuver to Republican free-traders in Congress – Trump has promised to bring manufacturing back to American shores creating millions of jobs in the process.

It’s been many decades since manufacturing and trade have played such an important role in a presidential election. Now that Trump occupies the Oval Office, it is the duty of America’s hard-working men and women to hold him accountable to his campaign promises.

Former President Obama vowed to create one million new manufacturing jobs during his second term but fell woefully short with a gain of only 315,000 jobs in the sector during his last four years in office.

But Obama did lay the groundwork for America’s manufacturing workers of the future. He has made available public training, community college programs and created manufacturing hubs in cities throughout the country that will connect young, trained workers with companies in search of skilled labor in advanced manufacturing.

In order to restore and create new well-paying, benefit friendly manufacturing jobs, Trump must continue to build on Obama’s efforts. Trump realizes that American companies must remain strong and be able to compete with foreign competition on a level playing field.

And Trump believes - as does AAM - that a major part of that equation is “Buy American.”

During the presidential campaign, in the weeks after the election and now ensconced in the White House, Trump has continually reiterated his message: “Buy American and hire American.”

As for steelworkers, Trump told a crowd in Monessen, Penn. in July, “We are going to put American-produced steel back into the backbone of our country. This alone will create massive number of jobs.”

As unpredictable as Trump can be, he seems to be convinced that America’s dwindling manufacturing sector is a major cause of our economic malaise. He has strongly voiced support for American manufacturing, infrastructure investments, innovation and national security.

But President Trump can’t do it alone because changes made by executive order are limited. He will need the help of a reluctant Congress. We doubt he can persuade the staunchest of market-driven, free trade agreement advocates by way of his Twitter account.

So this is why every USW member and other hard-working factory workers must ensure their voices are heard. Congress must conclude that the middle-class workforce understands the need to make products in America. With fair trade deals and the purchasing power of American workers, we can rebuild lives, families, cities and make America even greater.

To send your personal message to your representatives in Congress, please visit our website at www.americanmanufacturing.org. At the top of the homepage there is a box titled “Back Buy America.” Click on the Take Action box to fill out a short form and a letter will be sent to your U.S. Senators and your district’s member of the U.S. House of Representatives. You can also contact their local offices by telephone or call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121. Ask for your representative by name and you will be connected to their Washington, D.C. office.

Jeff Bonior, AAM staff writer, Alliance for American Manufacturing
Billy’s Banter

SOAR recently held their elections for the leaders of the SOAR chapters. I would like to congratulate those of you that have been elected or re-elected to positions of leadership and also to those who choose to be actively involved in our activities. For those of you who have decided not to continue in a leadership role or were not successful in your run for re-election, I would like to thank you for your past involvement and ask you to continue to be involved in the Organization in any way you can. We must continue our efforts to expand SOAR and look for ways in which we can form coalitions with other likeminded organizations, to increase the potential for success on promoting issues important to our members.

There may be times when we as leaders forget the guiding principles under which we were formed. I think this may be an appropriate to remind all of us of the purpose of SOAR and where we should focus our energies. I frequently look at the back of my SOAR membership card to remind me and keep me focused. It states as follows;

SOAR is an organization directly affiliated with the USW. Its purpose is threefold:

- to better the communities in which you live
- to advance the policies of the USW
- to engage in political and legislative action

I would also like to remind everyone about the rapidly approaching International SOAR Conference that will take place in April, in Las Vegas. Please make sure you submit your delegate information and any resolutions you want considered in a timely fashion. We do not have many opportunities to come together as a group and this event offers the best option for us, as a group, to share our successes and the stories about our adventures. See you there.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

District 6-Major win in contract!

Our sisters and brothers from USW Local 13292, working at Your Credit Union in Cornwall and Ottawa, just scored a major win in their new contract. Workers experiencing domestic violence can take up to 10 paid days of leave.

This is huge! Paid domestic violence leave provisions are still making their way through the Ontario legislature, so our union prioritizing this at the bargaining table is a big deal. Go to our Facebook page and send a message of congratulations to USW Local 13292: usw.to/z7

Kudos to the Women of Steel Committees who are making anti-violence presentations at their workplaces. For more information, please visit: usw.ca/anti-violence.

Photo is of Marty Warren, District 6 Director
The McNeil Report

• At an art auction in Edinburgh, Scotland, a wealthy American lost his wallet containing £20,000 ($45,000). He announced to the gathering that he would give a reward of £200 to the person who found it........From the back of the hall a Scottish voice shouted, “I’ll give £250.”

• A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.

• I don't approve of political jokes...I've seen too many of them get elected.

• America is a country which produces citizens who will cross the ocean to fight for democracy but won't cross the street to vote.

• Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.

• Somewhere an elderly lady reads a book on how to use the internet, while a young boy googles “how to read a book”.

• District and Chapter articles and photos should be emailed to the SOAR Director, Jim Centner at the address at the left.

Elaine Sez...

On January 21, I was so proud to be an American and a woman. The Women's March was held that day in cities all over the USA and the world. Millions of women, as well as men and children, took to the streets to let their voices be heard. The issues were as varied as the wonderful hand made signs. It was dignified, classy, and not one incident of violence or arrest. I would have liked to have been there with my sign in support of public schools and women's health issues. It was awesome! And, don't mess with the ladies!

Old Charlie Sez...

Why do Americans choose from just two people to run for president and 50 for Miss America?
USW Commends Trump Decision to Withdraw from the TPP; Anticipates Further Action
Jan 23,2017

(Pittsburgh) -- United Steelworkers (USW) International President Leo W. Gerard issued the following statement today after President Trump announced he would permanently withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

“The President's action today rewards the long and hard-fought efforts of USW members and workers across the country to keep the TPP from coming to a vote.

“Today's action draws a line in the sand that hopefully is just the start of President Trump’s promised, pro-worker, pro-income-growth agenda that prioritizes revitalizing manufacturing. We look forward to working with the current administration on overcapacity in steel, aluminum, and on currency manipulation and other unfair trade practices.

“This should be just the beginning of a new approach on trade. We want to work with President Trump and his administration to do much more. NAFTA must be renegotiated to reclaim jobs lost to Mexico. Trade deals ranging from China PNTR to KORUS must be replaced or repealed. Ongoing negotiations on the Environmental Goods Agreement, the TTIP, the TISA and China BIT all must end.

“But negotiations and agreements are only part of the problem. Enforcing existing rules demands a much higher priority. Dumping, subsidies, evasion, and so many other unfair trade practices are sapping America’s industrial strength and undermining the lives and livelihoods of countless workers.

“It is important to develop the right trade policies as they create the rules that link us to the global economy. In the coming days, we will look for more details on what policies the new President intends to pursue. Rebuilding our nation's manufacturing sector and revitalizing broadly shared prosperity must be at the core of a new approach on trade.”

Wayne Ranick, USW Communications Director

What Is The USO?

For over 75 years, the USO has been the nation’s leading organization to serve the men and women in the U.S. military, and their families, throughout their time in uniform. From the moment they join, through their assignments and deployments, and as they transition back to their communities, the USO is always by their side.

Today’s USO continuously adapts to the needs of our men and women in uniform and their families, so they can focus on their very important mission. They operate USO centers at or near military installations across the United States and throughout the world, including in combat zones, and even un-staffed USO service sites in places too dangerous for anyone but combat troops to occupy.

The USO is not part of the federal government but relies on the generosity of individuals, organizations and corporations to support its activities, and is powered by a family of volunteers to accomplish their mission of connection.

Source: Taken from the USO website

Note: My own experience was the entertainment the USO provided me in Chicago when I was in the Navy. It’s a great organization and worthy of all the support they can get. —Charlie Averill, SOAR Sec/Treas
Think About It

If the Democrats had clearly and aggressively supported the cause of workers, those who are active and retired long before and during the election, such as on trade and income inequality, I believe the outcome of the Presidential election would have been different.

Donald Trump, in effect, took the message of labor and progressives, regarding trade, wages and the status of workers as a major campaign message that I believe resonated with workers that facilitated his Electoral College win. It is ironic, that his conduct regarding these issues before the election was actually contrary to this message and included statements that workers make too much money and opposed an increase in the minimum wage. The Democrats and all of our elected officials hopefully have learned a lesson.

Hopefully, President Trump, will live up to the promises he made regarding, Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. We must be prepared to hold him to these promises. It appears that he has taken action on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), which is welcomed. However, I have great concerns regarding his cabinet appointments. It appears that many of these appointees hold positions, have opinions and have engaged in past conduct that has been contrary to the function of the agency they will lead.

For example, Tom Price who has been nominated to head the Health and Human Services Department holds many opinions that are contrary to the function of this agency, including the elimination of the Affordable Care Act without a clear replacement that will cost 20 million people to lose their health care coverage and the loss of benefits for those on Medicare. The nominee for the Secretary of Labor, Andrew Puzder, who is the CEO of a fast food restaurant chain, has a record that suggests he’d create a Department against Labor. And the nominee for Secretary of Education has supported positions that could have an adverse effect on public education.

Also, beware of claims and arguments to reduce regulations. I believe some of this could just be code words to attack workers’ rights, environmental protections, and safety and health regulations.

Bill Gibbons, PACE Representative

SOAR International Conference Scheduled

The SOAR International Conference is scheduled for April 7-8, 2017, at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. Congratulations to the delegates who will be attending this important conference. Prepare yourselves to do the work necessary to keep our SOAR organization strong.

The consensus after the election is that 100% of Americans think 50% of Americans have lost their minds.
New President’s Rocky Beginning  
by Robert Roach, Jr.

A President must choose wisely when filling cabinet positions. President Trump repeatedly assured voters that he would not cut Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid during his campaign, but his nominees to lead the Office of Management and Budget, Rep. Mick Mulvaney, and the Department of Health and Human Services, Rep. Tom Price, seem to have other ideas.

The nominees’ confirmation hearings followed the national Women’s March, which mobilized millions worldwide demanding equality and the right to healthcare for all Americans. Mulvaney declared his plan to advocate raising the Social Security retirement age to 70 and making draconian cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, as he has throughout his tenure in Congress. Rep. Price refused to commit to working on reducing prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries and remains an advocate for both raising the eligibility age for Medicare and privatizing it. Also concerning is Rep. Price making personal trades and investments in the very industries he was supposed to oversee while in Congress.

Alliance members were a strong voice at marches, placing a spotlight on key retirement issues including Social Security and healthcare. We organized thousands of people to call the White House to demand accountability from the new President, only to have the White House disable its public line. But we refuse to be silenced. The power of the people has been on display since the inauguration and we must work diligently to raise our voices in opposition to the destructive intentions of the new cabinet.

Robert Roach, Jr. is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

A Word To The Wise About Social Media

Social media is an effective way to quickly spread our message widely, but it also poses certain risks. Because it is an easy way to communicate, we run the risk of being thoughtless or careless with our postings. Sometimes we get lazy and re-post someone else’s content without researching whether the information is true. And, sometimes, we get so mad or excited about something that we post it before we take a moment to think about it.

Baffled!

That’s the only good way I can think of to describe what I think of President Donald Trump. His wild antics and demeanor during the presidential campaign and the way he treats and speaks to and about people is so outrageous that I can’t for the life of me understand how someone who is so narcissistic could have so many followers.

At the same time, however, some of what he is purposing does make sense to me. Like promising not to make cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, making and buying American products, bringing back manufacturing and the like. But then, at the same time he has nominated cabinet Secretaries that don’t seem to have those same values. And now, he wants to reinstitute the concept of torture.

I never did watch the television program that made him so famous. Maybe I would better understand him if I had.

Charlie Averill, SOAR Sec/Treas
Older And Living Alone, The Rise Of Elder Orphans

Elder orphans, older adults living alone, should be among the chief concerns of health policy gurus and, for that matter, presidential candidates. They are single, divorced or widowed, and without children, or with children living far away. These older isolated individuals need both personal resources and community resources in order to age in place.

According to a new report out of North Shore-Long Island Jewish Health System, there are now more than 9 million elder orphans or individuals at risk to become elder orphans—roughly 22 percent of the older adult population. In 2012, there were 43.1 million adults over age 65, representing about 13 percent of the population, according to the federal Administration for Community Living.

Elder orphans do not have a health care proxy. They may be physically or cognitively impaired. They have no one to care for them, to act on their behalf, if they are sick or hospitalized, if choices need to be made about their current situation and the future. They often have little income and few assets. That puts them at great risk of not having their health care or life wishes honored. They often live in nursing homes, with no one to visit them or provide companionship.

If elder orphans cannot make decisions for themselves, the state appoint may conservators or guardians to be responsible for the elder orphans’ finances and persons. The elder orphans become wards of the state and lose all rights to make decisions for themselves. The number of elder orphans is likely to grow substantially as the population ages. In 2012, about one in three Americans between the ages of 45 and 63 were childless and living alone, which is 50 percent more than in 1980. We need a strategy for helping them as they age; we need to plan ahead for the next likely larger generation of elder orphans.

By 2030, some estimate that more than 5 million people—of the estimated 70 people over 65, including 9 million over 85—will need to live in a nursing home or alternative care facility because they will not have anyone to care for them at home. It’s not even clear whether there will be enough nursing home beds for these elder orphans, if they wanted to enter a nursing home. Today, there are 15,700 nursing homes with 1.7 million beds and 1.4 million residents, according to the CDC.

Written by Diane Archer of jus+care

Recollections

I have some really good memories of the YMCA. When I was in grade school, we lived in Gary, Indiana before moving to Hobart, Indiana. Hobart didn’t have a YMCA at the time so some of my friends and I would take a bus to the “Y” in Gary where we were able to play chess, checkers, ping pong and go swimming.

My next recollection was when the Navy sent me on my way to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii via Las Angeles and then San Diego, CA. When I arrived in L.A., it was too late to travel on, so being unfamiliar with my surroundings and never having had roomed in a hotel before, I went to the local YMCA for a room.

Then, when in Hawaii, I frequented the Armed Forces YMCA which was really a great place for servicemen. Besides reasonable room rates, they had just about every thing necessary to make a serviceman feel welcome. I remember particularly the rooms set aside to play records. It was a great place.

Charlie Averill, SOAR Sec/Treas