

Connection

From the Director's Desk - Another Myth Spread by the Right



If you listen to the noise out of Washington, the right is once again attacking Social Security! The latest target of the conservatives in Congress are disabled Americans receiving Social Security benefits. I am sure you've already heard the messaging: Social Security disability fraud is rampant because it's so easy to receive benefits and people would rather collect a hefty check from the government than work. It's the 2014 incarnation of "our nation is full of 'welfare queens' and 'greedy geezers.'" It also suffers from the same basic problem...it's simply not true.

The timing of this attack on Social Security's disability program is not an accident. It's the cornerstone of Congressional Republicans' campaign to oppose both President Obama's nomination of a new Social Security Administration Commissioner and the routine reallocation of the Trust Fund to prevent a 20% disability cut in 2016. Rather than address the disability shortfall head-on, as Congress has done many time before, conservatives hope to hold the disability program hostage in return for cuts throughout the entire Social Security program.

Brothers and Sisters, we are smarter than this. We cannot fall for the old divide and conquer politics that the GOP loves to promote. "Welfare queens and "greedy geezers" are simply villains created by disingenuous politicians to grossly misrepresent the truth. It infuriates the masses and builds support to fix a problem that doesn't exists. This takes the focus off of the real villains. Those who seek to destroy Social Security.

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) stated, "There is a quiet, covert war being waged on Social Security. The tactic? Divide and conquer. Today, detractors try to use Social Security Disability Insurance as a back door to cut the program as a whole. And, we will organize and fight back against today's attacks aimed at some of the most vulnerable Americans: the disabled."

Jim Centner, SOAR Director

~~2nd Judge Rules Against Indiana's Right-to-Work Law - District 7~~

2nd Judge Rules Against Indiana's Right-to-Work Law – District 7

A Lake County judge has struck down Indiana's 2012 right-to-work law that made it illegal for companies to compel nonunion members to pay fees for union services. But Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller said Wednesday that he will ask for a stay to prevent the decision from taking effect immediately. And the matter is expected to ultimately be decided by the Indiana Supreme Court, where a similar case already is pending.

Billy's Banter - Meeting Attendance is Important



Before I begin, let me start by saying that this article is not a criticism of our Chapters and their efforts to increase membership attendance at their meetings. However, I feel I have an obligation, as we all do, to try to grow the organization. A good way to do so would be to increase participation at our meetings. Our organization, like many others, has chapters that have meetings that are regularly well attended and those that suffer from poor attendance.

I would like to ask those chapters that continue to suffer from poor attendance to try something different. Who knows what can happen, it can't hurt. Guest speakers have proven to be effective. Maybe someone from the local union the chapter is affiliated with could stir up some interest. Elected representatives or someone that is familiar with retiree services in your area could also be a draw. The chapters that do this tell me it works. However, they insist for it to work, it must be promoted and well-advertised among the members.

For Chapters who continually have good attendance at your meetings, please take the time and share your methods and ideas that made your meetings a success. Please take the time and write a small article relating to what your Chapter does to generate attendance at your meetings. If you do, we will share your ideas with everyone who reads this newsletter.

If we can improve our attendance at meetings, it will provide more opportunities for us to become more visible in our communities and more people will want to join and become involved in our organization.

Again, we all have a vested interest in making SOAR a bigger and better organization than it presently is and by the sharing of ideas you can make a positive contribution to the growth and strengthening of SOAR. I look forward to hearing from you.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

Eldercare Abuse Awareness Day



Although Social Security serves people of all ages, the vast majority of our beneficiaries are retirees. We care about those we serve, which is why we had special interest in supporting World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15.

Started in 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organization (WHO), the day's purpose was to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older people so that we can help prevent it.

According to WHO, "Elder abuse is a violation of human rights and a significant cause of illness, injury, loss of productivity, isolation, and despair."

Learn more about elder abuse and how to stop it at the National Center on Elder Abuse, a part of the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Aging, at www.ncea.aoa.gov.



Medicare's anniversary on July 30th is a unique teaching moment when media outlets around the country – including newspapers, radio, and TV – will be open to a discussion of single-payer health reform, based on the model of improving and expanding Medicare to everyone! This week is your best chance to submit an op-ed or letter to the editor to your local paper.

Below are some talking points, as well as op-eds and LTEs that have been successfully published in the past on Medicare's birthday. Be sure to email Ben when you submit something, and we will help you gain a national audience for your submission!

Talking points:

- July 30 will be Medicare's 49th Anniversary, passed into law in 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson.
- In contrast to ideological disputes over the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), Medicare offers 49 years of living proof that public, universal health coverage is superior to private insurance in every way.
- Medicare is more efficient than private health insurance, its costs have risen more slowly, and yet it provides better access to care, better financial protection, and higher patient satisfaction (sources: [here](#) and [here](#)).
- Unlike the rollout of [healthcare.gov](#) and state exchanges under the Affordable Care Act, Medicare was implemented smoothly and at low cost because the program is universal and didn't juggle enrollment in hundreds of private insurance plans (source [here](#)).
- Universal healthcare would not only extend coverage to everyone below age 65, but it would improve coverage for seniors (Canada's universal plan covers 79% of seniors' costs compared with 51% covered by Medicare in the U.S.) and make Medicare financially sustainable (Medicare would have saved \$2 trillion if its costs had risen at Canadian rates since 1980).

Faces and Facts of Disability



Social Security touches the lives of many Americans, often during times of hardship, transition, or uncertainty. Our benefit programs—retirement, survivors, and disability—offer financial protection for people and families when they need it most.

Our new website and campaign, The Faces and Facts of Disability, provides facts about the Social Security Disability Insurance, or SSDI, program, as well as personal stories about the people helped by disability benefits. The numbers and facts are important. But the inspiring stories of real people—our neighbors, family and friends—tell the real story of what Social Security disability benefits are all

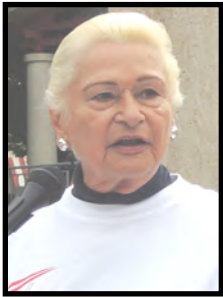
about. Find out for yourself at www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityfacts.

Alliance Joins Boycott of Staples over Efforts to Privatize Postal Operations

The Alliance for Retired Americans is asking its members to support the American Postal Workers Union's (APWU) efforts to stop the privatization of postal operations by joining APWU members in boycotting stores of the office supply chain Staples.

Older Jobseekers Face Unique Difficulties Without Unemployment Benefits

by Barbara J. Easterling



Unemployment is hard on workers of any age. It can mean stress, financial strain, and uncertainty about the future. Older jobseekers, though, face a particularly difficult road. All too often, these workers are also forced to deal with age and unemployment discrimination as they look for work. Workers ages 55 to 64 face the longest bouts of unemployment of any age group – nearly 11 months on average, according to the Department of Labor. That's three months longer than the average for 25 to 36-year-olds. Older workers are also more likely to face expensive medical bills, a burden that only adds to the financial strain of any extended period without a job.



With last year's failure of Congress to extend emergency unemployment compensation, unemployed workers are eligible to receive benefits for only 6 months. When these modest benefits are exhausted, older jobseekers are often forced to put their retirement security at risk by dipping ever further into their savings. Increasingly, older unemployed workers find themselves thrown into early retirement by financial circumstance. For many workers this means being forced to take Social Security retirement benefits early, a change that sees these workers' Social Security payments reduced for life.

Many older Americans who, through no fault of their own, find themselves without a job are being pushed towards long term financial ruin by the failure of Congress to act. It's time for Congress to extend emergency unemployment compensation to give our long term unemployed workers more time to find jobs.

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.

Next Week: Social Security and Medicare Trustees Report, Medicare's 49th Birthday

On Monday, July 28th, the Social Security and Medicare Board of Trustees will release their annual report on the current and projected financial outlooks for the two programs. The report will provide long term projections for the financial health of the programs stretching 75 years into the future. Last year's report projected that the Social Security trust fund would be able to maintain current benefits levels through 2033 while the Medicare Trust Fund, which covers hospital care, was projected to fully cover benefits through 2026 – two years later than forecast the previous year. The Alliance will issue a statement on Monday in response to this year's projections. Also next week: Activists will celebrate Medicare's 49th birthday with events across the country!

Alliance Urges Members to Make Voices Heard on Field Office Closings

Over the last several years, budget cuts at SSA have resulted in 80 field office closings and nearly 11,000 fewer staff providing face-to-face assistance. These cuts come during an unprecedented increase in demand for critical SSA services as Baby Boomers hit retirement age. In response to the wave of SSA staff reductions and field office closings, the Alliance is asking members to call their representatives in Congress and let them know that service cuts at the Social Security Administration have to stop. For information on the service cuts, as well as phone numbers for contacting your representatives, see the flier from the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) at <http://tinyurl.com/lja4wg4>.

Report From the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM)



We've been working pretty hard on an international trade case in Oil Country Tubular Goods (OCTG) the past few months. Here's the scoop:

The case was filed by several US producers charging nine different countries with dumping OCTG into our market, selling it for far less than what it even costs to make, putting our domestic industry at risk. A few months ago the Department of Commerce determined that all of the countries were indeed dumping this product into the U.S. with the exception of South Korea, even though we had evidence to prove otherwise. So, in our typical fashion, we raised a ruckus. AAM, USW and U.S. Steel held a series of rallies, sent thousands of support letters and visited hundreds of Senators and Members of Congress.

Two weeks ago, the Department of Commerce gave its final determination and ruled in our favor against South Korea. This was great news but the story isn't over yet. Now the case moves onto the International Trade Commission to determine if the actions of those nine countries caused harm to our domestic industry. We should have the final ruling in September, so stay tuned. Thank you to all SOAR members who helped on this campaign. We must continue to work together fighting unfair trade. 8,000 working families in the OCTG industry are counting on us! You can follow this case and our work to support it on our website at <http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/sosjobs> - Together, we can Keep it Made in America...

Rachel Bennett Steury, AAM Field Coordinator, Alliance for American Manufacturing

HHS.gov

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



Consumers have saved a total of \$9 billion on premiums

Health care law will return to families an average refund of \$80 each this year

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced 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.

An obscure Obamacare feature may net health insurance customers \$332 million this year. That's the total insurance companies will have to give back to customers this year under an Affordable Care Act provision designed to keep companies from overcharging consumers, the Department of Health and Human Services announced on Thursday. Including this year, consumers will have recovered a total of \$1.9 billion from insurance companies since the rule took effect in 2011, according to the department.

I Envision Great Opportunities With Soundcloud



District 7 recently held their annual SOAR school at the University of Illinois. We talked about the more traditional methods of communicating but then we discussed the newer forms of communication. This included such things as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest and others.

These new methods are valuable in this day and age. I've tried most of them with some success but there is one other tool that I think might be valuable for SOAR chapters. That is a free web service called Soundcloud.

Soundcloud is available at <https://soundcloud.com/>

Because our SOAR dues are just twelve bucks per year per retiree, the amount sent back to the chapter is just 30% of that or \$3.60 per retiree. That fact, along with the cost of a first class postage stamp of .49 cents, makes the mailing out of a newsletter quite an expense for a chapter's treasury.

Many SOAR members are at least using email these days so Soundcloud just might be the answer for some of our chapters wanting to keep their members informed of upcoming events, chapter minutes, updates etc.

Soundcloud is pretty easy to use once you get the hang of it. If your computer has a microphone on it, you can simply go to Soundcloud and upload your voice and if you have say, a one page newsy letter to read, after uploading, you can get the link to it and simply email the link to your chapter members.

To test it out to see if it might work for your chapter, just go to the above web address, sign up and agree to their terms of use, then try uploading a quick sample message. You can then listen to it and if not satisfied with the result, simply delete it and try again. That way, you can develop a "feel" for how to use it.

I have several recordings on Soundcloud and when my limit of free time is used up (which is quite a bit), I'll simply delete the oldest recordings giving me more space.

I realize that this might sound scary to some or maybe your chapter isn't interested in emailing out a "sound" newsletter but I thought the idea was at least worth sharing with you all.

You can find some excellent tutorials about Soundcloud on Youtube. One of the best is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJrtiMz33oM>

My own Soundcloud page can be found by simply going to the Soundcloud web page and searching for Charlie Averill.

If you should decide to give it a try and would like some help, give me a call at 574-772-3332 or email charlieav@embarqmail.com

Charlie Averill, SOAR Sec/Treas



Communication:

Noun

1. the imparting or exchanging of information or news:
2. a letter or message containing information or news.
3. the successful conveying or sharing of ideas and feelings.

SOAR Chapter Connection

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Upcoming Events

August 8-9 International SOAR
Conference

Elaine Sez...



When you
drink vodka
over ice, it can
give you
kidney failure.
When you
drink rum over
ice, it can give
you liver
failure.

When you
drink whiskey over ice, it can
give you heart problems.
When you drink gin over ice, it
can give you brain problems.
When you drink wine over ice, it
can give you blurred vision.
Apparently, **ICE** is really bad for
you! Who knew! Warn your
friends!
(I figured I needed new glasses!)

The McNeil Report

Two old guys, Abe and Sol, are sitting on a park bench feeding pigeons and talking about baseball. Abe turns to Sol and asks, "Do you think there's baseball in heaven?" Sol thinks about it for a minute and replies, "I dunno. But let's make a deal: if I die first, I'll come back and tell you if there's baseball in heaven, and if you die first, you do the same."

A few months later, poor Abe passes on. One day soon afterward, Sol is sitting there feeding the pigeons by himself when he hears a voice whisper, "Sol... Sol..."

Sol responds, "Abe! Is that you?"

"Yes it is, Sol," whispers Abe's ghost.

Sol, still amazed, asks, "So, is there baseball in heaven?"

"Well," says Abe, "I've got good news and bad news."

"Gimme the good news first," says Sol.

Abe says, "Well... there is baseball in heaven."

Sol says, "That's great! What news could be bad enough to ruin that!?"

Abe sighs and whispers, "You're pitching on Friday."

From the Editor

- Don't forget that this newsletter is online at www.usw.org Just type Connection in the search box located in the upper right hand corner.
- Please share this newsletter with your chapter members.
- District and Chapter articles and photos should be emailed or mailed to the SOAR office at the address at the left. Email is the preferred method.

Charlie Averill, Secretary/Treasurer and Editor



Interesting Fact About Social Media

Whatever you might think of “Social Media”, believe me, it’s here to stay. My Grandma didn’t like to use the telephone. It was like she was afraid of that newest technology and would much rather just yell across the corn field to her neighbors. Please don’t be like Grandma. Don’t be afraid of new technology. Try it, you might like it.

- Social Media is not about technology. Social Media is about People.
 - Over 50% of the world’s population is under 30 years old. To them, Dracula is a cereal character and Vampires live in high schools.
 - In 10 years over 40% of the Fortune 500 will no longer be here.
 - Social Media has overtaken pornography as the #1 activity on the Web.
 - Facebook tops Google for weekly traffic in the U.S. It even impacts our offline behavior.
 - 1 in 5 couples meet online
 - 3 in 5 gay couples meet online.
 - 1 in 5 divorces are blamed on Facebook
 - What happens in Vegas stays on Twitter, Facebook, Youtube and Flickr
 - An education study revealed that online students out performed those receiving face-to-face instruction.
 - Kindergartens are learning on iPads, not chalkboards.
 - If Facebook were a country it’d be the world’s 3rd largest, yet Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Google are not welcomed in China.
 - 95% of companies using social media for recruitment use LinkedIn.
 - A new member joins LinkedIn every second.
 - “We don’t have a choice on whether we DO social media. The question is how well we DO it.” Erik Qualman
 - Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and Britney Spears have more Twitter followers than the entire populations of Sweden, Israel, Greece, Chile, North Korea, Australia.
 - 50% of the mobile Internet traffic in the UK is for Facebook. Imagine what this means for bad customer experiences.
 - Over 37 million people watched the VW Darth Vader Super Bowl Ad on YouTube. The child actor had never seen Star Wars.
 - The Ford Explorer Launch on Facebook generated more traffic than a Super Bowl Ad.
 - Generation Y and Z consider e-mail passé. (Y are those born 1977-1994) (Z are those born 1995-2012)
 - Some universities have stopped distributing e-mail accounts.
 - John Doe is now friends with John Doe Jr.
 - 69% of parents are “friends” with their children on social media.
 - eReaders have surpassed traditional book sales.
 - GROUPON will reach \$1 billion in sales faster than any company in history.
 - 1.5 Million Real Farmers.....80 Million Farmville Farmers.
 - social gamers will buy \$6 billion in virtual goods by 2013.
 - movie goers buy only \$2.5 billion in real goods.
 - YouTube is the 2nd largest search engine in the world.
 - Every minute 24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube.
 - If Wikipedia were made into a book, it would be 2.25 MILLION pages long and would take you over 123 years to read.
 - Word of Mouth is on DIGITAL STEROIDS.....World of mouth.
 - 34% of bloggers post opinions about products & brands. Do you like what they are saying about your brand? You better....
 - Socialnomics is here to stay...
 - 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations. Only 14% trust advertisements.
 - 93% of marketers use social media for business.
 - The ROI (return on investment) of Social Media is Your Business Will Still Exist in 5 years.
 - Babies in Egypt have been named Facebook. Now that’s revolutionary.
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