

USW@Work

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Volume 9/4

A Powerful Voice for Workers

11th International SOAR Conference

MGM Grand ~ Las Vegas, Nevada
August 8-9, 2014

SOAR kicked off its 11th International Conference with welcoming remarks from District 12 Director Bob LaVenture. He thanked the leaders of SOAR for all their dedication and leadership while they were active members of the USW, and paid tribute to their continued involvement with the union and all of its activities. LaVenture warned the delegates, "Don't let your guard down and pay close attention to what is going on in Washington and State Houses across America... this is an important election coming up, we need SOAR's help. We have to elect candidates that represent working people."

SOAR President Bill Pienta addressed the delegates. Speaking before the delegates for the first time as president, he told them he was honored to have the opportunity to share his thoughts and visions with the people who have built SOAR and the United Steelworkers into the organizations they are today. He thanked USW International President Leo W. Gerard for having the confidence in him to fill

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SOAR ELECTED THEIR LEADERSHIP FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

Pictured left to right, top to bottom, are: Jim Centner, Director; Bill Pienta, President; Al Becco, Vice President (West); Harry Hynd, Vice President; Lee Etta Hairston, Administrative Assistant; Charlie Averill, Secretary-Treasurer; Bruce Bostick, District 1; Mike Pyne, District 2; Rod Bezo, District 3; Jim Bickhart, District 4; Lawrence McBrearty, District 5; Doug MacPherson, District 6; Scott Marshall, District 7; Bob Adkins, District 8; Claude Karr, District 9; Dave McLimans, District 10; Bonnie Carey, District 11; Joel Buchanan and Terry Bonds, District 12; Jack Golden, District 13; Bill Gibbons, PACE Division Representative; Ken Kovack, Legislative Director; Jack Caspariello and Dan McNeil, Emeritus Members; and C.L. "Connie" Entrekin, President Emeritus.

collage by Charlie Averill



BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

Something I Wonder About

I have been reading about income inequality in North America and discovered some interesting information regarding the disparity between the top 1 percent and the rest of us. Last year was a record year for the rich in North America. According to *Forbes* magazine, the 400 wealthiest Americans are now worth \$2.29 trillion.

A \$270 billion increase over last year. This equates to an average increase of \$675 million for each of the 400. The top 100 richest in Canada are worth a combined \$230 billion. While the average net worth per person in Canada is \$207,300 and \$222,624 in the United States.

Forbes lists 520 billionaires living in the U.S. and Canada. I wonder what the average would be if the 78

that live in Canada and the 442 that live in the U.S. were excluded from the respective averages of net worth.

Don't get me wrong, I am not against people making money. But, I wonder just how much is enough and how much of a benefit it would be if there was a greater distribution of a portion of this enormous wealth. I wonder just how many cars or homes can these 520 people buy. What is it that you cannot buy with \$5 billion that you needed to have 20, 30 or 40 billion dollars?

I do know that the real wages for most of us in North America have been stagnant or have gone down in recent times and that it is more difficult for us to maintain or improve our standard of living. I wonder if some of that wealth had been put into our wages, would our economies be better off and ALL of us would benefit from a growing economy?

Just wondering.



JIM CENTNER
SOAR Director

Mid-Term Elections

The mid-term elections are upon us. We all have a lot at stake this November. The entire House of Representatives and 36 Senate seats are up for election, along with hundreds of state and local races. The outcome of these races will determine whether we continue on the path of re-creating the middle class or go back to the failed policies that caused the greatest recession since the Great Depression.

This election is about jobs! The Obama administration, in spite of a do-nothing Republican-led Congress, has set us on a course of recovery. Even more could have been accomplished were it not for the political maneuvering of the far right and those in the House and Senate that are determined to see our President fail at any cost. It seems of little consequence to those on the right, that more and more of our nations' middle class are sinking into poverty — while they play their inside-the-beltway games — with their sights clearly now focused on the 2016 election. It's criminal to hold our economy hostage and keep millions of Americans unemployed or under employed over political ideology.

Because of the upcoming election, banks and corporations are sitting on record cash reserves and not putting Americans back to work in an unbridled attempt to influence the outcome in November. Working families are losing their jobs, health care, retirement savings and homes. We need to see real leadership in Washington and a focus on jobs, because there is no such thing as a jobless recovery.

We have two choices in this election. We can either continue to move forward and support policies that improve and enhance the quality of life of working families and retirees, or we can go back to the failed policies of the right that got into the mess we have been digging out of for the last six years.

We have a real opportunity to continue on the path of recovery. But, it will not come without a fight. We need to marshal all of our resources to elect and re-elect representatives that care about the needs and wants of the middle class, not the corporate elite. We will only be successful if we all get involved in this election. We must educate our friends and family on the issues and make sure we go to the polls to be victorious this November!

SOAR Activists Join in Protest at ALEC's Annual Meeting

SOAR members from
Chapter 13-PC-3 with USW District 13
Director Rueben Gaza and
SOAR Board Member Jack Golden
preparing to protest at ALEC's
annual meeting in Dallas, Texas.



As lawmakers schmoozed with corporate officials at the annual American Legislative Exchange Council meeting (ALEC) in Dallas, hundreds of protesters were there to greet them. Under the banner of "TEXposeALEC," SOAR members joined in with Steelworkers and other grassroots activists to protest ALEC's agenda on issues including labor rights, environmental policy, political spending, public education and health care.

The over 500 demonstrators let those attending know they didn't support their anti-worker, pro-corporate agenda. Jack Golden, District 13 SOAR Board Member said, "The policies supported by this organization hurt everyone but the corporate elite. We need to let people know that ALEC is the force behind all this anti-worker stuff going on in our State Houses, that its funding comes from corporations, and that the billionaire Koch brothers are among its largest donors."

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New SOAR Chapter in District 9

Cedar Springs, Ga. — On May 30, 2014 District 9 Coordinators Greg England and Claude Karr presented retirees from USW Local 1864 with their SOAR Charter. Chapter 9-PC-1, is the first former Paper Worker Chapter to be chartered in USW District 9. "This was a great day for all of our retired and active members at the Cedar Springs Mill. This is the first of greater activism to come from District 9," stated District 9 Director Daniel Flippo. "More new chapters will be established to work with the District to protect retirees' and worker's rights. Our coordinators are working to grow District 9 SOAR!"

From left to right are: District 9 Executive Board Member, Claude Karr; Chapter Officers: Mac Tedder, Thurman Tidwell, Raymond English, Claudie Ceaser, Emory Courson, and District 9 SOAR Coordinator, Greg England.



11th International SOAR Conference

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the vacancy created when Connie Entrekin stepped down to spend more time with his family. Bill thanked Connie (who was unable to attend) for his leadership and his continued friendship, support and guidance.

Pienta railed against the state of politics in both our countries. He told the delegates, “Our fight is the same on both sides of the border and we must be united in our defense.

Health care and retirement security are two issues that must be strengthened, not dismantled, as championed by those on the right.” He urged the delegates to continue

their activism on behalf of working families and retirees. Bill thanked the delegates for all they have “done to make SOAR the dynamic organization that it is” and for their help and support in his first year as president.

SOAR Vice President, Harry Hynd introduced a memorial video tribute to Lynn Williams and shared his and his wife Margaret’s personal memories of times spent with Lynn.



USW International President Leo W. Gerard took the dais and extended his personal best wishes for a successful conference. He addressed the delegates and reviewed the state of the union with them. President Gerard paid tribute to the memory of Lynn Williams. He thanked President Pienta for his good works and acknowledged the contribution made by past president Connie Entrekin.

President Gerard highlighted the need for activism in preparation of the 2014 elections in the United States, “With your help we’re going to try to inspire as much of our membership as possible. This election is about survival — survival of the labor movement, survival of Social Security and survival of Medicare. We cannot let the Republicans steal the senior vote from us. I believe your vote can put us over the top, and if we do that our kids and grandkids will have at least as good a future as we have.”

USW International Secretary-Treasurer Stan Johnson addressed the delegates. In his remarks, he thanked them for their “service, sacrifice and for the work that you do.” He said, “I am young enough to know that this union was formed by your dedication, your tireless work and your willingness to put yourself on the line to make

sure this union was handed off to others, and we will do everything we can to make sure we hand it off to others in as good a shape as you handed it off to us.”... “You’re an integral part in what we do.”... “When we go into the elections this fall we need you engaged like you have never been before.”... “Without your support we can’t win, but together we will. It’s not going to be easy, but together we will win.”

Rich Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans spoke to delegates about the importance of the senior vote. He told the delegates that because retirees vote in higher numbers than the rest of the population, they have the power to swing elections. “Too many stayed home in 2010,” Fiesta said, “handing that crucial mid-term election to Republicans.”

Fiesta stressed the importance of this upcoming election, “From transportation funding and voters’ rights to health care and Social Security, nearly every major political discussion directly affects retired Americans. We need your help; the senior vote is going to be critical to who will get elected this year.”

Other speakers at the conference were National Director of Canada, Ken Neumann, who spoke on the political



LEO W. GERARD
International President



KEN NEUMANN
National Director for Canada



FRED REDMOND
International Vice President
(Human Affairs)



climate in Canada; Vice President (Human Affairs) Fred Redmond; Vice President of National Paper Bargaining, Jon Geenen; Vice President (At-Large) Carol Landry.

Also addressing the delegates were District Directors; Michael Bolton, Steve Hunt, John Shinn, Dan Flippo, Emil Ramirez and Rueben Gaza.

The delegates also heard from Holly Hart, USW Legislative Director, who discussed current legislative initiatives; Emily Woodward, Executive Director of the Steelworker Health and Welfare Fund who spoke on the Affordable Care Act; Kim Miller, Director of the union's Rapid Response Program gave an overview and update on their latest actions. In addition, Connie Mabin, USW Director of New Media spoke on the unions' NextGen program that reaches out to younger workers to get them involved in our movement.

Ramogi Huma, President of the College Athletes Players Association (CAPA) spoke to delegates about the struggles of college athletes. CAPA was created with help from the USW, in an effort to improve how scholarship recipients are treated by the universities and the NCAA.

The delegates elected officers and executive board members for the next three years. They are featured on the cover of this issue.

The 126 delegates also adopted resolutions supporting the following actions on major issues facing SOAR and our members:

- ▶ Renew our commitment to recruit former and retired USW members into our organization.
- ▶ Endorse, support, participate in, and partner with the Alliance for American Manufacturing effort for the mutual benefit of both SOAR and the AAM.
- ▶ Support and recognize the Alliance for Retired Americans as a viable and active retiree organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of retired workers.
- ▶ Fight to protect Social Security and Medicare.
- ▶ Continue the fight to protect voting rights for all.
- ▶ Continue to work with the USW on issues of concern for retirees.
- ▶ Defend and support improvements in the Affordable Care Act.
- ▶ Fight to preserve and improve the Canadian health care system.
- ▶ Labor Law Reform.
- ▶ Continue to oppose trade policies and trade agreements that do not include provisions to protect workers' rights.
- ▶ Fight for legislation to create and support good, family-supporting jobs.
- ▶ Increase Political Action within our SOAR chapters.
- ▶ Fight to improve pension security and changes to the bankruptcy laws in both of our countries that; would guarantee workers priority over any other claims in bankruptcy proceedings.

The conference came to its successful conclusion with USW Vice President Fred Redmond administering the oath of office to the newly-elected Executive Board.



HOLLY HART
USW Legislative Director



RICH FIESTA
Executive Director of the ARA



STAN JOHNSON
International Secretary-Treasurer



NEW FACES ON YOUR SOAR EXECUTIVE BOARD



BRUCE BOSTICK – DISTRICT 1 BOARD MEMBER

Bruce joined the United Steelworkers in 1972 as a member of Local 1104, when he went to work for U.S. Steel Lorain Works in Lorain, Ohio. At the time he hired in, Local 1104 had over 10,000 members. He was elected to the grievance committee in 1978 and served as chairman of that committee for a number of years. Bruce served on various committees throughout his 30-year career. Among them were: the volunteer organizing committee that brought in 11 units to the local in the 1980s, the trade and craft committee, contracting out, education and newspaper committees.

Bostick was a twenty-five year delegate to the AFI-CIO Central Labor Council, where he helped build numerous coalitions. Among them was the Unemployed Crisis Center which brought labor, churches and community groups together to help the unemployed during the economic downturn of the 1980s.

Bruce was very active during the year-long lockout of our members in 1989 with U.S.

Steel that laid the groundwork for the pensions our members enjoy today. He also spent time on the union's payroll working with the Strategic Projects Department. While there, he provided valuable support and assistance to our members who were either locked out or forced on strike by their employers.

After retiring in 2002 from Republic Technologies, which purchased the Lorain Works in 1999 and declared bankruptcy shortly thereafter, Bruce went back to work with the USW. He worked with the International to garner political support for the fight to win back pensions and health care. While helping gain only a partial win in this fight, he joined SOAR and has remained active ever since.

Bruce served as a SOAR coordinator for the last 11 years before being elected to his current position and also serves as vice president for the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans. He currently resides in Columbus, Ohio.



MIKE PYNE – DISTRICT 2 BOARD MEMBER

Mike began his union career on September 7, 1972, when he hired in at Motor Wheel Corporation in his home town of Lansing, Mich. He became a member of Allied Industrial Workers (AIW) Local 182. Mike held various offices in the local including steward, chief steward, vice chair of the Motor Wheel branch of the amalgamated local, as well as vice president and president of his local.

Mike has always been interested in politics, starting in September of 1974, again in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, and 1984, when he was asked to work casually for the International union during the political season. In 1984, he accepted a job with the Michigan AFL-CIO in the political education department, coordinating the political program for the State Federation. In 1986 he changed positions within the Michigan AFL-CIO where he then assisted dislocated workers in finding new employment by offering training in different areas of work.

In December of 1988 Mike was offered and accepted the position of organizer with his International Union the AIW, which merged with the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) in 1993. He worked as an organizer and in 1998 he accepted a servicing assignment in North East Wisconsin—a position he held when the UPIU merged with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW) to create PACE. In 2005, PACE merged with the USWA creating the USW. After that merger, Mike continued his servicing responsibilities and took on the additional role of political coordinator for District 2, a position he held until he retired.

Mike has been a board member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans since 2007 and currently serves as president of that organization. He and his wife Pat have two grown children and two grandchildren. They reside in Appleton, Wis.



CLAUDE KARR – DISTRICT 9 BOARD MEMBER

Claude was 18 years old when he went to work at Continental Conveyor and Equipment Company in Winfield, Alabama, where he worked as a tool and die maker. He joined the union shortly after being hired and became active in Local 295 of the Aluminum Workers International Union (AWIU). Through a series of mergers with the Brick, Glass and Clay Workers, in 1982 the AWIU became the Aluminum Brick and Glass Workers International Union (ABG) which merged with the United Steelworkers in 1997.

Claude was very active in his local union.

While working at Continental Conveyor, he held a number of positions in his local, including, recording secretary, vice president, grievance chairman and president. In 1989 he served as a casual representative for the ABG and was hired as a permanent staff representative in 1993; a position he held until he retired in 2010 and became an active member of SOAR.

Claude lives in Cherokee, Ala. with his wife Michelle. They have five children and four grandchildren who they enjoy spending time with. They also enjoy travelling, gardening and boating, as time permits.



DAVE McLIMANS – DISTRICT 10 BOARD MEMBER

Dave was appointed to the SOAR Executive Board by United Steelworkers International President Leo W. Gerard to fill the unexpired term vacated by Denise Edwards. Dave was elected to a three-year term at this year's SOAR International Conference.

After being discharged from the U.S. Army, where he served a tour of duty in Vietnam, Dave joined the United Steelworkers at Budd Company, Trailer Division in Eagle, Pa. He rose through the ranks from shop steward to financial secretary, grievance chair and president of Local 4588. He served on the Steelworker's legislative committee until the plant closed on Nov. 18, 1987.

While laid off, Dave led the fight to recoup

five weeks of back pay for the members of his local and fought successfully, to recover the pension and benefits his members earned.

On February 15, 1988, Dave started working at Lukens Steel Co. in Coatesville, Pa. After his probation was served, he was appointed to the position of shop steward. He also served on the safety committee, as chairman of the trustees and vice president. He held the position of legislative chair from 1995 until his retirement in February 2013.

McLimans is currently serving as president of the Chester County Council AFL-CIO.

Dave lives in Parkesburg, Pa. with his wife Stephannie. They have six children and ten grandchildren.



BONNIE CAREY – DISTRICT 11 BOARD MEMBER

Bonnie worked at a number of union facilities before joining Local 105 of the Aluminum Workers International Union (AWIU), when she went to work for Alcoa Davenport Works in Bettendorf, Iowa (AWIU). Through a series of mergers with the Brick, Glass and Clay Workers, in 1982 the AWIU became the Aluminum Brick and Glass Workers International Union (ABG), which merged with the United Steelworkers in 1997.

Bonnie was very active with her local union. She served on the Safety & Health committee, coordinated both her local's Rapid Response team and Woman of Steel program. Bonnie also held the positions of trustee and political coordinator for her local. In 2004 Bonnie

worked as Eastern Iowa political coordinator and continues to serve in that capacity.

Bonnie is a graduate of the United Steelworkers Scholarship Program. She is a delegate to the Quad City Federation of Labor and is a former executive board member of that federation.

She retired in 2009 after 30 years of service. Soon after retiring, Bonnie was elected president of SOAR Chapter 11-4. Her chapter is one of the most active in the district. They are very involved with their community. As president, she has led the chapter in a number of volunteer opportunities.

Bonnie and her husband Don have two grown children and two grandchildren. They reside in Port Byron, Ill.



Members from SOAR chapters 23-16 and 23-4 joined WVARA activists to celebrate Medicare's 49th birthday with Nick Casey (far left), candidate for W.Va. 2nd Congressional District.

SOAR and WVARA Celebrate Medicare's 49th Birthday

SOAR members from Chapters 23-16 and 23-4 participated in West Virginia's Alliance for Retired American (WVARA) sponsored events to celebrate Medicare's 49th birthday.

The first event, in Charleston, W.Va. took place at the election headquarters of Democrat Nick Casey, who is running for Congress in the 2nd District. Casey is running for the seat vacated by Republican Shelly Capito, who is running for the Senate to replace Jay Rockefeller, who is retiring. Shelley Capito has a shameful lifetime ARA voting record of only 18 percent.

Casey's Republican opponent moved to the West Virginia 2nd District from Maryland just weeks before the registration deadline. He previously ran for Congress,

unsuccessfully, in his home state. He is backed by outside money, including groups associated with the Koch brothers.

Ginny Moles, president of the WVARA hosted the event. She addressed the group with some background and facts about Medicare. In her remarks, she included an interesting bit of trivia; former President Harry Truman was the first person to sign up for Medicare, at the Medicare bill signing ceremony in Independence, Mo. on July 30, 1965. A representative from the WVAFL-CIO read an endorsement letter from Richard Fiesta, the National ARA Executive Director, in support of Casey's bid for Congress.

The next event was in Beckley, W.Va. at the re-election headquarters of Congressman Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.-3). Rahall is being challenged by State Senator Evan Jenkins, who was a Democrat and changed to Republican before the filing date. Jenkins supported the Affordable Care Act twice in the State House, but is now saying he will repeal Obama Care if elected to the House of Representatives.

Alliance for Americans President Barbara Easterling and Executive Director Rich Fiesta both spoke at the event and endorsed Congressman Rahall in his bid for re-election. They thanked him for his support of issues that are important to retirees and working families and for his lifetime voting record of 94 percent on senior legislation.

Of course no birthday event is complete without cake, and WVARA President Moles made sure there was plenty for all at both events.



Left to right are: ARA Executive Director Rich Fiesta; ARA President, Barbara Easterling; Congressman Nick Rahall, and WVARA President Ginny Moles at Rahall's re-election endorsement event.

CONSUMERS HAVE SAVED A TOTAL OF \$9 BILLION ON PREMIUMS

Health care law will return an average refund of \$80 per family this year.

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced today that consumers have saved a total of \$9 billion on their health insurance premiums since 2011 as a result of the Affordable Care Act.

Created through the law, the 80/20 rule, also known as the Medical Loss Ratio (MLR) rule, requires insurers to spend at least 80 percent of premium dollars on patient care and quality improvement activities. If insurers spend an excessive amount on profits and red tape, they owe a refund back to consumers.

“We are pleased that the Affordable Care Act continues to provide Americans better value for their premium dollars,” said Secretary Burwell. “We are continuing our work on building a sustainable long-term system, and provisions such as the 80/20 rule are providing Americans with immediate savings and helping to bring transparency and accountability to the insurance market over the long term.”

An HHS report released today shows that last year alone, consumers nationwide saved \$3.8 billion up front on their premiums as insurance companies operated more efficiently. Additionally, consumers nationwide will save \$330 million in refunds, with 6.8 million consumers due to receive an average refund benefit of \$80 per family. This standard and other Affordable Care Act standards contributed to consumers saving approximately \$4.1 billion on premiums in 2013, for a total of \$9 billion in savings since the MLR program’s inception.

The report shows that since the rule took effect, more insurers year over year are meeting the 80/20 standard by spending more of the premium dollars they collect on patient care and quality, and not red tape and bonuses.

If an insurer did not spend enough premium dollars on patient care and quality improvement, they must pay refunds to consumers in one of the following ways:

- ▶ a refund check in the mail;
- ▶ a lump-sum reimbursement to the same account that was used to pay the premium;
- ▶ a reduction in their future premiums; or
- ▶ if the consumer bought insurance through their employer, their employer must provide one of the above options, or apply the refund in another manner that benefits its employees, such as more generous benefits.

The 80/20 rule, along with other standards such as the required review of proposed premium increases, is one of many reforms created under the health law helping to slow premium growth and moderate premium rates. Combined with the savings consumers are receiving from tax credits on the Marketplace and the new market reforms, including the prohibition of pre-existing condition exclusions and charging women more for insurance than men, the 80/20 rule helps ensure every American has access to quality, affordable health insurance.

HHS.gov

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



80/20 RULE

Insurers are required
to spend at least
80 percent of
premium dollars
on patient care and
quality improvement
activities.

International SOAR Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada

Twenty-three Canadian delegates from chapters across Canada took active roles in the 11th International SOAR conference held in Las Vegas on Aug. 8 and 9.

Delegates reflected on, debated and voted on a significant number of resolutions submitted by the SOAR executive board, SOAR chapters and the Canadian SOAR conference. Canadian delegates were often at the mikes to discuss issues such as pension reform, climate change and support for a green economy and political action.

Delegates also elected SOAR executive board members to lead them in the next three years. Elected to represent Canada were: Harry Hynd, Vice-President; Rod Bezo, District 3; Lawrence McBrearty, District 5; and Doug MacPherson, District 6.



**Delegate Brian Corcoran
Chapter 6-SA2**



**Delegate Bob Sutton
Chapter 6-10**

District 3 Western Canada SOAR Update



B.C. SOAR Co-ordinator Fred Girling and Vice-President Kay Noonan, Chapter 3-14.

Surrey, B.C.

Almost 600 Steelworkers' family members joined a USW-sponsored picnic at Bear Creek Park on July 12 to support striking members of Local 9176 (Crown Holdings).

Participants helped promote a boycott of Carnival Cruise Lines, given the fact Carnival's CEO also is a key member of the Crown Holdings board of directors, which refuses to negotiate a fair settlement to the 13-month strike. SOAR Chapter 3-14 officers processed the registrations.

Regina, Saskatchewan

Kudos to the members of Chapter 3-19 in Regina, who make their community better. Once again this summer, chapter members helped build a USW-sponsored house for Habitat for Humanity.

Members also donned their blue SOAR aprons to flip burgers and turn hot dogs to raise money at the USW family picnic. Soar members turned out in droves to make this year's barbecue another great success.



Cooking up a storm are SOAR members Randy Stieneberger, Joe Lawryk, Dennis Carrigan and Dave Voss.

Vancouver, B.C.

USW District 3 Director Stephen Hunt recently met with B.C. coordinator Fred Girling and the executives of Chapter 3-14 to discuss ways in which SOAR can assist active USW members.

Proposals included holding pre-retirement meetings for USW members, with participation of SOAR members sharing life stories about retirement. Plans are also underway for a future mini-conference between SOAR and NextGen members.

**Kay Noonan;
Fred Girling,
Director; Steve
Hunt and Garry
Owen, President,
Chapter 3-14.**



“Speaking truth to power is never easy, but union members are called upon to do this almost daily when standing up for what’s right.” Former SOAR president emeritus Lynn Williams said, in a speech to the International convention a few years ago, that all trade unionists are heroes because of the stands they take. So it was for three retired IWA members in British Columbia almost 25 years ago. Read on for a little bit of inspiring union history that saved a bit of old growth forest for future generation to enjoy.

Submitted by SOAR members Sy Pederson, former president of local 1-363 and Erik Erikson, retired Financial Secretary local 1-363.

Fallers’ Risky Decision 20 Years Ago Continues to Pay Off for All

The three-man crew spent the morning felling trees, as they had done for years, and as their fathers had done before them.

Felling is not a job for the sentimental or the fearful, as the cuts and gravity that transform timber into logs can just as easily crush a man to a bloody pulp.

On a May day 20 years ago, a trio of axemen went about their business bringing down tress on Vancouver Island, turning nature’s bounty into profits for their employer and paycheques for themselves.

They were midway through the workday when they came upon a stand of prime timber—towering red cedars and majestic Douglas firs, as well as spruce, balsam, hemlock and cottonwood.

The ground was level and free of underbrush. A thick canopy overhead filtered the sunlight. Paths blazed by foraging Roosevelt elk paths crisscrossed the area. Nearby, the chill waters of White River flowed past.

The setting was spectacular, even for men who spent every workday in the woods. “It looked pretty nice,” said Don Zapp, “so we put our saws down.”

“You’ve got to see it to believe it,” said Dave Luoma. “It seemed to be the right thing to do at the time.”

Joined by Dave Morrison, the union chairman at the Kelsey Bay division of MacMillan Bloedel, the three decided they simply could not destroy so beautiful a site. They took a stand to preserve a stand of old-growth trees.

They knew their impromptu decision might come with repercussions. They had earned seniority and contributed to a pension plan in a dangerous job. One of them had recently married.

“It was kind of a big risk,” Mr. Zapp said. “We had a lot of years to lose.”

He had entered the woods in 1972, following in the caulk-boot steps of his father, Tony. Four years earlier, Mr. Luoma had

also followed his father, Reino, into the forests of Quadra Island as a gyppo logger.

Fallers like the independence of being off in the woods on their own, making decisions as to how best bring down trees without getting brained. That spirit contributed to a stubbornness when they stumbled on an Eden in the middle of a cut.

As it turned out, the men were not punished for their extraordinary refusal.

Mr. Zapp and Mr. Luoma recently returned to the stand, where they posed against giant firs, flesh Lilliputians leaning against bark Gullivers. They had similarly posed two decades earlier for *Lumber Worker*, the union newspaper.

The two fallers were joined by about 40 others from the village of Sayward, about 340 kilometres north of Victoria. They wore rain slickers and held a picnic under a tarp. Colourful drawings by some of the 48 children enrolled in Sayward elementary and junior secondary school hung from another tarp like Tibetan prayer flags.

The event was the dedication of a sign telling the creation story of what is now White River Provincial Park, a 68-hectare patch of pristine wilderness that some call “the Cathedral Grove of the North Island.”

The sign was covered by a pair of grey Stanfields serving as a drape for the unveiling. Resting below was a hard hat and a pair of caulk boots, the protective tools of the faller’s trade.

The park was created five years after the loggers refused to do their job, protecting an elk and bear habitat, as well as a river filled with coho, steelhead, rainbow trout and Dolly Varden.

After the sign was unveiled, Mr. Zapp, 60, and Mr. Luoma, 62, shook hands. (Mr. Morrison was unable to attend.)

The ceremony was filmed by Renee Poisson, a Courtenay filmmaker. She is at work on a documentary about the creation of the



Dave Luoma (left) and Don Zapp were fallers who disobeyed a company order to cut down trees on a site that later became a provincial park. They recently returned to the grove, where a plaque heralding their effort was unveiled. Photo by Ann Greene.

park and the culture of fallers. Her producer is Sy Pederson, a 63-year-old retired faller and the former local president. “All my uncles and my father were fallers,” he said. “A dangerous job, being a faller.”

In his own time in the woods, he unwittingly headbutted his share of the dead branches known as widow makers.

“They go out and face dangerous conditions. Felling trees most days, dodging trees some days. Trees are felled and bucked and you’re producing something of value.”

“Because loggers are also hunters and fishermen,” he said, “the trio knew what was especially worth protecting.” Their fellow fallers and their union, IWA-Canada, backed their decision and the company did not log the grove, leaving a gem for the rest of us.

The documentary is not the first movie to have been filmed in the park. Hollywood came north to film “The Scarlet Letter,” a Demi Moore vehicle about which can be said it had better scenery than reviews. Artifacts from the film set are still evident at the park, including a wide boardwalk for horse-drawn carriages.

Mr. Pederson is raising funds to complete the documentary. Something of a joker, he has a vision for the premiere. He wants moviegoers to enter the theatre by walking along a trail of loggers’ longjohns, replacing the red carpet with a grey one.



Share Your Memories!

Next year, Rapid Response celebrates 20 years of educating, empowering and engaging. In that time, Steelworker members and retirees have made sure that our voices were at the table by taking on bad trade agreements, fighting for safer workplaces and pushing for better policy for all workers. We've battled over the World Trade Organization in Seattle, stopped the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami, rallied to stop anti-worker efforts at state capitols and marched through the Halls of Congress. We've engaged our members in the workplace, written letters, made the calls, signed the petitions and more.



There's a lot to be proud of!

We want to know your favorite memories. When we gather in Washington, D.C. for our next Rapid Response and Legislative Conference from April 13-15, 2015, we'll celebrate this 20-year milestone. Please help us by providing your memory of Rapid Response involvement.

Visit www.usw.org/RRmemories and tell us about:

- ▶ When you first got involved;
 - ▶ Why the program matters to you;
 - ▶ An experience you had at an action, rally or conference;
 - ▶ Or, something else related to Rapid Response that matters to you!
- And, if it's easier, just give us a call at 412-562-2257.

Here's what retirees, members and staff are saying:

"We started our local Rapid Response program in 1995 as a way to communicate with our members. We started by recruiting volunteers in all of our departments and shifts as a way to easily get information out. After a series of test runs, our network was ready to go. The local representatives were fortunate to have the opportunity to present this structure to the USW International executive board and very proud to have it adopted as a USW program for all local unions in the U.S."

— Donnie Blatt, District 1 Rapid Response Coordinator and Local 5724 member

"I took part in the first training meetings. We met on St. Patrick's Day in 1996 in St. Louis. When we left there we got faxes from the International, then we went all over District 11 teaching classes... I was proud to do it. It was the best tool and we got people going!"

— Bill Finkle, District 11 SOAR

"While at the 2012 Rapid Response conference in Washington, D.C., I had my 13 year old son lobbying on the Hill with me. Because I raised him in a strong union household, he was able to take an aide for Rep. Murphy (Pa.) to task!"

— Jo Jo Burgess, District 10, Local 14693

Head to www.usw.org/RRmemories and leave your thoughts.

ARE WE FAILING AMERICA?



America needs an infrastructure upgrade. In fact, it needed one yesterday.

By Scott Paul

That's the takeaway from a new report by Duke University's Center on Globalization, Governance & Competitiveness (CGGC). Washington's current approach to transportation investment—kicking the can and filling potholes instead of investing in bold new projects—is a serious drag on the national economy. And it's costing good paying jobs in your state.

This isn't just another partisan squabble in D.C.; lawmakers on both sides of the aisle want to fix this problem. If you travel even a short distance in America these days, you've seen the consequences of that underinvestment borne out. There are more than 150,000 deficient bridges in use across the country, and we're faced with an \$85.9 billion backlog worth of road repairs.

But Washington's failure to lead has even deeper consequences—without reliable federal funding, states like California and New York have found ways to outsource major transportation projects like the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. When California purchased foreign steel for the Bay Bridge, it helped create 3,000 jobs in China and sent over a quarter of the tax dollars used to build the bridge overseas.

Worrisome? Yes. But that's not the half of it. Consider that:

- ▶ Old and broken transportation infrastructure makes the United States less competitive than our top trading partners by slowing down the process of getting U.S. goods to market. That makes American businesses, manufacturers, and workers less secure.
- ▶ Over the years, underinvestment has cost the U.S. 900,000 potential jobs, including 97,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a self-inflicted economic wound.
- ▶ Infrastructure investment provides incredible bang for the buck: every \$1 billion spent on transportation infrastructure creates more than 21,000 American jobs. More people working means more economic activity, and that means a better future for America's middle class.

So what are we waiting for?

Congress' top priority should be closing the gap between our infrastructure needs and the investment required to reclaim lost competitiveness and put Americans back to work. The research clearly shows the potential for federal infrastructure investments to boost manufacturing job growth—and if we invest wisely, by spending our tax dollars on American-made transportation projects, we can stem the tide of outsourcing manufacturing jobs.

AAM will do its part to hold Washington's feet to the fire. But we need your help: Visit our website to learn more about how to rebuild America, and send a letter to your elected representatives demanding action.

Scott Paul is the President of the Alliance for American Manufacturing.





Washington Wrap

By Ken Kovack
SOAR Legislative Director
Washington, D.C.

"450,000"



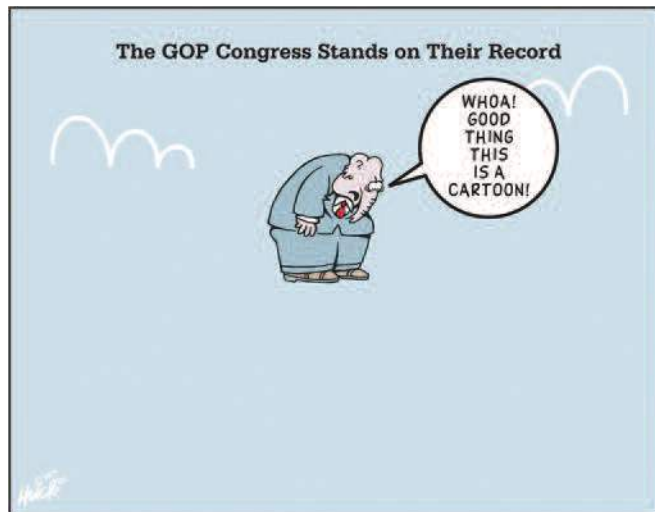
450,000 in Virginia may lack proper ID to vote.

The Virginia state law, that took effect this year, will have a serious impact during the mid-term, national and state elections in November. Last winter, during the administration of the now defamed Republican Governor Robert McDonnell (investigated by state and federal authorities and found guilty in 11 charges of corruption), the state of Virginia joined with 33 other states that recently passed laws restricting or adding barriers to eligible voters. Virginia's law was reported to be among the strictest.

Driver's licenses are the most common form of identification in

Virginia. The news article reported that 457,931 voters did not have a driver's license according to the state board of elections. This is cause for alarm in Virginia and the other states amending their voter eligibility laws. Election advocates say it is hard to estimate how many voters in a state might not have a valid ID. Some voters have photo ID through their school or work that may or may not be accepted depending on the rules in a particular state. These new ID laws place an extra unnecessary burden on potential voters. The end result of these new rules, championed by the right, is to reduce voter turnout among certain population groups that are considered to usually vote for Democrats.

Another huge obstacle facing the electorate is how widely these state administrators publicize the voting law changes. Awareness is essential and if this information is not circulated widely, it could create serious problems at the polls.



The bottom line, we have a constitutional right to cast our ballots. Many men and women have sacrificed their lives in the fight for moral justice, equal rights and the right to vote. It is imperative that we recognize the obstacles placed in our path and do whatever is necessary to ensure our ability to vote. A friend reminds me that the most important seat to have is in the voting booth on Election Day. That sounds good to me. Too many legislative issues are at stake to do otherwise.

Source: The Virginia State Board of Elections- News release, *Washington Post*, 9-26-2014.

Chapter 8-1 Holds Annual Summer Party

Baltimore, Md. — Chapter 8-1 held their annual Summer Party/PAC Fundraiser on June 25, 2014. Over 100 members and guests enjoyed a great barbecue and heard remarks from elected representatives from their federal, state and local governments, as well as a number of community representatives. SOAR Director, Jim Centner

and Bob Adkins, SOAR District 8 executive board member were also on hand and addressed the gathering.

Don Kellner, President of Chapter 8-1 presented a plaque to State Senator Norm Stone, who served over fifty years in the Maryland legislature. Kellner praised the Senator for his support over the years and stated, "It's an honor to present this token of our appreciation, Senator Stone is a true friend to labor and working families across Maryland."

The chapter also raised \$4,400 for the USW District 8 Political Action Fund.

A special thanks from SOAR and District 8 USW Director Ernest "Billy" Thompson, to SOAR Emeritus Board Member Jack Casparriello for spearheading this event and his continued good work and dedication to our union.



We Need an Economy that Works for Everyone

By Barbara J. Easterling

The conservative, billionaire Koch brothers are getting richer and average Americans continue to struggle financially. Forbes Magazine just listed Charles and David Koch as being tied for fourth on the list of the wealthiest people in America.

That is not unexpected.

The problem is, we don't have an economy that works for everyone. As winter approaches, so many retirees are hoping they'll have enough money to set the thermostat at a comfortable temperature.

The AFL-CIO recently introduced the Koch sisters to drive home that point. The Koch sisters are two working, union women who share the same last name as the Koch brothers, but whose beliefs stand in stark contrast. The Koch sisters' campaign brings the issues most Americans care about—from fair wages to protecting Social Security—to the forefront of the political debate.

America is at its best when we are working as a team to improve our communities and one another. The greedy wolves of Wall Street should not get lavish tax cuts, while Americans have to endure what some, such as the Koch brothers, want to feed us: draconian cuts to Social Security and Medicare. Their schemes will only increase income inequality and create a new gilded age.

What America really needs is an increase in the minimum wage. I love this country and hold out hope that our elected leaders in 2015 will work across the aisle to create an economy that helps everyone.

Barbara J. Easterling is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans. She was previously the secretary-treasurer of the Communications Workers of America. For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org or call 1-800-333-7212.



SOAR Lends a Hand

Chapter 27-11 saw steelworkers in need and wanted to help. Chapter President Paul Santilli arranged a press conference to show their support for the locked out workers from PSC Metals in Canton, Ohio. In addition, the chapter took up a collection to support the embattled workers who were out of work for over seven months in a dispute over health care.

The chapter also invited the locked out members to join them at their annual picnic the following week. When the members of 3610-02 arrived at the picnic they had good news to share a reason to celebrate! The company returned to the bargaining table and a settlement was reached.

Paul Santilli, President of SOAR Chapter 27-11 presenting a check to locked out members of USW Local 3610-02.



District 7 Summer School

This past July, more than 30 District 7 SOAR chapter presidents, coordinators and activists participated in a week-long school held at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. The special SOAR session was part of District 7's annual summer school. The week focused on everything from an overview of SOAR's programs and activities, to hands-on leadership training to build strong and vibrant chapters.

We were very fortunate to have SOAR Director Jim Centner help lead the school. His experience and knowledge was appreciated by all and made for lively participation and discussion. District 7 SOAR, with the help of our district's education department, plans to continue these sessions annually.



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