

Connection

From the Directors Desk - Struggling



As I sat down to put pen to paper for this column, I thought it's time to quit bashing the Republicans and to write about bipartisanship. But, after much deliberation I was truly at a loss.

The GOP of the last few years is no longer your parent's or grandparent's party. This is most definitely not the party of Abraham Lincoln or Dwight D. Eisenhower.

These current groups, of so called conservatives in Congress, are nothing more than hired guns of the filthy rich. They are bought and paid for by those who seek to enrich their wealth by minimizing or eliminating rules and regulations that take from their bottom line.

They have created and financed the Tea Party to do their bidding; under the misguided notion that all government is bad. They believe government must be brought to its knees and recreated to serve the needs of the rich at the expense of the rest of us.

You only have to look at their most recent budget proposal. With few exceptions, the new Republican budget is just window dressing for their old Republican budgets: cuts for working families, tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas, coupled with the obliteration of Medicare and Social Security.

We deserve much better than this! We cannot allow the destruction of a just society to make the rich even richer. We must band together like never before to protect the quality of life of all Americans. Not just those who continue to fill the troughs of misguided politicians whose sole purpose in serving our government is to fatten their own wallets!

Jim Centner, SOAR Director

SOAR Will Be With The Alliance In Washington



The Alliance for Retired Americans 2015 Legislative Conference is being held July 7 - 10, 2015, at the Washington Hilton, Washington, DC. Join us as we hear from labor, government and community leaders on issues concerning Social Security, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act and retirement security. During the conference, we will be going to Capitol Hill to speak directly to your Senators and Representatives, so you can share your experiences and advocate to strengthen and expand Social Security and protect Medicare.

With talks of cutting Social Security and Medicare, it is critical that we get our message to protect, strengthen and expand Social Security and Medicare directly to lawmakers and decision makers. We will have skill-building workshops around organizing, effective advocacy, how to communicate your message and leadership development. The conference will lead into our "Medicare Turns 50" events.

SOAR Chapter Connection

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Elaine Sez...

Hello fellow basketball lovers!

March is OUR time to take over the television. No MSNBC, C-Span, or Chris, Rachael or Rev. Al for a couple of weeks. Yeah! I love the NCAA tournament! Poor Charlie, he pouts and slinks around the house and complains about me being "gone" for a month. Sadly, it will be over all too soon. Then back to same old, same old! Sigh! Go Michigan St.

The McNeil Report

She's Nuts About Basketball

During this March Madness, I hadn't seen Elaine for weeks. When we had a power outage at our house a few days ago, my main computer, laptop, TV, DVD, iPad and my new surround sound music system were all shut down.

Then, I discovered that my mobile phone battery was flat and to top it off, it was raining outside, so I couldn't play golf.

I went into the kitchen to make some coffee and I remembered that this also needs power. So when I bumped into Elaine in the kitchen, we sat and talked for about an hour.

She seems like a nice person.

Charlie Averill

From the Editor

- Don't forget that this newsletter is online at <http://www.usw.org/act/activism/soar/resources/soar-chapter-connection>. Please share it with your chapter members.
- Deadlines to submit articles and photos for the SOAR in Action magazine are April 15, June 25 and October 12. District and Chapter articles and photos should be emailed to the SOAR office at the address at the left.



Three Things To Do To Address Hearing Loss As You Get Older



While our hearing is likely to weaken with age, there are things we can do to address hearing loss. Hearing aids can be very expensive—as much as \$3500 for a single hearing aid and most people need one for each ear. Batteries are also expensive—as much as \$150. So, you want to be sure you really need them. If you do, here are ways to keep your costs down.

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1. Get a free [annual wellness exam](#) with Medicare. Medicare now covers an annual wellness exam in full so there's every reason to make an appointment. During your visit, make sure that the doctor checks you for hearing impairments as well as your likelihood of falling. While Medicare will not pay for a hearing aid, the doctor can tell you whether you really need one.
 2. If you qualify for Medicaid, check the Kaiser Family Foundation web site to see whether [Medicaid covers hearing aids in your state](#). If you're a Vet, [the VA may cover your hearing aids](#) depending upon the degree of your hearing loss or the cause of your hearing loss.
 3. If you need help paying for hearing aids, contact Hear Now at 800-328-8602. Through the Starkey Hearing Foundation, [Hear Now](#) might be able to provide you with good hearing aids at low cost. The Lions Club's Affordable Hearing Aids project also might be able to help you get [low-cost hearing aids](#). Sertoma, a civic, service organization, whose mission is hearing health, offers [a list of organizations that help people who need hearing aids](#).

Source: Jus+care

Tylenol And Other Painkillers With Acetaminophen Can Be Toxic When Overused



Millions of Americans can and do safely rely on painkillers with acetaminophen on a regular basis. They also take acetaminophen to lower fever. According to the [NIH](#), they generally have nothing to worry about so long as they do not exceed the maximum dosage for the drug, 4000 mg a day.

If you are taking multiple medications, however, make sure that those drugs do not contain acetaminophen. You could be exceeding the maximum daily dosage and doing harm to your liver.

It's also unsafe to take acetaminophen if you're on warfarin, a blood-thinning drug, sometimes known as Coumadin.

And the NIH warns that you should not have more than two alcoholic drinks a day when you are taking acetaminophen.

Source: Just+care

What's Your Rapid Response Story?

Share your memory and get entered to win a Rapid Response T-shirt.

For 20 years, Steelworkers have successfully used Rapid Response for education and activism on legislative issues. The program has changed our union by sparking activism and building power to take on the challenges that confront America's workers. In 2015, we are marking our two-decade milestone and want to hear from you!

Share Your Memory at <http://www.usw.org/RRmemories>.

Please share your story, a memory or your thoughts on Rapid Response. Maybe it's how you initially got involved or the first time you made a phone call to your Representative. Perhaps there was a training, rally, conference or other gathering that sparked your interest. Whether you have something short to say or many stories to tell, whether you've been involved for 15 years or just a few months, you are part of our story.

Rapid Response has been successful thanks to the hundreds of thousands of Steelworkers who have stepped up and gotten involved. We will be celebrating these memories starting at the upcoming Rapid Response and Legislative Conference and moving forward in 2015.

As a thanks for participating, we'll enter your name in a drawing for one of five Rapid Response t-shirts in early April!

Campaign For America's Future Says:

Republicans aren't ashamed or embarrassed. They are so in love with their big ideas to remake America, they introduced them twice. Once in the House, again in the Senate.

Here are some highlights of the GOP plan for America:

- 11 million families, seniors and children will lose food stamps.
- 35,000 children will not get Head Start.
- 133,000 fewer poor families will get housing assistance.
- 2 million fewer workers will receive job training and employment services.
- \$1.2 billion will be cut from education. That could fund 4,500 schools and 17,000 teachers.

Seniors aren't exempt from the devastating cuts. The House GOP plan turns Medicare into a "premium support" model that essentially replaces the guarantee of quality healthcare for seniors with a system of coupons. They slash services for seniors, including 500,000 fewer rides to doctors and grocery stores.

On Monday, March 23, we mark five years of the Affordable Care Act, making a difference in the lives of millions of Americans! To date, 16.4 million uninsured people have gained health care coverage since the passage of the Affordable Care Act. The story behind the numbers is told by millions who have freedom, peace of mind, and the security of affordable health coverage.



Statement of Richard Fiesta, Executive Director the Alliance for Retired Americans



“The budget plan put forward by House Republicans today is a frontal assault on the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities and working Americans.

It would privatize critical aspects of Medicare, gut Medicaid and drastically reduce support for persons with disabilities. It breaks promises to seniors regarding benefits they have earned over decades of work.

It also signals that the Republican leadership is interested in going after Social Security, which keeps 22 million older Americans out of poverty. We’ve seen these tactics before – Commissions to recommend ‘so-called

reforms,’ and attempts to pit disabled workers against retired workers. If Republicans were truly concerned about the Social Security’s future, they would be working to expand benefits for beneficiaries and improve the program’s finances by lifting the earnings cap on Social Security contributions.

Medicare has served our country’s retirees well for 50 years and the rate of health care spending is now slowing after decades of uncontrolled growth. This budget puts those gains at risk and the needs of the privileged over the middle class.

The 4.3 million members of the Alliance for Retired Americans – with members in every state -- will be redoubling its efforts to educate, speak out and hold members of Congress who vote for this budget accountable.”

Upcoming Events

- April 11-16 - Rapid Response Conference, Wash D.C.
- April 27 - White House Council on Aging, Cleveland, Ohio
- May 16 - Memorial Day Massacre remembrance, Chicago
- July 7-10 - Alliance for Retired Americans Legislative conference, Wash D.C.

Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

Anyone who has been passionate about anything at all knows that without the support of a spouse or loved one they simply can’t do their job as well without that support.

Union leaders, and SOAR leaders, know that they are depending on those they hold most dear to help steer them when they go wrong and help them along the way when they are right.

I have noticed that, whenever USW Int’l President, Leo W. Gerard, speaks at a convention or event, he generally makes it a point of introducing his spouse and family and thanks them for their understanding and support.

We all can take a lesson from Leo’s lead and know that the support of our loved ones can certainly give us the much needed and appreciated support that keeps us going in fighting for the things we hold most dear.

It’s the smart thing to do.

Charlie Averill, SOAR Sec/Treas

Stroke Survivors Can Benefit From Music Therapy - by Diane Archer



There are [more than 7 million stroke survivors in the United States](#), many of whom have lost their ability to speak and move and many others of whom have lost cognitive functions. But, with intensive therapy, sometimes it is possible for them to regain both physical and mental skills. [There is evidence that music therapy can help stroke survivors with movement and muscle control as well as with speech and mood.](#)

The Sacramento Bee recently profiled [a program in California that is doing wonders for stroke survivors who have lost their ability to speak by engaging them in song](#). Interestingly, music therapy can trigger memories in stroke survivors that can allow them to sing in a choir even when they

struggle to speak in sentences. People who otherwise cannot form words are able to do so in combination with melodies. “Research has shown that melodic intonation therapy, in which patients associate common phrases with rhythmic pacing and simple tonal patterns, has helped some stroke victims improve their ability to speak over time.”

In addition, group sessions for stroke survivors affords them an ability to engage and socialize, which can be very important for their health.

Three Ways To Get Physical Therapy Covered Through Medicare - by Diane Archer



Whether it's because of an illness, an injury or another reason, many of us will need physical therapy at some point in our lives. If you have Medicare, it might pay for your physical therapy. In order to get Medicare to cover your physical therapy, you must first qualify for coverage. And, how much physical therapy Medicare covers depends on where you get your physical therapy. Here are three ways you might qualify for Medicare covered physical therapy:

- Outpatient physical therapy services: Medicare might cover outpatient visits to a hospital, skilled nursing facility, [Comprehensive Outpatient Rehabilitation Facility \(CORF\)](#), or a Medicare

certified physical therapist in order to maintain or regain your functioning. Medicare will pay for up to \$1940 of physical and/or speech therapy and possibly more if your doctor explains why it is medically necessary. Medicare will cover an additional \$1940 of occupational therapy. In each instance, Medicare pays 80 percent of the cost (\$1552 in total) once you meet the \$147 deductible in 2015. Your doctor must set up the plan of care. [For other coverage criteria, visit Medicare Interactive.](#)

- Home-based physical therapy services: If you qualify for the Medicare home health benefit, Medicare will cover your physical therapy through the certified home health agency if your doctor prescribes it in your plan of care. [Click here to learn more about this limited benefit.](#)
- Physical therapy in a nursing home: If you qualify for the Medicare skilled nursing facility benefit, depending on your needs, Medicare might cover daily therapy services. [Click here to learn more about this limited benefit.](#)
- Medicare also covers cardiac rehabilitation care. [Click here to read more about this coverage.](#)

Source for this page: justcareusa.com

Report From the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM)



As you folks know, all of us at the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), have been working pretty steadily at addressing currency manipulation. By artificially devaluing their own currencies, other countries make the U.S. dollar more expensive, which makes American exports pricey and foreign imports dirt cheap. We're concerned that the new trade deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), will pass without a currency rule in it, allowing for trade cheats to continue to get away with this protectionist practice. AAM is among many groups across the country who have made their voices heard about this problem, because unfair trade hurts everyone.

That's why we're supporting two new bills that would address this trade cheating and put American manufacturing back on the map. In the house: the Currency Reform for Fair Trade Act (HR 820). In the Senate: the Currency Undervaluation Investigation Act (S 433). Learn more about them here: <http://goo.gl/QXIBM7>

Both bills can end currency manipulation and create millions of jobs - if we build support for them from our legislators. Many of you have been lending a hand in this effort, and we thank you and ask you to keep the momentum going! Your call to your member of Congress could be the one that convinces them to do the right thing.

So give your legislators a ring and tell them that supporting these bills will keep America working. Then let me know how it goes: 260-633-1060. And if your SOAR Chapter would like to help out the campaign in other ways, we'd love to hear your ideas.

Rachel Bennett Steury, AAM Field Coordinator, Alliance for American Manufacturing, 260-633-1060

Clear as Mud

Are you confused by what is going on in the Middle East? Let me explain.

We support the Iraqi government in the fight against Islamic State (IS). We don't like IS, but IS is supported by Saudi Arabia, whom we do like.

We don't like President Assad in Syria. We support the fight against him, but not IS, which is also fighting against him.

We don't like Iran, but Iran supports the Iraqi government against IS. So, some of our friends support our enemies and some of our enemies are our friends, and some of our enemies are fighting against our other enemies, whom we want to lose, but we don't want our enemies who are fighting our enemies to win.

If the people we want to defeat are defeated, they might be replaced by people we like even less. And all this was started by us invading a country to drive out terrorists who weren't actually there until we went in to drive them out. Do you understand now?

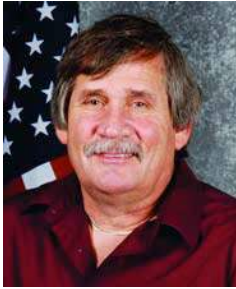
Source: Can't remember

Social Security Update (on line)

Eighty years have passed since the signing of the Social Security Act, and the agency and its programs continue to support millions of Americans.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt first brought the agency, then called the Social Security Board, to life on August 14, 1935. With his signature, President Roosevelt said, "Today, a hope of many years' standing is in large part fulfilled."

Fight 'fast track' of NWI steel jobs to overseas



Another 1,500 Northwest Indiana steelworkers will be out of work, The Times reported in February. “If this were wholly unexpected, it would be more of an emotional and psychological shock. But we expect this from steel jobs,” responded an economics professor. “Fortunately, the steel layoffs are not the hit to our economy they once were,” added a broker-owner.

As director of the United Steelworkers in District 7, representing more than 60,000 steelworkers in Indiana and Illinois, I have to ask, Is everyone in America asleep? These jobs are leaving Northwest Indiana because steel imports made with substandard wages are flooding America at an all-time high, compliments of their trade agreements. It is going to get worse because Congress is once again considering legislation to renew "fast track" trade

promotion authority.

Fast track is a policy that gives the executive branch the opportunity to negotiate — in secret and out of public view — trade agreements that have historically proven to suck the highest paying jobs out of America, fast. Since NAFTA was passed 21 years ago, via Fast Track, our trade deficit has grown from \$218 billion to \$912 billion. And when President Barack Obama signed the South Korea trade deal in 2011, our trade deficit with South Korea alone jumped 50 percent, which equates to a loss of 50,000 well-paid jobs.

Trade agreements need to ensure that workers in America benefit as much as the corporations pushing our jobs offshore while they pocket the effects of our loss.

Enough is enough. It is time to wake up! Contact your president, senators and congressman. Remind them they are elected officials and need to keep the good jobs here in America. I have offered, as other labor organizations have, to work with Congress to ensure that future trade agreements work for America, all of America.

It is time to stop fast track and secret trade agreements that permanently take away the good jobs from America and destroy the middle class.

Mike Millsap, District 7 Director

Get This -- Ted Cruz is going on Obamacare



The newly announced Republican presidential candidate told CNN's Dana Bash on Tuesday that he will sign up for health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act -- a law he has been on a crusade to kill.

“We'll be getting new health insurance and we'll presumably do it through my job with the Senate, and so we'll be on the federal exchange with millions of others on the federal exchange,” Cruz said.

Asked whether he would accept the government contribution available to lawmakers and congressional staffers for their health care coverage through the ACA, Cruz said he will “follow the text of the law.”

Source: CNN

Billy's Banter SOAR In Action



I am very happy to report on some of the activities our SOAR chapters have participated in recently. As you all are aware, the mission of SOAR is to be something more than lunch meetings or picnics. We are an Organization that wants our members to be active and involved in supporting and protecting our rights and the rights of our sisters and brothers.

Reports and messages of thanks have come to SOAR regarding our assistance on the picket lines of USW members on strike in the oil industry; where we have active chapters that have stepped up and assisted the strikers on the lines, leafleted the public and provided moral support as well. With an industry that had not had a work stoppage in over 30 years, the experience and knowledge possessed by some of our SOAR members proved invaluable. The support given by our SOAR chapters, especially in District 1, 7, 12 and 13, showed how valuable a chapter can be and should be emphasized in our talks with locals when discussing the formation of more chapters.

Also some of our Chapters have also been involved in local political elections. Chapters in Illinois and Colorado have sent numerous reports and pictures of their activities and involvement in the campaigns of local politicians. I am sure there are more stories out there like these and we need to hear about them.

I am so proud of these members and their involvement, but we need to do more. We need more chapters involved. We need more stories of the activities of our chapters to show how valuable SOAR is and to help in organizing more SOAR chapters.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

Don't Get Scammed

Financial scams abound. Recently, the [Federal Trade Commission shut down two computer scam operations that allegedly tricked people out of \\$120 million](#). The scammers prey on people in all kinds of ways -- first building trust, then offering "help" and then asking for money. Here are three things you should never do.

1. Don't give strangers your social security number, credit card information or bank account information under any circumstances.
2. Don't wire money to anyone without first checking with someone you trust.
3. Don't give strangers access to your computer.

Medicare Turns 50:

Upon the passage of Medicare, President Lyndon Johnson said that, "No longer will young families see their own incomes, and their own hopes, eaten away simply because they are carrying out their deep moral obligations to their parents, and to their uncles, and their aunts.

Medicare helps give millions seniors and families of seniors the financial security they need. Learn more about the history of Medicare on the Alliance website: http://retiredamericans.org/members/Medicare_Turns_50

For a printable version of the Friday Alert document: <http://tinyurl.com/mugr6qn>

Wealth And Income Inequality



Have you noticed lately that many politicians have come to the realization that income inequality is a major problem? It's no surprise the working middle class has not been confronted with such significant income inequality in over 30 years. Yet, the 1 percent has enjoyed 90 percent of the income growth. Yep, the rich are getting richer.

But some of these same politicians support and pursue the same policies that have caused the problem. Tax cuts for the wealthy, less regulations, bad trade policies, and the attack on unions.

They call it trickle-down economics and it's also known as Reaganomics. Or, is it really trickle on. None the less, it hasn't worked and has contributed to the income inequality problem. In addition, they want to destroy unions and worker

bargaining rights through so called right to work (for less) laws.

Unions are the only and best answer to assure that workers have a place at the table to protect workers and increase their income and provide rights that otherwise would not exist.

We know the history and what has worked and what doesn't work.

William Gibbons, PACE Representative

House Seeks to Implement Medicare “Doc Fix”; Replace Sustainable Growth Rate

House Speaker John Boehner and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi have been negotiating a long-term deal to resolve issues with Medicare funding. Currently, Medicare legislation requires a series of short term adjustments to the Sustainable Growth Rate, called “Doc Fix,” that prevents funding cuts to doctors.

Alliance Executive Director Richard Fiesta said that, “We are monitoring the deal closely, as we have concerns that this agreement could put a significant burden on current beneficiaries.”

According media reports, this deal would remove the Sustainable Growth Rate, a formula that determines changes in compensation, and replace it with a new payment system. Preliminary reports also indicate that beneficiaries with incomes higher than \$133,000 would pay higher premiums and Medigap plans with first dollar coverage would incur a deductible. Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/mxtvt7x>

Bills to Expand Social Security Benefits Introduced

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced legislation last week that would expand Social Security benefits by about \$65 a month for most recipients. The bill also increases cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security recipients in line with the CPI-E and provide a minimum Social Security benefit for retirees.

Sen. Sanders' plan would significantly improve Social Security's financing by eliminating the cap on Social Security contributions for earnings above \$250,000 a year. It would also expand the system's revenue base to include high-income households' unearned income. Read more about the Sanders bill in The Hill: <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/235682-sanders-wants-to-increase-taxes-to-bolster-social-security>

Rep. John Larson's (D-CT) also introduced a bill to expand Social Security benefits this week. This legislation would provide- larger cost of living increases for retirees and disabled workers and raise the income cap on Social Security taxes (currently \$118,500) to \$400,000.

Alliance President Barbara Easterling commented on these developments. “We can and must expand Social Social Security benefits and extend the financial health of the system.” More at: <http://tinyurl.com/lp6tttdr>

Source: Alliance for Retired Americans Friday Alert 3-20-15
