

USW@Work

A Regular Publication of the United Steelworkers

Volume 16/3

A Powerful Voice for Workers

Where's the money going?

VACCINATIONS

**GETS SHOTS IN ARMS,
SO GRANDPARENTS
CAN GET HUGS.**

**THE AMERICAN
RESCUE PLAN ACT**

Celebrating Medicare and Social Security



BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

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.

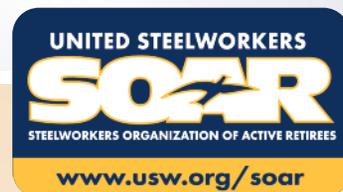
Together, Social Security and Medicare were intended to address two significant needs among Americans who are

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, 64 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.



A Pandemic and a Promise



JULIE STEIN
SOAR Director

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 multi-employer 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.

Join with us, as we continue the fight to protect and enhance the quality of life of our retirees and working families. We are stronger together!

Sources:

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

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



District 4 Gets a New SOAR Chapter

On May 26, SOAR members in New Bedford, Massachusetts, were honored to have their new SOAR Chapter 4-16 officially chartered by the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees.

The newly formed chapter will be home to retirees from USW Local Union 1357, a local representing Steelworkers employed at steelmaker Allegheny Technologies, Inc. (ATI), where they make specialty flat-rolled steel for the aeronautics, automotive and razor blade industry.

Al Polk, District 4 SOAR Executive Board Member, reported that Donald Rei, Robert Giusti and Olavo “Ollie” Mingola were instrumental in laying the foundation for this new chapter. Serving as the chapter’s first-ever president will be Donald Rei.

Rei previously served as vice president of the local union for 22 years prior to his retirement. He states that he has been impressed with the interest amongst the retirees in forming their SOAR chapter, which already has approximately 40 members, and is still growing.

Several other LU 1357 retirees and SOAR supporters were formerly officers of the local, before their retirement. Robert Giusti previously served as the first president of the local union for 23 years, since its beginning when the finishing plant was organized and the local union was chartered, in 1998. Giusti will serve as the SOAR chapter’s vice president.

Ollie Mingola previously served the local union as financial secretary and will serve the SOAR chapter in the same position, as well. Giusti, Rei and Mingola were members of the organizing committee that led to the successful organizing campaign for USW LU 1357; and then, they were part of the bargaining committee to negotiate the local’s first bargaining agreement with the employer.

As former officers of LU 1357, they believe that SOAR is essential for retirees — not only by being involved and having an organized voice as retirees, but also staying connected to the union, seeing each other at meetings, discussing matters of mutual interest and maintaining their friendship over the years.

The chapter plans on holding monthly meetings and will support the work of LU1357, while fighting against efforts to compromise vital programs like Medicare and Social Security.

Unfortunately, their first official activity of the SOAR chapter was to support the members of LU 1357 on the picket line. On March 30, 2021, more than 1,300 of our steelworker siblings at nine locations in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Massachusetts, began an unfair labor practice strike against their employer, ATI. Fortunately, a tentative agreement was reached on July 2, and the USW members voted to ratify their new four-year contract, ending the three-month strike.

SOAR welcomes all our new members from Chapter 4-16, and together we will continue the fight for retired and working families.

In solidarity!

Surrounded by newly-elected officers and members of the chapter, pictured above standing right of charter, USW District 4 SOAR Executive Board Member, Al Polk proudly presents the Charter of Organization to SOAR Chapter 4-16 President Donald Rei, standing left of charter. SOAR Chapter 4-16 is USW District 4’s newest SOAR chapter for the district and the first chartered in Massachusetts.



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Julie Stein, Editor
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 Eric Russell, Copy Editor
 Jay McMurrin, Copy Editor

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Send address changes only to:
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ALL CANADIANS COULD BENEFIT *from Saskatchewan's Telecom Model*

By Fred Girling
SOAR BC Coordinator

Is it any wonder that Canada's telecommunications corporations are the country's most-hated sector?

A 2017 public-opinion poll found Canada's telecoms had the worst reputation of any industry, worse even than banks or oil companies.

The five corporate giants that control the majority of Canada's telecom infrastructure are Bell, Rogers, Telus, Shaw and Quebecor. The Big Five is about to become four, as shareholders of Shaw Communications have voted to accept a \$26-billion buyout by Rogers Communications.

These corporations have always argued that Canada's small population and vast space are the reasons their

customers pay some of the highest prices in the world. Using the industry's argument, the low-population province of Saskatchewan should have some of the highest rates in Canada. However, rates in Saskatchewan are among the lowest. Why? The provider there, SaskTel, is a Crown (public) corporation.

In 1947, Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas announced that the telephone system would be taken over by a newly established Crown corporation. In the ensuing decades, there have been attempts to privatize the service, most recently in 2017 when the province's right-wing government introduced privatization legislation, Bill 40. However, in the face of intense public pressure, the bill was

repealed the following year.

We know that the CRTC, Canada's federal telecommunications regulator, won't protect consumers, as witnessed by the sway held by corporate lobbyists and their endless private lunches with government officials and regulators.

Perhaps it's time to bring the Saskatchewan model to the rest of the country and let government-owned and operated providers have a chance to prove they can provide quality service at cheaper costs to consumers.

This is a worthy issue for SOAR members to pursue.



Fred Girling

SOAR Chapter 6-02 Gives Back To Support Strikers

By Doug Macpherson
Vice-President and Canadian National Coordinator

USW Local 6500 members in Sudbury, Ont., rejected a concessionary contract offer tendered by mining giant Vale, setting off a strike on June 1, 2021. Two weeks later, Brazil-based Vale responded with another offer demanding similar concessions, which the 2,500 members resoundingly rejected.

At the core of the dispute is the company's ruthless demands for concessions on health benefits, in particular cuts to crucial benefits for future retirees, thus creating two classes of pensioners.

Vale is a massively profitable multinational corporation that has relentlessly sought to impose concessions on its Canadian employees and retirees since it purchased the former Inco Ltd. in 2006. The company's never-ending concession demands have provoked multiple labour disputes, including a year-long strike in Sudbury in 2009-2010 that resulted in a historic global solidarity campaign in support of the workers.

Now, Vale is again seeking concessions from its Sudbury workers and retirees — despite its huge profits and after



taking \$67.7 million from Canadian taxpayers, in the form of pandemic-related subsidies from the federal government.

There is tremendous community support for the Local 6500 members and their fight to defend future generations of workers and retirees. Several rallies have been held in the city to support the strikers, with residents waving signs displaying the community campaign's slogan: "We stand with you as you stand with the next generation."

SOAR Chapter 6-02 is among the most-active supporters of the strikers and has donated \$1,000 to the strike support fund. SOAR members will stand with their brothers and sisters of Local 6500 in their courageous fight for future generations.

SCOTT DUVALL *Announces Retirement*

By Lena Sutton

SOAR Executive Board Member, District 6

On March 5, 2021, Scott Duvall, Member of Parliament for Hamilton Mountain, announced he would not seek another term in the next federal election in Canada.

Born into a Steelworker family, Scott started his career in 1974 at Stelco Canada Works in Hamilton, Ont. For a short time, three generations of Duvalls worked at the plant, as Scott was hired while his father James and grandfather Frank were still on the job.

“In those times companies would hire you off the street,” Scott recalls. “I stayed at Canada Works because the money was good and my family was there.”

Scott soon became active in the union, getting elected as a steward, recording secretary, chief steward, vice-president and finally as president of USW Local 3250 in 1984—the same year Stelco announced plans to close the plant, affecting about 500 workers. The plant closed in 1986, and Scott was the last worker to leave as he helped colleagues secure employment insurance benefits or jobs elsewhere in the Stelco chain.

Scott and many colleagues took jobs at Stelco’s Parkdale Works, where workers were represented by USW Local 5328. Scott ran for president of the local, losing by 15 votes to Joe Crugnalle. The setback did not deter Scott from remaining active in the union. He served for 12 years as Local 5328 vice-president, working alongside Joe Crugnalle. When Joe died in 2001, Scott became local president and won two more terms.

In November 2006, Scott’s community activism led to his election to Hamilton City Council. Two months later, he retired from Stelco to serve his municipal constituents full time. He was appointed chair of the city’s Steel Issues Subcommittee to defend the interests of the local steel industry and its workers.

In October 2015, running as a New Democratic Party (NDP) candidate, Scott was elected as federal Member of Parliament for the riding of Hamilton Mountain. He was re-elected in the 2019 federal election.

The NDP’s critic for Pensions, Seniors, and Labour, Scott has fought tirelessly for workers’ and pensioners’ rights and for pay equity, affordable housing, dignity for seniors and many other working-class issues.

Scott has led a relentless campaign to pass legislation—

which he introduced in the House of Commons—to protect pensions and benefits for workers and retirees affected by cases of corporate bankruptcies and restructuring. His proposed bill, which would help hundreds of thousands of workers and pensioners has received tremendous public support. Appallingly, it has not been passed by the government due to opposition from the Conservative and Liberal parties.

Further, in its most recent budget the Liberal government created a two-tier system that denies badly needed support to seniors between ages 65 and 74 who receive Old Age Security (OAS) benefits. The Liberals are giving additional benefits only to OAS recipients 75 or older, leaving seniors between ages 65 and 74 out in the cold.

Scott Duvall stood in Parliament repeatedly to denounce the Liberals for inflicting this injustice on so many seniors, especially those living alone and with no other pension income.

Throughout his political career, Scott has maintained his strong ties to his community and the labour movement. He has been active in groups including the United Way, Hamilton Food Share and the Neighbour to Neighbour Centre. As an MP (prior to the pandemic) he hosted a barbecue each Canada Day to raise funds for a local food bank or charity.

Scott has always displayed his Steelworker pride, whether it’s USW lapel pins, shirts, jackets or hats, and he never shies away from a brief lesson on the importance of unions to defend and create decent jobs, pensions and a fair society. If you visit Scott’s office, you can’t help but notice the USW and SOAR Chapter 10 memorabilia on display.

We are sorry to lose Scott as a truly progressive, working-class MP, but we are confident his legacy will be carried on by Malcolm Allen, the NDP candidate for Hamilton Mountain in the next federal election. SOAR Chapter 10 members will do everything we can to help elect Malcolm and a New Democratic government that stands with workers, retirees and families, instead of the wealthy and big corporations.

SOAR members wish Scott and his wife Sherry many years of enjoyment with their daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren in the next chapter of their journey.

Thank you, Scott for all you’ve done to represent the interests of workers and families. We look forward to your continued activism and contributions with SOAR!



Scott Duvall



KENNETH S. KOVACK

Retired SOAR Legislative Director



Kenneth S. Kovack
1926-2021

The Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) mourns the loss of longtime Union and SOAR activist Ken Kovack, who passed away on June 3, 2021, at the age of 95.

Born and raised in East Chicago, Indiana, Buck Sargent Ken Kovack served in the Army Air Corps during World War II

and was discharged in 1946. Before returning home to East Chicago, he attended industrial school for two semesters in California. His union career began on July 2, 1947, when he was hired at Inland Steel's 76-inch Hot-Strip Mill in East Chicago and became a member of USWA Local 1010. After meeting and marrying the love of his life, Valerie, in 1950, the couple made their home in Highland, Indiana.

There's no doubt that Ken's forte was in organizing the organized. His father (Frank) took him to several union meetings, and he quickly became active as a Safety Steward. Shortly after that, he was elected chairman of the Occupational Safety and Health Committee. He immediately expanded committee activities, including working with the National Safety Council training programs for the Safety Stewards and teaching members and families the Red Cross' first aid program. He was also active with the Hammond Safety Council and the USWA Sub-District Safety Council. With the help of his wife, he conducted a blood replacement program, first within Local 1010 and then the community.

By way of interviews on the Labor News and Views radio program, Ken started a drive to install seat belts in cars and a student court for safe teenage drivers. In addition, the company gave him paid time to teach first aid to department employees. He also helped to enroll local union members in the joint union/company annual United Way fund drives. Thereafter, he ran for and won the position of Local Union 1010 Recording Secretary. At that time, Local 1010 had over 13,000 members.

While serving as the local's Recording Secretary, Ken was very active on the Legislative and Political Committee and was a Local 1010 Community Services Committee member during the Basic Steel Strike of 1959. In 1962, 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 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.

During the President Johnson War on Poverty, a small group met at his house to form the Board of Directors of the NW Indiana Anti-Poverty Program. Ken became the VP and then President of the Board. About that same time, in 1967, a staff position opened in USWA District 31 (now District 7), and he was invited to apply for and eventually was assigned to service nine locals.

One year later, Ken accepted a job in the Steelworkers Legislative Department in Washington, D.C., moving his family to Rockville, Md., in 1968. He served for 23 years as a legislative lobbyist, ending as an Assistant Director, Office Manager and the organizer of visiting USW Districts Legislative Conferences, rallies, etc. He met with many presidents, attended Inaugural Balls and was proud of many accomplishments, including the idea of rumble strips on the highways he presented while lobbying on Capitol Hill, where it passed. Thanks to Ken's efforts, today, we are all safer!

Ken participated in two Labor Exchange Programs. First, in Germany. And then, he toured Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Hong Kong.

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

During these years, the staff had legislative assignments regarding House and Senate bills important to our union, in particular, and all workers in general. Our affiliation and regular meetings with the AFL-CIO, organizational coalitions, and like-minded public interest organizations remain to this day.

Ken was also an Executive Board Member and Secretary-Treasurer of the Consumer Federation of America

May he rest as he served our Union ~ in power and in peace.

(headquartered in Washington, D.C.) for almost 21 years and served as an Emeritus Board member. Additionally, Ken attended meetings of other national organizations and often lobbied members of Congress with their staff members.

Upon retiring in 1992, Ken vowed to be a volunteer for at least ten years in the Legislative Department, and he became active in SOAR, occupying his old office in D.C.

Ken had testified before Congress and occasionally spoke at SOAR conferences. As the volunteer Legislative Director of SOAR, he wrote the quarterly Washington Wrap article for the SOAR magazine and legislative updates to the SOAR Executive Board for distribution to SOAR chapters nationwide. He also 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.

Former SOAR Director James Center, who retired in 2017, described Ken “as having walked the halls of Congress for many years, and he was a true legend in our organization. As an active lobbyist of the Steelworkers, Ken was key to the union’s legislative team that shepherded many of our legislative victories through the House and Senate. As a retiree, he actively served SOAR for more than 25 years. For 20 of those years, he traveled into the legislative office once a week to champion our issues.” Center, then fondly recalled, “When I became the retiree director in 2001, I leaned on Ken a great deal as I acclimated myself to the job. He was a mentor and friend.”

Current SOAR Director Julie Stein recalls feeling inspired by how Ken ended his email communications, “Keep on Keeping On” was his signature closing,” to be followed by “In solidarity.”

Ken, at age 93, retired as the volunteer Legislative Director of SOAR after 27 years of service to the organization. He and Val remained as residents of Rockville, Maryland, taking more time for each other and family.

Ken’s lifetime of activism and commitment to the labor movement stretches more than seven decades.

Not only was he a strong, dedicated Union and SOAR activist, but Ken was also a man devoted to his family, church and volunteering. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. In addition to his beloved wife of 71 years, Valerie, Ken leaves behind five children, nine grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

“Keep on Keeping On”

SOAR in ACTION



Chicago, IL — Pictured above, SOAR supports striking hospital workers on July 6. One week later, after more than ten months of negotiations, SEIU Local 73 reached a tentative agreement on July 13 with the Cook County Board (Chicago) on most issues, ending the 18-day strike. Two economic issues related to raising the wage floor for lowest-paid workers and changing anniversary pay raise steps to reward longevity will move into arbitration, which was not an option available until workers went on strike. The strike support action was called by the Chicago Federation of Labor. In solidarity!



New Bedford, MS — Pictured left to right, SOAR Chapter 4-16 President Donald Rei and Chapter 4-16 Vice President Robert Giusti attend a rally supporting the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) at St. Luke’s Hospital in New Bedford, held April 27. The registered nurses of St. Luke’s Hospital, affiliated with the MNA, are advocating for safer conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and negotiating a first union contract with the administration of St. Luke’s Hospital that will make lasting, positive change. The RNs seek a fair contract to improve working conditions and ensure safety for patients, nurses and the community. In solidarity!



Pictured left, USW District 7 Director Mike Millsap speaks to commemoration attendees as SOAR Vice President Scott Marshall stands nearby.



Pictured left to right, Bea Lumpkin, William Alexander and Alderwoman Sue Sadlowski Garza.

SOUTHEAST CHICAGO SOAR CHAPTER 31-9 Commemorates 84th Anniversary of Memorial Day Massacre

By Bea Lumpkin
SOAR Activist, Chapter 31-9

Despite the pandemic, Southeast Chicago SOAR Chapter 31-9 safely gathered to commemorate the 84th anniversary of the Memorial Day Massacre at Republic Steel.

Chapter 31-9 held a live-streamed outdoor gathering and a rose-laying ceremony at the memorial site.

Dr. Rev. Zaki L. Zaki, Senior Pastor of the United Methodist Church, kicked off the event with the invocation. He said, “The ten who were killed on Memorial Day, 1937, did not die in vain.” He commended members of SOAR and praised the leadership of Ed Sadlowski, deceased leader of USW District 7, for keeping the memory of the martyrs alive.

Rev. Zaki was followed by Bill Alexander, President of Southeast Chicago SOAR, who welcomed all and gave a brief overview of the demands of the steelworkers in 1937.



Alexander explained that the Wagner Act of 1935 gave workers the right to organize unions but did not force employers to sign a first contract. He also explained that The PRO act, a pro-worker piece of legislation awaiting a vote in the Senate, goes further than the Wagner Act and provides for arbitration, if needed, to guarantee a first contract after a year of negotiations.

Sue Sadlowski Garza, Alderwoman of the 10th Ward, and daughter of Ed Sadlowski, said that in the 10th Ward, people remember the 1937 fight for workers’ rights. She described that fight in detail and pledged never to forget the martyrs in the cause of union rights.

Next, the Women of Steel, the women’s caucus of United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO, gave a dramatic presentation that highlighted the martyrs’ sacrifice. Each woman, dressed in black, called out the name of each martyr. They told how each was killed, in most cases by a bullet in the back. In an impressive ceremony, Women of Steel draped each cross in black, ten in all.

Then Donald Davis, history teacher at Washington H.S. and Chicago Teachers Union activist, read from the two winners of the student essay contest sponsored by SOAR. The essay contest was about the Memorial Day

Massacre and its relevance today in the fight for the PRO Act, the Protect the Right to Organize Act. Winners of the SOAR scholarship were Brianna Costillo and Alejandro Rojas.

The last speaker was Bea Lumpkin, 102-year old retiree leader and a CIO organizer in 1937. She demanded answers to “Who was punished, who went to jail for these murders?” Lumpkin replied, “Nobody!”

Placing roses on the monument to the martyrs was the final ceremony.

As they walked to the monument across the street, all sang labor’s song, Solidarity, led by Mike Wolfe, the SOAR chapter Financial Secretary. Everyone placed a rose on the monument, inspired by those who gave their lives fighting for a Union and better conditions for workers and their families.

Chapter 31-9 also commemorated the 84th anniversary of the Memorial Day Massacre by publishing a new video: *Police Kill 10, Wound 100, Memorial Day Massacre, 1937.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDVYk_uq9W8&t=24s

It outlines the events of that day at Republic Steel, and other attacks on workers in the steel industry across the country at that time.

NEW FTC RULE AIMS to CRACK DOWN on MADE IN USA CHEATS

By Elizabeth Brotherton-Bunch

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) finalized a new rule on July 1, 2021, that will give the agency new tools to crack down on companies that falsely label their imported products as “Made in the USA.” It’s a big win for more than 12 million manufacturing workers across the country, including United Steelworkers members who make a wide variety of products at factories across the country.



Several polls have found that Americans prefer to buy products that are Made in America, and in many cases are even willing to pay more money for them. These Americans often want to use their money to support local workers and businesses. In addition, they know that a Made in USA label embodies American values like good quality and hard work.

And a Made in USA label can be a power-

ful PR tool, attracting potential customers and helping consumers make buying choices while shopping. Unfortunately, some companies have tried to take advantage, purposely deceiving consumers by falsely labeling their imported products as Made in USA. Up until the FTC finalized the new rule, the agency didn’t do much about it.

In one particularly egregious case from 2018, a company sold a hockey puck called “Patriotic Puck.” It was labeled as “100% American Made!” Patriot Pucks were draped in the American flag.

The FTC found that the puck was actually made in China.

In another case from 2018, a company called Sandpiper/PiperGear USA sold military-themed backpacks and other gear, including at thousands of U.S. military bases located overseas. Although labeled as American-made, the FTC determined that the bags were manufactured in China or Mexico.

While the FTC concluded that these companies purposely deceived consumers, the companies went largely unpunished. They faced zero financial penalties and didn’t even have to admit fault.



Thankfully, FTC commissioners like Rohit Chopra recognized that this was a big problem, and have spent the past several years leading efforts to strengthen the FTC’s ability to enforce Made in USA labeling.

Interestingly, Congress granted the FTC authority to seek penalties and other forms of relief for Made in USA fraud back in 1994 after the North American Free Trade Agreement took effect. But the FTC never issued a rule on the issue, and there was a longtime consensus that Made in USA fraud “should not be penalized.”

Companies, in essence, were operating on the honor system when it came to labeling their products. But not everyone is honorable, and it meant that companies like Patriot Puck and Sandpiper could deceive consumers, get caught, and basically get away with it.

Moving forward, the FTC will now have the ability to “seek redress, damages, penalties, and other relief from those who lie about a Made in USA label,” including by seeking “civil penalties of up to \$43,280 per violation of the rule,” according to the agency.

Even before the new rule was finalized earlier this month, the FTC was already making moves to crack down on Made in USA cheats. For example in 2020, the FTC announced a \$1 million settlement with Williams Sonoma after the home products retailer was found to have repeatedly labeled imported products as Made in the USA.

“The final rule provides substantial benefits to the public by protecting businesses from losing sales to dishonest competitors and protecting purchasers seeking to purchase American-made goods,” Chopra said. “More broadly, this long-overdue rule is an important reminder that the Commission must do more to use the authorities explicitly authorized by Congress to protect market participants from fraud and abuse.”

Elizabeth Brotherton-Bunch is Senior Vice President for Communications for the Alliance for American Manufacturing.



SOAR EYES ON WASHINGTON

By Jay McMurren, SOAR Legislative Director *

On July 1, in a ruling that surprised no one, the right-wing U.S. Supreme Court upheld two state of Arizona laws that follow a Republican scheme to restrict votes of black, brown, native Americans and seniors.



Jay McMurren

The Arizona legislation in question required election officials to throw away ballots cast by voters in the wrong precinct. It also makes it illegal for anyone to collect ballots for delivery to polling places, sometimes called “ballot harvesting.” Delivering ballots is a common practice at many minority churches and in rural areas.

In this case, the GOP majority in the Court seems to side with the position that as long as Americans are given an opportunity to vote they

should be willing to accept that it could include a little hardship. In his opinion Justice Samuel Alito wrote: “Voting takes time and, for almost everyone, some travel, even if only to a nearby mailbox. A mere inconvenience cannot be enough.” Addressing concerns that the laws will disproportionately affect minority voters, and despite the fact that voting restrictions affect racial or ethnic groups differently does not make them illegal, (even though morally wrong,) Alito further wrote, “The mere fact there is some disparity in impact does not necessarily mean that a system is not equally open or that it does not give everyone an equal opportunity to vote.” Therefore, any impact is too small to violate the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

SOAR President Bill Pienta urged Steelworkers to get involved in the fight against Republican efforts to suppress votes in their states. He told us, “Over a dozen U.S. states have enacted 22 restrictive voting laws. And another 61 such laws are pending in 18 states. This recent Supreme Court ruling tells us we cannot count on the judiciary to stop voting injustice. Instead, we have to fight voter suppression ourselves, precinct by precinct and state by state.

While many progressive groups are opposed to this new trend in curbing minority voting, most have yet to recognize that these new, restrictive laws will eventually have a similar impact on elderly voters. “The legislation we are seeing passed in Republican-leaning states is aimed at folks

who need some sort of assistance in the registration or voting processes. Many of our SOAR members are in the same position. These restrictions, without question, are going to hurt our senior members.”

To counter the growing voter suppression movement, Democrats are backing two proposed bills that will make voting easier for everyone. The first is a sweeping reform bill called the “For the People Act.” Second is a more narrow piece of legislation referred to as the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. However, it is unlikely that either bill will pass. Last month, a filibuster by do-nothing Senate Republicans stalled passage of the “For the People Act.” SOAR members are encouraged to contact their U.S. Senators and insist that they support the legislation named above.

SOAR will stay the course and keep our eyes on Washington, as we continue the fight to protect and enhance the quality of life of our retirees and working families.

* Jay McMurren also serves as SOAR Executive Board Member, District 2.



Where's the Money Going?

It's clear that there is no way for our country to get back on track until the virus is under control. The American Rescue Plan directly confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, making our country safer and healthier. This includes facilitating further testing, contact tracing and personal protective equipment, as well as vaccine procurement, supplies and distribution and more.

Get more FACTS on the American Rescue Plan here:

<http://usw.to/rescue>



Honor Medicare's 56th Anniversary by Allowing Drug Price Negotiation

By Robert Roach, Jr.

Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs and the people's out-of-pocket costs are going up every year.

Seniors are bearing the brunt of this, because they need more medicines to stay healthy. In fact, 25 percent of older Americans report not taking a drug as prescribed by their doctor due to cost.

As Medicare celebrates its 56th anniversary on July 30, there is no better way for Congress to help seniors and strengthen the program than requiring Medicare to negotiate lower prices.

Medicare's spending on prescription drugs increased by 26 percent between 2013 and 2018 due to higher drug prices, according to a recent report from the Medicare Advisory Payment Commission (MedPAC). Medicare drug price negotiation will save seniors and taxpayers \$500 billion over ten years.

Congress needs to put the American public ahead of pharmaceutical corporation profits and make drug price negotiation the law of the land. Drug corporations are spending millions on commercials and lobbying Congress to protect the status quo and their enormous profits.

On April 22, 2021, Representatives Frank Pallone (NJ), Richard Neal (MA) and Bobby Scott (VA) re-introduced

the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act (H.R. 3). The bill, which was passed by the House last year but blocked in the Senate, requires Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices for everyone covered by Medicare and private insurance.

The Senate is also signaling that lowering drug prices is on its agenda. The Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. Ron Wyden (OR), has released its Principles for Drug Pricing Reform legislation. These reforms call for not only allowing Medicare to negotiate lower drug prices, but also ensuring that consumers pay less for their drugs at the pharmacy counter and holding pharmaceutical corporations accountable when they raise drug prices more than the overall rate of inflation.

The Alliance for Retired Americans supports both H.R. 3 and the Finance Committee's principles but Congress needs to work faster. Seniors are fed up with waiting and it's time for our elected leaders to deliver for us.



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.

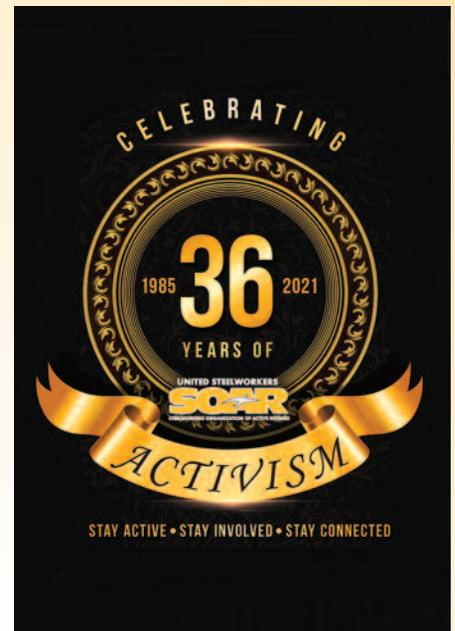
SOAR in ACTION

Beaumont, TX — On May 1, following ExxonMobil's rejection of the Union's offer of a one-year extension, the members of LU 13-243 have been locked out of the oil refinery plant. The local union is fighting for a fair contract that won't negatively impact members' safety, security and seniority.

Later that month, SOAR Chapter 13-1 (Corpus Christi, TX), took action and joined the picket lines in a pledge of solidarity. The SOAR chapter also donated \$200.00 to the local union's strike pantry.



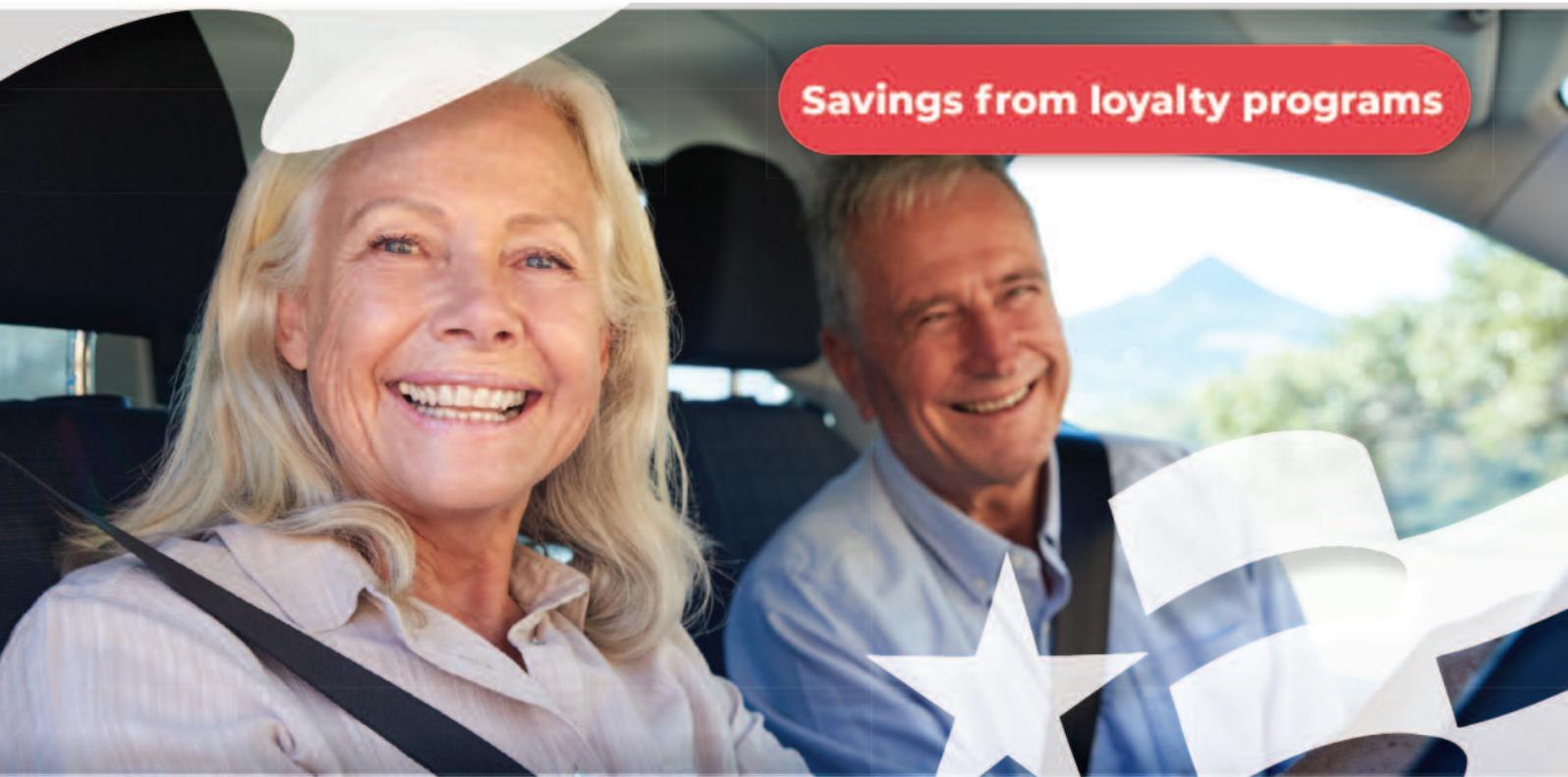
Pictured right to left: Andy Rosas, SOAR District 13 Executive Board Member; Karla Konning, USW LU 13-243 Secretary-Treasurer; Darrell Kyle, USW LU 13-243 President; and Robert Hill, SOAR Chapter 13-PC-2 President and some members of both groups.





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