

USW@Work

A Regular Publication of the United Steelworkers

Volume 14/2

A Powerful Voice for Workers

BETTER TOGETHER

2019 SOAR *Canada National Conference*

SOAR chapter delegates from across Canada met for two days, March 31 and April 1, in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, to hear from engaging speakers, debate and adopt resolutions and spend quality time getting to renew old acquaintances and make new ones.

The conference theme, Better Together, emphasized the bonds between active USW members and SOAR. A promising event, which we hope will be developed further, was a joint session with the delegates to the Next Generation conference which took place on April 1.

A highlight for many delegates was the presentation by Isobel Mackenzie, the B.C. Seniors Advocate.

The Office of the Seniors Advocate has a mandate from the B.C. government to monitor the provision of seniors' services, analyze systemic issues; provide information and referrals to seniors and their family members; report to the Minister and to the public on issues affecting



seniors; and provide recommendations to the Minister and other service providers.

The B.C. Seniors Advocate was created in 2014 and there are only three other provinces where this position has been replicated — Alberta, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick. SOAR delegates left our conference convinced that this was a concept that needs to be pursued in their own provinces.

Isobel led the delegates through a series of statistical slides which demonstrated the inaccuracy of some of the myths about aging in Canada and public perception of these statistics.

For example, to follow are erroneous statements that were paraphrased from Isobel's presentation: "We are constantly being told by the media and politicians that we will soon be swamped by a tsunami of aging seniors. We are called, derisively, 'bed blockers' creating havoc in the medical system. That we are doomed to be a nation of dementia patients, and that we are headed toward an unsustainable future because of aging." However, the facts paint a very different picture.

For instance, as you can see from the table to the left, 92 percent of persons aged 65 or older live totally independently, 80 percent in their own homes.

Indicators	65 or older	85 or older
Median income for seniors	\$27,354	\$24,798 (75+)
% living independently (80% homeowners)	92%	68%
% living in retirement/assisted living	3%	12%
% living in long-term (residential) care	4%	18%
% seniors living without dementia diagnosis*	94%	80%
% that use publicly subsidized home support*	3%	13%
% of total emergency department visits	22%	8%
Average life expectancy	At 65: 18.8 years	At 85: 6.8 years
% of seniors with active driver's licence **	75%	41%
% that live alone	24%	29%
% that are employed	25% (65-69)	8% (70+)
% that volunteer	38% (65-74) 196 hrs	27% (75+) 196 hrs

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BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

Worker Actions on the Rise

Part of the recent changes in our tax policy was to reduce corporate taxes and, in turn, provide money that could be used for increases in workers' earnings. A kind of a "share the wealth" or "trickle-down" tax strategy. At least, that is what we were told. Well, the numbers are now in and speak for themselves. 2018 had the largest number of people on strike since 1986.

Union density in 1986 was 17.5 percent and in 2018 represented 10.5 percent of the workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 485,200 workers were involved in work stoppages last year. It is also important to note that there were thousands more workers who worked on a day-to-day basis, when their contracts expired and were threatening to strike, but ultimately did not. For the vast majority of workers who had to go on strike or threaten a

strike, their employers did not take a position that they could not meet the workers' demands; it was that the employers did not want to, and it took a job action to get many of the employers to ultimately agree to a fair Agreement. I would like to believe that employers will come to their senses and deal with their workers fairly in 2019, but I doubt it.

If you know of a local that may be in for a fight in the near future, offer SOAR as a resource. If the local does not have a SOAR Chapter, now may be the right time to organize one so that, if needed, we have activists available for picketing or demonstrating. We at SOAR are a resource and a part of the local. We can and should work hand-in-hand with the local to defend and improve the lives of our members and retirees.

Source: <https://www.bls.gov>



JULIE STEIN
SOAR Director

No Security in the CRADLE Act

Paid parental leave might not sound like an issue that would directly concern retirees, but two bills recently introduced by Senate Republicans to expand paid leave to more Americans would be funded by cutting Social Security.

Introduced by Senators Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) in March, the Child Rearing and Development Leave Empowerment, or CRADLE Act, offers new parents the chance to take up to three months of paid leave at the cost of delaying their eventual retirement by two months for each month of leave they take.

Similarly, Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Mitt Romney's (R-Utah) New Parents Act would give the option of a reduced Social Security benefit upon retirement in order to offset the cost of taking paid parental leave now.

More than 80 percent of Americans support expanding paid parental leave according to a 2017 study by the Pew Research Center. However, this level of support was based upon the idea of leave being paid for by the employer and not by cutting Social Security.

When the Social Security Act was signed into law in 1935, it was not intended to be a piggy bank for future generations of lawmakers to dip into when they want to do something that will advantage them politically. Rather, Social Security was created to provide a safety net for retirees, victims of workplace accidents, aid for dependent spouses and children, and people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, America is lagging behind other developed countries when it comes to providing paid leave to new parents. However, we need to find a way to do this without chipping away at vital programs like Social Security.

Join with us, as we continue the fight to protect and enhance the quality of life of our retirees and working families. Together We Stand Strong!

Source: <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/03/23/americans-widely-support-paid-family-and-medical-leave-but-differ-over-specific-policies/>



facebook.com/groups/uswsoar



District 4 SOAR Shows Support for Stop & Shop Workers

Solidarity! That's what it takes for unions to win in 2019, and that's what Steelworkers are showing in Lincoln, Rhode Island.

On April 11, some 31,000 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) went out on strike over stalled contract negotiations with the Stop & Shop supermarket chain affecting more than 240 Stop & Shop grocery stores across three New England states—Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. At issue were the company demands to cut pensions, eliminate premium pay for Sundays and holidays, and concessions in health care coverage. While contract talks are ongoing, the Union reports little movement on the company's side. A previous three-year contract expired on February 23.

At its regular monthly membership meeting, held April 14, USW Local 4543 in Lincoln, Rhode Island, members discussed the strike and pledged not to cross the picket line at the Stop & Shop in Lincoln. They also promised to show support of the UFCW by joining picket lines during their free time. Lastly, a motion was made to recruit Local 4543 and SOAR Chapter 4-15 members to join UFCW picketers on April 17 at the Stop & Shop store in town.

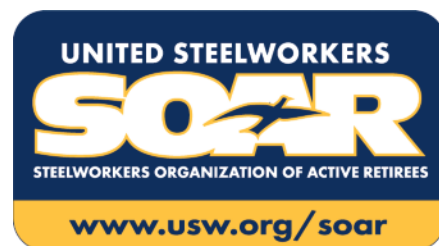
On April 17, a large contingent of Steelworkers and retirees met at the 4543 Union hall and caravanned to the grocery mart. According to Local 4543 President, Ed Matias, "Our members were enthusiastically welcomed by the strikers. They

appreciated knowing that other Union members were sympathetic to their plight." SOAR President Andrew Pora added, "An injury to one Union worker is an injury to all of us. I am glad to have had the opportunity to show other workers that they are not alone in their struggle for a fair contract." Solidarity! The accompanying photo shows a portion of the 4543 delegation on the picket line.

On the same date, UFCW members got an additional boost in morale, as former Vice President Joe Biden took part in picketing at the Stop & Shop store in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, Mass.

Editor's Note: The AFL-CIO reported on April 22nd, that a tentative agreement between the 31,000 members of the UFCW in New England and the management of the Stop & Shop supermarket chain had been reached, effectively ending the historic (11-day) strike that captured the country's attention. The members have since returned to work.

The proposed deal will provide wage increases and preserve health care and retirement benefits. It will also maintain time-and-a-half pay on Sundays for members of the five UFCW New England-area local unions. As this issue of SOAR in Action was going to press, the three-year agreement was still subject to ratification.



SOAR in ACTION

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BETTER TOGETHER 2019 SOAR *Canada National Conference*

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Those without diagnosed dementia equal 94 percent, meaning that only six percent of this demographic have dementia.

Seniors fear losing their driver's license, yet only 25 percent do so. Many of the fears seniors and society have about aging are without foundation.

As Roosevelt said, all we have to fear is fear itself.

Isobel concluded her presentation by identifying what Canadian seniors need:

- ▶ Peace of mind about their ability to meet the costs of aging.
- ▶ Assurance that quality services will be available to allow personal dignity through the aging process.
- ▶ A society that embraces and values the wisdom and perspectives that

come with multiple decades of life experience.

There is a role for governments and a role for citizens in ensuring such a society.

Conference delegates also heard presentations on 'social connectedness,' the need for us as seniors to stay engaged in a variety of ways with different generations.

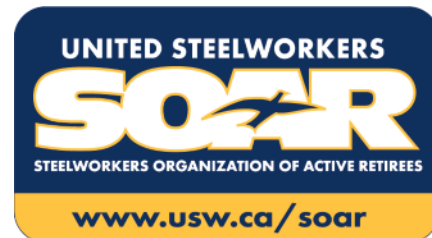
As they say, to age well it takes an intergenerational village to do so. This is one of the main reasons why our chapters need to establish a working relationship with our NextGen members. We have much to give them and them to us.

Over the course of two days, the delegates debated and adopted some 18 resolutions and a policy brief, prepared by the Canadian Health Coalition, enti-

tled "Ensuring Quality Care for All Seniors," which will be mailed to all chapter presidents in Canada.

These actions taken by delegates at the conference provide a plan for all of our chapters to engage their political leaders at all levels, in implementing our priorities.

We should never dismiss or devalue the act of lobbying. Having our voices heard and our proposed solutions implemented will help ensure a dynamic democracy and a better society for all.



KAY NOONAN

Honored with Lynn Williams Award

By Doug Macpherson
SOAR Canadian National Coordinator

The 2019 Canadian National SOAR Conference in Vancouver was a tremendous success, with many memorable moments including the presentation of the Lynn Williams Award for Service for 2018 to a most worthy recipient, Kay Noonan.

The vice-president of SOAR Chapter 3-14 in Vancouver, Kay was supported by several of her chapter's members who were on hand to witness the award presentation. It was also a special moment for many other conference delegates who were seeing the Lynn Williams Award for the first time.

The annual Canadian Lynn Williams Award is open to all chapters in Canada to

nominate a person whom they believe has demonstrated exemplary service to the membership and community in keeping with SOAR's constitutional mandate.

A Steelworkers' activist for her entire working life, Kay has continued her activism and service into retirement. She is a founding member and current vice-president of Chapter 3-14, which has a sterling record of progressive political and social activism.

Kay is the SOAR delegate to the Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO) and she serves on the Surrey Seniors Planning Table and the Seniors Advisory and Accessibility Committee, both of which advise the Mayor and City Council on seniors' issues.

Kay is an active New Democratic Party member and works closely with Harry



Kay shares her happiness with members of her Chapter 3-14. Pictured left to right: Monty Bartlett, Kay Noonan, Fred Girling and Allan Haggstrom.

Bains, provincial Minister of Labor and NDP MLA, on issues of importance to seniors and all citizens, including protections for residents in manufactured home parks, access to transportation and the high cost of hospital parking.

Kay's activism and advocacy for the less fortunate in her community is a credit to her and brings honor to all SOAR members. She has raised the bar for future nominees for the Lynn Williams Award for Service.

Pharmacare, a Socially Progressive Policy Whose Time Has Come

By Doug Macpherson
SOAR Canadian National Coordinator

Pharmacare, the name given to a publicly administered, single-payer, national, universal prescription drug program is long overdue in Canada.

Canada is the only industrialized nation that has a universal medicare system that does not include prescription drug coverage. Canadians who are hospitalized receive drug coverage, but once they are released that coverage disappears and they are on their own—even if their medications are required for ongoing treatment and recovery!

A national pharmacare program will provide universal and equitable access for all Canadians, improve the safe and appropriate use of prescription drugs and ensure drug costs are sustainable.

For too many low-income and senior citizens, the absence of universal pharmacare means cutting back on necessities and/or foregoing the medications they need altogether or skipping doses, all of which has devastating effects.

Canada currently has a costly patchwork system of prescription drug plans. Some Canadians are covered through employer benefits that often require costly deductibles and co-payments, some are covered through expensive private plans, some have no coverage which means they either pay out of pocket or don't get the medications they need, while provinces subsidize costs for some low-income and senior citizens.

The result is a grossly inefficient and costly system, with Canadians paying the third-highest prescription drug prices in the world.

Several studies and reports over the years have advocated for a universal, public plan, noting it would not only be more efficient and beneficial to all Canadians, it also would be less costly than the existing, patchwork system.

Canada's Liberal government is mapping out a plan to bring some changes to the system, but it appears the government will not commit to universal pharmacare.

Big Pharma and other powerful corporate interests are working to kill universal pharmacare and other policies that would improve the system. Pharmaceutical industry lobbyists have met over 600 times with Liberal government officials over the last 3½ years.

A new report by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions shows that Big Pharma increased its lobbying efforts by 500 percent in just one year and ramped up efforts to spread misinformation about universal pharmacare.

The revised NAFTA deal—NAFTA 2.0, CAUSMA or USMCA (choose your own acronym) contains provisions to lock in rules for longer patent periods for pharmaceutical corporations, resulting in even higher costs to American and Canadian consumers, as the Alliance for Retired Americans notes.

In preparation for this fall's federal election, Canada's New Democrats have released a comprehensive pharmacare plan.

Medicine for All—the NDP Plan for Pharmacare, includes:

- ▶ Coverage for all citizens and permanent residents of Canada, beginning in 2020;
- ▶ Enormous cost savings to governments, business, individuals and families.
- ▶ Even families that currently have private drug coverage will save more than \$500 per year.
- ▶ Employers currently providing extended health benefits will save approximately \$600 per employee annually.
- ▶ Controlling the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs in our health care system.

Clearly, the time has come for pharmacare for all Canadians.

Source: ndp.ca/news/quality-prescription-drug-coverage-everyone-canada

SOAR Activist Receives Honorary Award

Pueblo, Colorado is a steelmaking town. It has been since 1881 when William Jackson Palmer founded the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I). As one of the town's major employers, it seems like everyone in Pueblo knows someone that works at the plant, which is now operated by EVRAZ Steel. Having such a great impact on the local economy, it should come as no surprise that the United Steelworkers Union is a major player in Pueblo politics. USW volunteers are the backbone of the Pueblo County Democratic Party, knocking on doors and calling voters to remind them to support labor-endorsed candidates.

One of those volunteers is SOAR Executive Board member, Albert "Al" Becco. Becco is a CF&I retiree who was the longest serving President of USW Local 3267, which represents the office and technical workers at the mill. He retired in December 1986 and became an active member of SOAR; soon after to be elected president of SOAR Chapter 38-3.

In 1992, Oregon Steel purchased the mill. In 1997, Oregon decided to go to war against its workers. Steelworkers went on strike, and the company brought in scabs to keep the plant operating. The USW filed charges against the company, which were upheld by the NLRB. The strike was declared an unfair labor practice lockout, and the Steelworkers launched a corporate campaign to force Oregon Steel back to the bargaining table. SOAR played a key support role in the action, which was eventually successful in ending the seven-year labor dispute, and is the longest in USW history.

In addition to working with his locked out brothers and sisters at Oregon Steel, Al branched out and became active in the county Democratic Party. His first volunteer effort was to establish a weekly bingo game that grew to be one of the most anticipated events in Pueblo County and became the Party's largest fund generator. Several years after initiating bingo, Becco was elected First Vice Chair of the county Dems, a position he held for many years, until February of this year, stepping down at election-time to provide an opportunity for "younger blood" to move into a position of leadership.

In 2015, working with fellow SOAR member and party Treasurer, Mike Schuster, Al led an effort to give the Party a new, permanent home. After looking at several properties a site was selected and, with Becco co-signing the loan, the Dems bought a new headquarters.

With their leadership and continued fundraising efforts, he and Schuster pledged to pay off the building as soon as possible. For the next three years, nearly every penny that bingo raised went towards the building's mortgage. Finally, late last year, the \$175,000 tab was paid off.

In March, at its annual St. Patrick's Day fundraiser, to show its appreciation for his many years of service, the Pueblo County Democratic Party dedicated the building to Becco and presented him with a plaque honoring him for all that he had done for the local party and Democrats throughout the county.

Becco, at 85, continues to lead his SOAR chapter as president and serves as an Int'l SOAR Executive Board Vice President. He remains involved with the Dems and continues to serve the Party as an At-Large member of the Pueblo County Executive Committee.

USW District Director Robert LaVenture offered the following statement: "Al has dedicated his entire life to workers and the labor movement and he should be very proud of this award and acknowledgment. On behalf of all the members and retirees in District 12, we give Al a big "thank you" for a job well done. I would also like to thank his wife Norma for her work, and for keeping the torch "lit" under his backside."

It should be noted that SOAR Chapter 38-3 is one of the Steelworkers' largest SOAR Chapters and was one of the first to recruit non-Steelworker, but like-minded, members. District 12 SOAR Board member, Joel Buchanan, told us, "It is our position that if you support the right to

join a Union, and support the principles of the organization, you belong in SOAR. Membership in this chapter includes city and county officials, firefighters, and area teachers. We also have a state senator and two state representatives." Buchanan added, "The Steelworkers Union is respected and recognized as an activist's organization. Like-minded politicians and political activists are proud to be part of the SOAR chapter in Pueblo."

SOAR congratulates Brother Al for receiving this honor. His work is another example of Steelworkers leading the struggle to improve lives for retirees, working families, and the community. Thank you, Al, for all you do!



AL BECCO

ANDRES ROSAS *Appointed to SOAR Executive Board*

In February, United Steelworkers International President Leo W. Gerard appointed Andres Rosas as the District 13 SOAR Executive Board Member; to fulfill the remaining term of John Patrick, who had resigned from the position in January, due to health reasons.



“Andy” Rosas is a retired member of USW Local 235-A, which represented Steelworkers at Reynolds Aluminum in Corpus Christi, Texas. He worked at the plant for nearly 33 years and served the Local in a variety of elected and appointed positions, including Local Union President from 1992 until 1995.

Early in his working career, Andy completed a three-year Union Millwright apprenticeship program, and he earned his paycheck by performing maintenance duties as a trained mechanic until he retired in 2001.

Rosas is a founding member of SOAR Chapter 13-1 and has served as the chapter’s president since its inception. “When I retired, I wanted to stay politically involved. I didn’t always know about SOAR,” stated Rosas. “But, when I found out, I quickly applied for a charter, and the chapter was officially chartered on February 3, 2009.”

Chapter 13-1 is very active with the Coastal Bend Central Labor Council supporting the causes of Union members in the greater Corpus Christi area.

Additionally, the SOAR chapter and the American Federation of Teachers’ retirees formed a local chapter of the Texas Alliance

for Retired Americans (Coastal Bend Alliance for Retired Americans). Both groups advocate seniors’ issues.

Andy devotes a good deal of his time working to maintain membership in his SOAR Chapter. There are two reasons for that: First, the Reynolds plant shut down several years ago, and members have moved on to other jobs.

Second: Texas’ status as a Right to Work state. Rosas stated, “Texas has always been Right to Work. Because of that, we have a good number of workers who are not familiar with our Union or the SOAR Organization. It takes a little more effort to reach out to them and explain the importance of membership.”

Andy is proud to say that SOAR Chapter 13-1 recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary. To honor the occasion, the chapter held a cake and ice cream reception in February. Rosas reports the group currently has 120 active members. However, because of changes in the SOAR By-Laws, he looks forward to building membership by adding like-minded retirees. He told us, “We have a lot of Union members and Union supporters in town that would be a perfect fit for SOAR.”

“I look forward to reaching out to them. Not just for my chapter; but, also to grow SOAR in all of District 13, as well.”

Andy and his wife of 57 years, Enedina, reside in Corpus Christi, Texas. They have four children; Cynthia, Debra, Andres and Brian; and nine grandchildren.

On behalf of SOAR, we welcome Andres to the SOAR Executive Board and look forward to working with him as we continue our mission to protect and enhance the quality of life for retirees and working families.

Workplace Violence in Health Care **IMPACTS US ALL**

“There is an incident nearly every week at my hospital that ranges from slapping to punching to broken bones. I am a big guy, but one time I was trying to change the wet bed of a male patient when he became agitated and broke my arm. I was out of work for weeks.”

“I was stabbed at work by a patient.”

“My clinic’s patients include those who have Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, schizophrenia, and other conditions that can be particularly challenging. We are regularly hit, bit, grabbed, threatened, assaulted, and harassed. The protocol for emergencies is, ‘Yell for help and hope that someone hears you and is able to come.’”

Workplace violence can be the headline-grabbing stories like the cardiologist murdered in a hospital by the son of a deceased patient or a physician shot for refusing to prescribe opioids to the killer’s wife. But, more often it is the stories like those above, experienced by the tens of thousands of USW members who are nurses, support

staff, home care workers, behavioral health staff, emergency medical technicians, and related workers. It can come from patients and clients, but also other visitors or family members. Workplace violence should never be “all in a day’s work.” Yet, it is too often a reality for anyone in health care or social services.

Workplace violence is on the rise.

While workplace violence is a serious and growing problem for all workers, incidents in health care and social services have far outpaced any other, increasing by 69 percent in the past decade. The increasingly profit-driven nature of health care providers and a combination of social factors are driving the trend.

We all have a stake in this issue.

This foreseeable and preventable problem impacts anyone who works in health care or social services, any of us who are ever a patient, and any of us who visit or accompany a patient. With seniors more often in these environments, there is additional reason for concern. Given that workplace violence

increases costs and compromises quality of care, everyone is ultimately impacted.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Workplace violence prevention plans that incorporate appropriate training, staffing levels, resources, and other strategies can make a difference. The Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309/S. 851) would direct the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an enforceable standard so these workplaces are covered by plans.

Will you help?

Rapid Response is involved in our union’s efforts to move the legislation forward. If you would like to help, please contact your U.S. Senators and Representative. Ask them to support the Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309/S. 851).

U.S. Senate: 877-607-0785

**U.S. House of Representatives:
866-202-5409**



RETIREE HELPS FELLOW NUCLEAR WORKERS

Apply for Cancer Assistance in Oregon

Garry Steffy typically starts his day with a cup of coffee and a quick look through the newspaper for obituaries of people who once worked for ATI Specialty Alloys and Components in the small town of Millersburg near Albany, Oregon.

This daily routine is more than a retiree's curiosity. Steffy has made a mission of searching for USW members and former co-workers who qualify for a special government compensation program for those exposed to radiation while working on the U.S. nuclear weapons program.

"We have a rare opportunity here to assist our brothers and sisters," Steffy, a District 12 Coordinator for the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), said during an interview also attended by Albany Chapter 12-7 Trustee Eugene Jack. "Me and Jack, we're old Steelworkers. We'll go to the end to help."

Over several years, Steffy and his fellow SOAR members led the charge in spreading the word about the compensation program. They have helped hundreds of ATI retirees, employees and their families receive more than \$42 million in federal compensation and medical benefits. And that number will most likely continue to grow.

"I love when people get the money," said Steffy, who started Oregon's first SOAR chapter after he retired from ATI in 2010 with 36 years of service. "But I hate that they had to suffer to get it."

Congress passed the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act (EEOICPA) in 2000 to provide benefits to nuclear weapons project employees who were sickened by exposure to radiation and/or other toxic substances. Survivors of deceased workers were also eligible to file claims.

The metals refinery in Millersburg can trace its ownership to a company that began operations in the 1900s as the Wah Chang Trading Co. In 1956, the Atomic Energy Commission, now the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), contracted with Wah Chang to develop and produce a high-purity zirconium for the U.S. Navy. Zirconium is used to contain radioactive uranium used in nuclear reactors and on the Navy's nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers.

The facility, now owned by Pittsburgh-based ATI, a global manufacturer of technically advanced specialty materials, remains a major refiner of zirconium as well as other exotic metals such as hafnium, niobium, tantalum, and vanadium. It is one of the largest producers of rare earth metals and alloys in the United States.

Melting Uranium

In the 1970s, Wah Chang was contracted by Union Carbide Corp. to melt uranium-bearing material from the Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Union Carbide operated Y-12 from 1947 to 1984 for the Atomic Energy Commission and the DOE.

A special furnace called S-6 was used to melt the material, which was pressed into

billets or ingots and shipped back to Oak Ridge. It later became clear that not all of the radioactive material was removed.

The facility in Millersburg, which claimed a population of 1,329 in the 2010 census, was designated an atomic weapons facility in 2011 under the EEOICA and awarded special cohort status. Under that status, workers who contracted one of 22 listed cancers were eligible to file a claim and receive compensation of \$150,000 and medical benefits for life.

If you did not qualify in that part of the program, employees could be compensated under a more complicated "dose reconstruction" formula that considers age, gender and areas worked. Claims would be approved if the numbers added up to a 50 percent probability that an employee may have contracted a cancer from radiation while employed there.

Steffy learned in 2011 from a newspaper notice that he and co-workers at ATI Specialty Alloys, widely known to locals by its previous name Wah Chang, had been exposed to radioactive materials.

Unbeknownst to Steffy, the family of former Wah Chang employee Roy Backer in 2010 petitioned the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to declare workers at the plant eligible for benefits under EEOICPA.

Most workers at the Millersburg plant were never told about the uranium that was processed there or warned to take extra precautions, according to Steffy and a series of reports in the Corvallis Gazette-Times by Bennett Hall.

The three politicians were publicly thanked for their intervention in late 2018 in a letter signed by International President Leo W. Gerard and District 12 Director Robert LaVenture.



L to R: Eugene Jack, Trustee from Albany SOAR Chapter 12-7 and Garry Steffy, District 12 SOAR Coordinator, present thank you letter to U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley at the Senator's town hall meeting, held January 3, 2019, in Albany, Oregon.



Eugene Jack, Trustee from Albany SOAR Chapter 12-7 and Garry Steffy, District 12 SOAR Coordinator, present thank you letter to Congressman Peter DeFazio (center) at his town hall meeting, held April 17, 2019, in Corvallis, Oregon.



Garry Steffy, District 12 SOAR Coordinator, presents thank you letter to U.S. Senator Ron Wyden at the Senator's town hall meeting, held January 19, 2019, in Albany, Oregon.

“We always heard rumors about radiation,” said Steffy, who for 25 years operated the S-6 electron beam melting furnace that processed the uranium from Y-12.

Notification Letters

After Steffy heard about the program, he started to campaign to let ATI employees know. In the early stages, the company would not publicize the compensation program, but would confirm employment when requested by the program administrators.

Steffy also contacted local attorneys and funeral homes all around Oregon to look for ATI retirees who may have contracted cancer. SOAR several times sent hundreds of notification letters to retirees.

“I’ve gone to nursing homes to visit people who were literally on their last dime in their checking and savings accounts and they get this check,” he said. “It takes the pressure off them and their family.”

In March 2016, as ATI was ending a six-month lockout of 2,200 USW members nationwide, the Millersburg facility stopped responding to requests by the Department of Labor for employment records of former employees seeking the radiation compensation.

In refusing to verify employment, the company caused claims for compensation to be denied. That prompted Steffy to contact U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio and U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, all of Oregon.

After political pressure from the Oregon delegation, ATI Millersburg resumed employment verification in October 2016, and, for the first time, sent out letters to all current and retired employees informing them of the federal compensation program.

“In most cases, this was the only proof of a worker actually being employed at the plant,” Steffy said. “If these men had not stepped up to the plate and helped out, frankly I do not know where we would be now.”

The three politicians were publicly thanked for their intervention in late 2018 in a letter signed by International President Leo W. Gerard and District 12 Director Robert LaVenture.

“Garry should be given credit for his hard work and desire to bring justice to this issue,” LaVenture said. “Garry, like many of our SOAR members, never quit wanting to help others after he retired.”

See the full-story inside the current issue of USW@Work or go to www.usw.org/soar.

Editor’s Note: As of April 28, 2019, the total compensation paid to qualified recipients, including medical, is \$42,292,407.

The Condition of America’s Infrastructure Graded **D+**

By Jeff Bonior

It has been nearly 2½ years since President Trump took office. He rolled to a clear-cut election night victory by making many important promises to the American people. Chief amongst his campaign pledges was to fix America’s crumbling infrastructure.

So far, it has been all talk and no action when it comes to investing serious money into America’s roads, bridges, water systems, transportation systems, the electric grid and many more conveniences the American people rely upon daily.

The president initially proposed a \$1 trillion plan that went nowhere in Congress, because his administration could not provide the solution to adequate funding.

Recently, Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, asked him for support on a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure package. His retort was, “We can go bigger than that.”

The president might as well have said \$100 trillion, because nobody any longer believes that he is serious about a well-funded, meaningful infrastructure package. His initial proposal during his first year in office offered only \$200 billion in federal funding, with the remaining \$800 billion to come from private partnerships.

Well, no one took the bait. The president (along with his allies in Congress) hasn’t even figured out how to adequately fund the Highway Trust Fund to repair America’s deteriorating roads.

In the past two months, following the winter thaw, many of America’s highways and well-traveled arteries have had their speed limits lowered because these thoroughfares and congested roads have had an excessive number of people who were hitting dangerous potholes and getting flat tires on their cars.

It’s a long road from paving and reconstructing highways to fixing America’s outdated water systems, which will be a massive undertaking.

America’s engineers have weighed in with a grade of D+ for the condition of America’s infrastructure. Their conclusion is America’s roads and bridges are unsafe. Unreliable infrastructure is a competitive disadvantage that costs the economy billions in lost productivity each year.

The lack of a White House infrastructure plan is ironic since rebuilding America is one of the few opportunities for bipartisan collaboration. There is no deep divide between Democrats, Republicans, and Independents on this issue. Most Americans want a smoother ride.

A poll conducted by the bipartisan duo of Mark Mellman and Bill McInturff revealed overwhelming public support for this kind of federal project. A vast 81 percent of Americans, across all party lines, believe that repairing critical infrastructure is the issue they care about above all others. In contrast, only 34 percent of people polled rated the border wall with Mexico as their top priority for the president’s administration.

A sound infrastructure program will create job growth and local economic growth. Instead of just talking about it, the president should join with Congress and put the money for infrastructure where his mouth is. It is becoming increasingly obvious that nearly everyone wants this action.

If you are a homeowner, you understand that constant maintenance and repair is essential to keep your investment solid. When you fall behind, it can sometimes be impossible to recover and repair all the damage and deterioration.

Unfortunately, too little, too late, is where our infrastructure has been heading for the past 30 years.

Jeffrey Bonior is a staff writer for the Alliance for American Manufacturing.





A Very Special Thanks to Ken Kovack

Kenneth Kovack, SOAR Legislative Director Retires

Longtime union and SOAR activist, Kenneth Kovack has stepped down as the SOAR Legislative Director.

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 twelve 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, as well as legislative updates to the SOAR Executive board for distribution to SOAR chapters nationwide.

Ken, at age 93, decided to retire as the volunteer Legislative Director of SOAR, having served in this position for more than 27 years. Ken and Val remain as residents of Rockville, Maryland taking more time for each other and their family.

On behalf of the entire SOAR organization, we thank Ken immensely for his many years of dedicated service to the Union, and especially to SOAR. We wish him and his family well, and also the very best for a well-deserved retirement.

Special Thanks to John

Longtime union and SOAR activist, John Patrick, has stepped down from the SOAR Executive Board.

John Patrick is the retired President of the Texas AFL-CIO, a state labor federation that represented more than 237,000 union affiliates that advocates for all working families in Texas. John worked in the labor movement from 1972 until 2017. Before serving as the State Labor Federation President, he served for more than five years as Secretary-Treasurer of the Texas AFL-CIO.

John's career began as a member of the International Association of Machinists at Cameron Iron Works in Houston, Texas. He became a member of the United Steelworkers in 1977 when he went to work at Reynolds Aluminum. He served as their Local Union President from 1984 until 1996.

At that time, he became a Staff Representative for the USW and subsequently served in numerous capacities, including five and a half years as the District 13 Assistant to the Director.

John is a 1994 graduate of Antioch University, where he obtained a B.A. in Labor Studies, via the George Meany Center. John has served on the Democratic National Committee (DNC) since 2004.

Soon after his retirement, in April 2018, John was appointed to the SOAR Executive Board, representing District 13 and he served in that position until his resignation, just a few months ago, due to health reasons. He encourages all retirees to become active members of SOAR, and he also intends to remain active with the organization. John stated, "I will continue to do my best for the United Steelworkers (USW) and the entire labor movement."

John and his wife, Linda, have two sons, Cooper and Brent. They reside in Friendswood, Texas.

On behalf of the entire SOAR organization, we wish John and his family well and thank him immensely for his years of dedicated service to the Labor Movement and to SOAR.





Older Americans Month is an Opportunity for Seniors to Shape Public Policy

By Robert Roach, Jr.

May marks Older Americans Month, an annual celebration of seniors' contributions to the nation and an opportunity to recognize the power of older adults to influence our communities. This year's U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' theme is "Connect, Create, and Contribute."

Older Americans play a vital role in their communities through their connections to their neighbors. By sharing their stories, they help create a shared vision for the future. And by advocating for public policies that enhance our health, education, and financial security, they lead the way in ensuring a secure and dignified retirement for everyone.

This year, we urge older Americans to use their advocacy skills by fighting for policies that expand our earned Social Security and Medicare benefits, protect our pensions and lead to affordable prescription drug prices.

Americans 65 and older have the highest voter turnout by far, particularly during primaries, and that can be an advantage in electing leaders who pay attention to seniors' goals and interests.

Please do not take your power for granted. Get involved in the conversations on issues that shape our lives and then vote at election time. That will lead to policies that strengthen and expand our Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security programs, defend our pensions when they are attacked and keep prescription drug costs from skyrocketing.

Retirement from the workforce does not mean retirement from having your say in the public policies that affect us all—on social media, in discussions with family and friends, by contacting your elected officials about the issues that matter most, and by voting.



Robert Roach, Jr. is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans. He was previously the General Secretary-Treasurer of the IAMAW.

For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org.

District 12 Welcomes New SOAR Chapter

On January 23, 2019, the New Year was off to a great start when the first meeting of our newest SOAR chapter kicked off in Modesto, California. We welcome SOAR Chapter 12-11 as our latest officially chartered group of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees. Comprised of retirees from USW (formerly GMP) Local 17M, these members, along with USW Local 18T, represent Steelworkers employed at Gallo Glass, where they make bottles for Gallo brand wines. Yes, those bottles are proudly made right here in the U.S. by our very own members!

Along with the Local Union 17M President, USW District 12 SOAR Coordinator Joel Buchanan and USW District 12 Staff Representative Catherine Houston assisted retiree Stephen Talbott in establishing the chapter. Stephen has been elected to serve as President, and meetings are held at the USW 17M Local Union hall.

"When I first heard about the USW SOAR program, I knew Stephen would be the best person to gather our retirees together to form a chapter," said USW Local Union 17M President Anthony (Nacho) Arceneaux. "He was enthusiastic from the start. Stephen and the rest of our elected team are the right ones to lead this growing group. And our members look forward to being able to continue to participate and engage with their fellow members after retirement."

At the request of the chapter, USW Staff Rep Catherine Houston presented them with their charter. "I was honored to be asked," said Houston. "I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to



Pictured left to right: Catherine Houston, USW District 12 Staff Representative; SOAR 12-11 officers Stephen Talbott, President; Denise Ford, Recording Secretary; Elizabeth "Lise" Talbott, Financial Secretary; USW Local 17M President Anthony "Nacho" Arceneaux.

work with some of the members and retirees of this local over the last year and they are devoted and committed to making a difference through their SOAR activism. We all benefit from their valuable contributions."





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