

USW@Work

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Volume 10/4

A Powerful Voice for Workers



USW Reaches \$31 Million Settlement for FCA Retirees

**October 14, 2015—
Over 400 retirees who
worked for FreightCar
America Inc. attended
two meetings at
Aces Lounge in
Johnstown, Pa., to hear
the terms of a proposed
settlement to end years of
litigations over unlawful
termination of retirees’
medical and life
insurance benefits.**

Bethlehem Steel operated the factory from 1923 to 1991, when it was purchased through a management buyout and renamed Johnstown America Industries. It became Johnstown America Corp. in 1999 and FreightCar America in 2005.

This is not the first battle to be waged and won with management over employee benefits. In 2002, the company eliminated retiree insurance benefits when Bethlehem Steel went bankrupt and stopped reimbursing Johnstown America for benefits. USW attorneys sued, and the retirees won a settlement in which the company reinstated benefits.

This latest battle started in July of 2013, when FreightCar informed the USW and

retirees that it intended to cancel contributions for health and life insurance benefits for the Johnstown retirees.

A final hearing will be held in January 2016. Once finalized, the settlement will create a Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) to administer the funds. The VEBA will provide assistance with health care coverage for the approximately 1,000 retirees and surviving spouses, as well as resume cash death benefits that were suspended by the company.

For additional coverage on this story, please see the related article in this month's USW@WORK.



BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

Activism

I am very pleased to report to you regarding SOAR involvement, support and activism this year. SOAR has established our own Facebook page. I have asked our board to try to boost our “friends” to 500. I am happy to say that we have far exceeded that goal and with a little more effort from us all we could reach 1,000 before the end of the year! Please ask your friends to “Like Us” and follow SOAR on our Facebook page.

SOAR has been an active participant supporting the USW members in oil and steel, both on the picket lines and as participants in numerous demonstrations in both countries. Do not kid yourself; our support in the fight with U.S. Steel, Arcelor and others is for self-preservation. If U.S. Steel can eliminate their retiree obligations in the court room, as it is attempting to do in Canada, and if Arcelor and others can negotiate away their obligations, as they are attempting to do in the U.S.; this will embolden other companies and/or groups to

reconsider their obligations to seniors in an attempt to increase profits or reduce costs.

SOAR has found ways to work with other coalitions, both inside and outside our union, to build strength and increase our members. Many other groups share our position on issues that impact our communities, our lives and our future. We need to continue to find ways to work with and grow our relationship with these groups. Ask them to speak at your SOAR meetings and ask them if you can speak at their meetings. By exposing ourselves to these groups, we may get additional members into our chapter, who will share our desire to make a difference.

We had many SOAR groups involved in recent Labor Day parades and many of our members are taking an active role in the upcoming elections.

Thank you to all the SOAR members who have promoted activism in your chapters. Keep up the good work, and for those who have not been as involved as you should be, now is the time to start. We need you more than ever and if there is anything I can do to help, feel free to give me a call.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



JIM CENTNER
SOAR Director

A Thought on Bargaining

As most of you know, our union is having a difficult time reaching a fair and equitable agreement with the steel industry. Our members who work at ATI (formerly Allegheny Ludlum) are currently locked out. Our members at Arcelor/Mittal and U.S. Steel, as well as Cleveland Cliffs, are all working day-to-day on a contract extension, as we continue to bargain in hopes of reaching an agreement we all can live with.

I understand these are difficult times. What I don't understand is the mentality of the corporate leaders in this industry turning its back on its best resource, our members. It's the hard work, dedication and ingenuity of our members that made these companies what they are today!

Our union has stood side-by-side with these employers fighting unfair trade and hostile public policy that threatened their very existence. Yet, the minute the going gets rough they turn on their workforce; and try to take away the gains that our members have fought for and won over years of collective bargaining.

These are not easy jobs. I worked in this industry. It's a hot, dirty and dangerous work environment. Each and every one of our members either have witnessed or know someone who lost a limb or a life trying to earn a living providing for their loved ones. No one should have to worry about coming home in one piece, or for that matter coming home at all! However, in this industry and many others that our members toil in every day, that worry is real!

The CEOs and corporate elite have no idea what our members do every day that allows them to live in the lap of luxury. It's time for them to think about their lavish lifestyle and what they can give up in order for manufacturing to survive! Our members have done their share and more!

One day longer – one day stronger! I applaud all of our members involved in this struggle and for standing up for what is right and just! You are on the right side of this fight and history will bear that out!

SOAR in ACTION

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Jim Centner, Director/Editor
Lee Etta Hairston, Copy Editor

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SOAR and Union Blast Koch Brothers

by Bruce Bostick
District 1 SOAR Board Member

As part of the GOP union-busting media circus, the billionaire Koch brothers brought their Americans for Prosperity (AFP) convention to Columbus, Ohio, where thousands of unionists and friends gave them a true “union-welcome” to our state!

AFP has funneled millions from the Koch brothers to finance campaigns to destroy unions, wipe out pensions and bankrupt Social Security and Medicare. Ohioans took the opportunity to let them know that is not welcome in the Buckeye state. Four thousand angry protesters took to the streets, answering the call of the Ohio AFL-CIO to stand up to the billionaires. SOAR mobilized and was a major part of the upsurge!

“We had to show up,” stated Jim Reed, Cleveland SOAR President. “People have fought too hard for too long to win gains that these arrogant billionaires are trying to wipe out. We’re fighting for everyone!”



SOAR delegations helped allies with the mobilization effort and brought in folks from Cleveland, Canton, Massillon, Youngstown, Warren and Columbus areas.

“Ohioans voted overwhelmingly to reject the message that busting unions and enriching the wealthy would be good for us. We’re turning out,” said Tim Burga, Ohio AFL-CIO President, “to let the Koch brothers know this message won’t fly here. We’re here for economic justice for all.”

In the aftermath of this huge, successful turnout, our attention is returning to the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement. Congress must reject this lousy trade agreement, which requires a congressional vote to survive. Let’s bury it!



Chapter 30-18 Holds Annual Reunion

Retirees of the Northern Indiana Public Service Company came together on September 13, 2015 to celebrate their 17 years as a chapter. Charlie Averill, SOAR International Secretary-Treasurer who is a charter member of the chapter stated, “Since the company

service territory consists of the northern third of Indiana, having any social function to include our chapter members is very difficult; so this annual event is very important to us,” he went on to say, “Chapter President, Dorine Godinez, and all of the reunion com-

mittee members, did a great job organizing this year’s event that would not have been possible without the strong support the chapter receives from USW Locals 12775 and 13796 that represented the members while they were working.”



SOAR CONTINUES TO GROW IN DISTRICT 9

Thanks to the commitment of District 9 Director Daniel Flippo and the district's staff, SOAR has experienced unprecedented growth. In the last six months we have chartered four new chapters. The district has organized nine new chapters in the last 18 months.

SOAR District 9 Executive Board Member Claude Karr and Coordinator Greg England have been given free range of the district. Director Flippo has tasked them with the responsibility to build our retiree organization and has given them necessary support to make it happen.

Congratulations to all!



New SOAR Chapter Established at Local 12136 at ABC COKE

The new charter was presented to Local 12136 in May at their local SOAR meeting. USW District 9 SOAR Board Member Claude Karr and District 9 SOAR Coordinator Greg England worked with Local 12136 President Arnold Burton to establish the chapter for their local's retirees.

Pictured above with chapter members are the newly elected officers: President, Jerry Whitehead; Vice President, Travis Beavers; Recording Secretary, Mark Brady; Financial Secretary, Greg England; Trustees, Pat Carnes, Charles Brady and Larry Paul. SOAR Coordinator Greg England made the charter presentation on behalf of the district.



SOAR Charter's First Chapter in Mississippi

In September, members of Local 759, who work at Mississippi Polymers, became the first chapter in the state. Claude Karr, SOAR Board Member and Local 759 President, Mark Casto, were instrumental in getting this chapter started. President Casto stated, "The local's retirees are very proud of their new SOAR chapter." "This SOAR Chapter will add to the activism in the fight for labor in Mississippi," stated District 9 Director Daniel Flippo, "and we are proud to have started SOAR's first chapter in the state of Mississippi."

Pictured above with chapter members holding the SOAR Flag are: Greg England, Coordinator; Scott Cox, District 9 Staff Representative; and, Claude Karr, Executive Board Member. Also pictured are newly-elected chapter officers: President, Robert Palmer; Vice President, James Curtis; Secretary, James Blakney; Treasurer, James Yates; and, Financial Secretary, Paula Curtis.



Local 983—International Paper Receives SOAR Charter

Members of Local 983, from the International Paper Mill in Augusta, Ga., have a new SOAR chapter. Greg England, district coordinator presented the charter on June 16, 2015. SOAR Board Member Claude Karr worked with the Local's President, Lloyd Allen and Greg to get the chapter up and running.

Pictured above with members of the chapter are the newly elected officers: President, Billy Flanagan; Vice President, Carmie Bryant III; Recording Secretary, Selena Williams; Financial Secretary, Howard Griffin; Treasurer, Malcolm Hall; Trustees, Johnny A. Williams Sr., Alphonso Wright Sr.; and, Fred Kelly along with Coordinator Greg England.



Pictured manning the SOAR table at the District 9 Conference in September are: Greg England, District Coordinator; Jim Centner, SOAR Director and Claude Karr, District Executive Board Member.

See more news from District 9 on page 15.

The Alliance for Retired Americans Holds 2015 Legislative Conference

July 7-10, 2015—SOAR members were among the 400 activists that gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Alliance's 2015 National Legislative Conference. The activists reached more than 150 offices on Thursday's Lobby Day, when they met with their members of Congress and Senators and voiced their concerns about retiree issues. Alliance members lobbied their elected officials with very specific goals in mind, including: expand earned Social Security benefits; protect Social Security Disability Insurance; preserve Medicare and allow no cuts to it; and oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Trade Agreement.

"A core part of being a lifelong activist is a commitment to lifelong learning. We are never too old to keep learning new skills," said Alliance President Barbara J. Easterling of the conference's mission.

Richard Trumka, President of the AFL-CIO, began the conference with a fiery speech on Tuesday. Several elected officials addressed the attendees: House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Representatives Keith Ellison (D-Minn.) and Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.). On Wednesday evening, the President's Award was presented to Judy Cato, Executive Vice-President Emerita, for her activism and years on the Alliance Executive Board.

Max Fine, a member of President Kennedy's White House Task Force on Medicare in the 1960s, told the crowd what it was like to work on creating Medicare with both JFK and President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Several other speakers, including Mark Dimondstein, President of the American Postal Workers Union; Will Fischer, Executive Director of the Union Veterans Council; and many others brought enormous energy to the week's events.

The Alliance offered 11 different action sessions throughout the conference, including: *TPP: Latest update and What We Do Next* and *Politics and Advocacy in Action*.

"Now, we must go home and educate our neighbors on how strengthening and expanding Social Security would improve benefits for millions of Americans and ensure the stability of the program for years to come," said Jo Etta Brown, Alliance Executive Vice President for Community Advocacy in her concluding remarks.

SOAR President, Bill Pienta who attended his first Alliance Legislative Conference remarked, "What an impressive gathering of activists... these are people who fought for justice and dignity all of their working lives and continue to do so long into their retirement. I am glad to have them on our side!"



Pictured left to right: Bob Adkins, District 8 Board Member and West Virginia Alliance Vice President; Mike Pyne, District 2 Board Member and Wisconsin Alliance President; Charlie Averill, SOAR Secretary-Treasurer; Andres Rosas, Chapter 13-1 President; Jim Centner, Director; Bruce Bostick, District 1 Board Member; Bea Lumpkin, Chapter 31-9 Member; Bill Pienta, SOAR President; Carl Ramich, Chapter 10-6 President; Pam Landon; SOAR Member; Steve Landon SOAR Member and Idaho Alliance President; Pat Lane Chapter 31-13 Recording Secretary; Bill Gibbons, SOAR Board Member and Scott Marshall, District 7 Board Member. Missing from the photo is James Roberts, President Chapter 10-1.



Happy Birthday MEDICARE

On July 30, 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed the Medicare Act into Law. To mark this anniversary on Tuesday, July 28, four Granite City SOAR members: Jeff Rains, George Schneider, Marleen Carey and Dennis Barker delivered a "Happy 50th Birthday to Medicare" cake to Illinois Congressman Mike Bost's office in Belleville, Ill.

While there the delegation reminded the congressman's staff that The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, which created the Part D drug program, explicitly prohibits the government from negotiating lower prices under Medicare. They urged the representative to support Representative Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) and bill H.R. 2005 that would require drug makers to negotiate drug prices similar as what is done for veterans under the VA benefit Program. The Congressional Budget Office estimates this proposal would produce savings of \$121 billion over ten years.

They also asked the Congressman to denounce remarks made by Jeb Bush recently when he said, "We should phase out Medicare." The fact remains, Medicare has never been stronger. The answer, it seems, for extending the life of Medicare was the passing of the Affordable Care Act. Before "Obamacare" was passed, Medicare was projected to face a serious fiscal shortfall in 2017. Last week the Medicare trustees reported they now believe the system is fiscally secure through 2030.

Celebrating International Day of Older Persons

SOAR was among 50 organizations, representing over two million seniors, which staged events in major cities across Canada on Oct. 1 to celebrate International Day of Older Persons.

International Day of Older Persons was proclaimed in 1982 by the United Nations. SOAR members were actively involved in most of the events held in major Canadian cities this year. We celebrated the contributions seniors have made and continue to make in our communities, and we raised awareness of issues important to seniors.

This year's events in Canada were particularly significant as they occurred in the midst of a federal election campaign, along with the fact that, for the first time in the country's history

seniors outnumber children under the age of 14. Statistics Canada predicts that by 2024 seniors will account for 20.1 percent of the population.

The 50 seniors' groups involved in this year's celebrations agreed to politicize four key issues: pension reform; a national housing strategy (with emphasis on seniors' housing); federal leadership on health care funding, including a strategy for pharma care, dementia and home care; and income inequality.

Here is a sample of events where SOAR members participated:

► In **Hamilton**, home to chapter 6-10, SOAR members were among 200 people on hand for a public event at city hall where speakers focused on the four key election issues. The city's

mayor declared Oct. 1 the Day of Older Persons.

► Chapter 6-80 members in the **Waterloo-Kitchener** area attended a public event and flag raising at city hall.

► SOAR chapter 6-02 held an open forum at the Steelworkers Hall in **Sudbury**, where New Democratic Party candidates Claude Gravelle (SOAR member) and Paul Loewenberg addressed the four election issues identified by seniors. The city's mayor issued a proclamation recognizing Oct. 1 as International Day of Older Persons.



SOAR FOOD BANK SMM—
From left to right: Don Barill, Chapter 17; Sandra Pold, Chapter 7; Joan Paquette, Chapter 17; Val Barill, Chapter 17 and Bob Grant, President Chapter 7.



SUDBURY IDOP—
From left to right: Peter Hunter, Julien Dionne, Roy Madalvee, Paul Loewenberg, Wyman McKinnon and Claude Gravelle.





► In **Toronto**, SOAR chapter 6-01 helped organize an event at Queens Park, outside the provincial legislature, in collaboration with the Ontario Health Coalition, nurses unions, public service unions, the SeniorsVote

group and other organizations, to commemorate the lives and deaths of 10 seniors who were victims of homicide in long-term-care facilities in the decade.



TORONTO IDOP—Mohamed Baksh and Graham Dean, members of Chapter 6-01.

Art Kube Brings Honour to SOAR

SOAR Chapter 3-14 member receives Order of Canada

Lifelong Steelworker Art Kube's tireless activism on labour and seniors' issues has earned him one of his country's highest honors, the Order of Canada.

A member of SOAR Chapter 3-14 in Vancouver, Art has dedicated his life to making things better for working people. In receiving the Order of Canada, Art has brought honor to SOAR and we congratulate him on this tremendous award.

Art began his remarkable career in the trades, working as a steel fabricator, heavy equipment operator and miner. His work took him from Vienna, Austria, to the Canadian Arctic and Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia.

In the 1960s Art became active in the Canadian Labour Congress and over the next two decades he took on a variety of positions advancing bargaining rights, labor education and organizing.

From 1983 to 1986 Art served as President of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, at a turbulent time in the province's history. The B.C. government under Premier Bill Bennett's Social Credit government introduced 26 bills on July 7, 1983, slashing social services, public schools and trade union rights, sparking a huge backlash against the government.

An organization quickly mobilized under Art's leadership, given the name "Operation Solidarity." The



campaign pulled together huge protest rallies across the province, culminating on Aug. 10, 1983, with 45,000 people rallying at Empire Stadium in Vancouver. Tens of thousands of workers went on strike across B.C. before the government agreed to talk. Art's leadership inspired an entire movement, leaving a legacy of determination and pride.

Art's commitment to community has continued in his retirement with seniors' organizations including SOAR, the Council of Senior Citizens of British Columbia, and the National Pensioners Federation. He remains one of the strongest voices on seniors' issues in Canada.

McINTYRE POWDER PROJECT

Documenting health issues in workers exposed to aluminum dust



by Janice Martell

From 1943 to approximately 1979-80, miners employed primarily in gold and uranium mines and some base metal and radium mines in Canada, the United States, Belgian Congo, Western Australia and Mexico were required to breathe in a finely ground aluminum dust known as “McIntyre Powder” prior to each shift, as a preventative measure (prophylaxis) against silicosis.

Prior to going underground, miners would undergo a mass “treatment” wherein canisters of McIntyre Powder aluminum dust would be dispensed via a compressed air system into the mine dries or specially constructed chambers. All ventilation would be stopped during the aluminum dust dispersal and miners were instructed to inhale the black fog of aluminum dust deeply to protect themselves against silicosis.

This practice was mandatory and was given without medical supervision and without prior informed consent of the miners. Tens of thousands of miners would have been exposed to McIntyre Powder during the 36 years that the program ran.

McIntyre Powder aluminum dust was also used to “treat” the employees of several non-mining industries in several U.S. states and a few such industries in Canada. These industries included pottery manufacturers, foundries, silica brick manufacturers and refractories.

Unlike the “mass treatment” method of aluminum dust dispersal used for miners, the employees of these non-mining industries were given individualized McIntyre Powder aluminum dust inhalation “treatments.” During an individualized “treatment” session, the employee would inhale McIntyre Powder through a mouthpiece-hose apparatus attached to a ball mill that ground the aluminum into a very fine, respirable dust.

The long-term health impacts on workers exposed to McIntyre Powder are unknown, but there is reason for concern. Clinical literature and research studies indicate that aluminum is widely accepted as being a neurotoxin (e.g. Kawahara & Kato-Negishi, 2011; Han et al., 2013). Animal studies have shown that rabbits exposed to low-dose aluminum dust inhalation (one-twentieth of the Threshold Limit Value) had nearly 2.5 times more aluminum in their brain than unexposed rabbits (Rollin et al., 1991).

A 1990 study by Sandra Rifat and colleagues on Ontario gold miners exposed/unexposed to McIntyre Powder found statistically significant cognitive deficits in the exposed group, supporting the putative neurotoxicity of McIntyre Powder¹.

A 2013 longitudinal study by Dr. Susan Peters and colleagues of Western Australia gold miners who were exposed to McIntyre Powder found that aluminum dust inhalation did not protect miners from developing silicosis and that there was some indication of possible increased risk of Alzheimer’s and cardiovascular disease for miners exposed to aluminum dust².

Despite these research findings, there has been no comprehensive investigation into the long-term health impacts on workers who were exposed to aluminum dust under the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program. This makes it extremely difficult for individual workers to successfully pursue a claim for workplace compensation benefits for health issues that may be related to occupational exposure to aluminum dust. In Ontario, for example, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) established an Operational Policy that states:

The Workers’ Memorial at Elliot Lake honors miners who have died from injury or occupational diseases.



“Dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and conditions with neurological effects are not occupational diseases or injuries by accident under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act when they are alleged to result from occupational aluminum exposure. The available medical and scientific evidence does not establish causal associations between occupational aluminum exposure and dementia, Alzheimer’s Disease or conditions with neurologic effect.”³

This Operational Policy was established by the WSIB in Ontario further to a 1992 Interim Report of the Industrial Diseases Standards Panel (IDSP) on aluminum. The IDSP report acknowledged that large amounts of aluminum can be neurotoxic and that further research was needed in order to better establish the potential impact of aluminum exposure on workers’ health. The IDSP report also determined that the only way to conclusively assess the brain burden of aluminum was through biopsy or at autopsy.

This same conclusion was reached 13 years earlier in 1979 by Dr. Murray Finkelstein, in a consultation report for the Ontario Ministry of Labour, which concluded with the recommendation “that brain tissue obtained at autopsy be analyzed for aluminum content. This would shed light on the question of aluminum kinetics and allow a re-analysis of the benefit-harm equation.”⁴

However, since Finkelstein’s recommendation was made in 1979 (the same year that the McIntyre Powder program was discontinued in most mines) there has been no systematic study at autopsy of miners exposed to aluminum dust through the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program—and a large proportion of those miners are now deceased.

In a few short years, all of the “evidence” of the health impacts of aluminum dust exposure on miners subjected to the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program will be lost with the deaths of the remaining exposed miners. These miners and their families will not receive compensation benefits for any health effects that may be related to their occupational exposure to aluminum dust. The government bodies that sanctioned the establishment of the McIntyre Powder aluminum prophylaxis program and the mining executives that mandated its use will not be held accountable for any health impacts on the lives of the miners required to inhale this neurotoxin.

I established the McIntyre Powder Project in April 2015 to challenge this injustice. I am the daughter of a retired Steelworker and former underground miner, Jim Hobbs, who worked in the nickel mines in Sudbury and the uranium mines in Elliot Lake, Ontario. My father was diagnosed with Parkinson’s in 2001 and I believe that his Parkinson’s is connected to his workplace exposure to McIntyre Powder aluminum dust. I want to establish how many other miners (or other workers) have/had neurological problems or other health issues which may be related to their exposure to McIntyre Powder.

The McIntyre Powder Project establishes a centralized place to document the number of miners or other workers who were exposed to McIntyre Powder and who also have/had health issues, particularly neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Multiple Sclerosis, other movement disorders, Alzheimer’s/dementia, brain cancers, etc.

The Project is a voluntary registry for these workers or their survivors to contact me and add their name and basic information to a list of fellow workers who were exposed to McIntyre Powder aluminum dust and who have/had neurological diagnoses or other potentially related health issues. Since many of these workers are deceased, hearing from their survivors (spouses, children, grandchildren) is critical to ensure that those workers are accounted for.

If sufficient numbers are gathered to establish reasonable concern about the incidence of neurological and other health issues in workers exposed to aluminum dust, it will provide the strength in numbers needed for more research and to push for changes in the way that occupational disease claims are handled.

REGISTER WITH THE PROJECT

I invite any worker who was exposed to McIntyre Powder aluminum dust (or their survivors) to contact me to register their information with the McIntyre Powder Project.

Thank you for sharing your voices with me and for joining the fight for justice.

CONTACT: Janice Martell – McIntyre Powder Project

E-mail: minersinfo@yahoo.ca

Facebook: McIntyre Powder Project

Website: www.mcintyrepowderproject.com



¹ Rifat, S.L., Eastwood, M.R., McLachlan, D.R., Crapper, Corey P.N. “Effects of Exposure of miners to aluminum powder”; The Lancet Volume 336, Issue 8724, November 10, 1990, pp. 1162-1165.

² Peters, Susan, Reid, Alison, Fritschi, Lim, de Klerk, Nicholas “Long-term effects of aluminum dust inhalation”; Occup Environ Med., December, 2013 70 (12) pp. 864-868.

³ WSIB Ontario Operational Policy “Occupational Aluminum Exposure, Dementia, Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Neurologic Effects”, Document 16-01-10.

⁴ Dr. Murray Finkelstein (Medical Consultant, Health Studies Service, Special Studies & Services Branch, Ontario Ministry of Labour), “A Review of Aluminum Prophylaxis for Silicosis”, October 18, 1979.

SOAR Continues to Receive Strong Support from USW

The United Steelworkers continue to show strong support of our retiree organization. This year SOAR had the opportunity to attend a number of the USW District Conferences all across our great union. When afforded the opportunity, SOAR leaders attend these conferences to promote our organization and to share with local union leaders the value SOAR adds to our union.

SOAR leaders and activist play a major role in promoting the union's social, economic, and political agenda. Our attendance at these meetings allows us to showcase our work. We are also provided a chance to address the delegates to explain the structure of our organization and how to get a chapter up and running.

A special thanks to the leadership of the USW! Our continued involvement in the unions conferences and activities, play a critical role and our survival and growth.



SOAR at District 10 Conference in Hershey, Pa. August 3-6, 2015. Pictured left to right seated: Jerry Green, President, Local 2599; Sandy Dedmon, Local 1940; standing: George Ehret, Recording Secretary, Local 2599; Jim Centner, SOAR Director; Bob Henshaw, Local 2599; and Rick Benson, Vice President, Local 9445.



SOAR at District 4 Conference in Atlantic City, N.J. August 17-20, 2015. Pictured left to right seated: Jim Bickhart, SOAR Board Member; Bill Pienta, SOAR International President; Dianne Pavlik, District Coordinator and Treasurer Chapter 4-6; standing: Al Polk, District Coordinator; Bill Pavlik, member 4-6; Jim Centner, SOAR Director; and Bill McClellan, District Coordinator.

SOAR Director Jim Centner discussing SOAR with delegates at USW District 8 Conference June 10, 2015, Blacksburg, Va.



District 7 SOAR: Solidarity Continues

District 7 SOAR chapters continue to concentrate on building solidarity with our union. Their latest focus has been in basic steel and their long, drawn-out battle to obtain a fair and equitable agreement across the industry. SOAR has maintained a steady presence with ongoing picketing and rallies at ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel facilities across the district. They have also been working to build support for our members employed by ATI who have been locked out for over 60 days at 12 locations across the country.

To improve communication and SOAR's involvement on legislative and social issues affecting working families and retirees, the district established a new position within its structure. District Coordinator Phyllis Frost has

taken on the responsibility to serve as the SOAR Rapid Response coordinator.

SOAR members continue to be active in local politics supporting USW endorsed candidates. SOAR, working with Alderwoman Sue Sadlowski Garza (who SOAR/USW helped elect earlier this year), played a major role in the effort to restart the annual Labor Day parade on Chicago's Eastside.

SOAR chapter leaders in Indiana and Illinois remain active with their state Alliance for Retired American (ARA) organizations. Many of our members in both states serve on their

boards. In Illinois, SOAR is helping to establish a Chicagoland ARA chapter that can unite community and faith-based retiree groups with union retiree organizations. These coalitions are playing an important role in fighting to preserve and expand Social Security, defend Medicare and other senior issues.

Due to the recent change in our by-laws allowing like-minded retirees to join, many of our chapters that are no longer connected to any current USW locals (due to plant closings), are now starting to grow again.

September 1, 2015: District 7 SOAR members preparing to join the 3,500 supporters who marched to ArcelorMittal headquarters in Burns Harbor, Ind. to demonstrate their support for a fair contract.



2015 “Jane Becker” Scholarship Luncheon

The Granite City SOAR Chapter (34-2) held their 6th Annual “Jane Becker” Scholarship/Award Banquet on Monday, August 10. The banquet was well attended with over 175 members, friends, allies and elected officials in attendance.

The SOAR scholarship has been named as the “Jane Becker” Scholarship in honor of Jane Becker’s activism as a gifted labor and political organizer who mentored a generation of activists. Jane was the wife and working partner to the late United Steelworkers President, George Becker, but she built a reputation on her own as a tireless advocate for working people and causes. She was one of the pioneer organizers of SOAR, the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, and lent her time and expertise to numerous Democratic political campaigns.

SOAR awarded two \$3,000 scholarships to the winners of this year’s essay contest. The essay contest was on the topic of “Right-To-Work.” The winners of the 2015 scholarships were **Madisen Palmisano** and **Ashleigh Briggs**.

The keynote speaker was Illinois Representative Jay Hoffman. Ike Gittlen, from the USW Organizing Department, introduced Jay Hoffman with comments on the challenges working families face in fighting the race to the bottom with the constant attacks on the middle-class values we all cherish.

Representative Hoffman talked about the battles the Legislature is currently having with the budget and dealing with Governor Rauner’s so-called “Turnaround Agenda” which includes his desire to enact right-to-work zones in Illinois.



Dr. Robert Daiber, Regional Superintendent of Schools for Madison County presented the scholarship checks to the essay winners for the first installment of their scholarship award.

The chapter also recognized community leaders and activist members.

The annual SOAR award winners this year were:

Friend of SOAR—Jay Hoffman, Illinois Representative 113th District.

Labor Leader of the Year—Dean Webb, President of the Greater Madison County Federation of Labor.

The 2015 Volunteer—Marlene Carey

The 2015 Activist —George Snyder

District 4 Honors SOAR Activist



Pictured left to right: Jim Centner, SOAR Director, Jim Bickhart, District Board Member; Bill Pienta, SOAR International President, John Shinn, District 4 Director, Dianne Pavlik, honoree, Lisa Husami, District Administrative Assistant to the Director and Del Vitale, Assistant to the District Director.

August 18, 2015 — Dianne Pavlik, District Coordinator and Treasurer of Chapter 4-6 in Lackawanna, N.Y. was recognized by USW District 4 for her activism on behalf of retirees and working families. Dianne is a tireless advocate for our members. She is actively involved in the union’s political/legislative programs. She also works with the Alliance for American Manufacturing; supporting good paying manufacturing jobs and promoting fair trade policies here in the United States.



No Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2016

Social Security's annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is an increase in the benefit amount people receive each month. By law, the monthly Social Security and SSI federal benefit rate increases when there is a rise in the cost of living. The government measures changes in the cost of living through the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI-W).

The CPI has not risen since the last cost-of-living adjustment in 2015. As a result, your SSI benefit rate and, for most people, your Social Security benefit amount will stay the same in 2016.

Other changes that would normally take effect based on changes in the national average wage index also won't begin in January 2016. Since there is no COLA, the statute also prohibits a change in the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax, as well as the retirement earnings test exempt amounts. These amounts will remain unchanged in 2016.

What Does the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Mean for Steelworkers and Retirees?

The U.S. and the 11 other nations involved in negotiating the Trans Pacific Partnership announced that they had reached an agreement on Monday, October 5. The TPP would be the largest regional trade agreement in history. As the news broke, International President Leo W. Gerard shared that:

"From what we know, the draft TPP threatens the future of production and employment. It compromises the so-called 21st century standards that were supposed to form the foundation for this agreement. It will deal a critical blow to workers and their standard of living in the United States. This TPP deal shouldn't even be submitted to Congress and, if it is, it should be quickly rejected."

As of press time, the final deal had not been released to the public. The following are excerpted from the AFL-CIO's Top 10 Unknown Things About the TPP. Read, print and share the full document by visiting the Rapid Response website at www.uswrr.org.

Will the TPP make medicines more expensive? Will the drug pricing provisions give foreign pharmaceutical companies more leverage to force Medicare to cover their products and pay higher prices for them?



How will the TPP adequately protect local and national control over public services? If important public services, including schools, libraries, the Post Office and water systems aren't completely carved out of the TPP's obligations, American taxpayers may be stuck having to pay a ransom to wrest back democratic control over expensive, low-quality, private contractors.

Will the TPP ensure the United States "writes the rules" of trade? For example, the reported weak rule of origin for automobiles ensures that China and other non-TPP countries will be able to benefit from the TPP without ever joining. This means China can still write its own rules. Americans need to know "who" is the "we" writing the rules, because it doesn't appear to be working people.

How will the TPP fix our trade balance or create jobs when it contains no mechanism to control currency manipulation? Addressing currency manipulation is probably the single most effective way the United States can create jobs, as it allows U.S. products to compete on fair terms in the global marketplace. The promised TPP tariff benefits could be undermined overnight if trading partners devalue their currency. Despite urging from Congress, all reports indicate no effective currency disciplines are included in the TPP.

Will the TPP adequately protect against unfair competition by state-owned and state-subsidized companies? Such companies often operate at a loss simply to drive U.S. competitors out of business. They also may buy U.S. companies in order to take technology to their home country, leaving U.S. workers holding the bag. It's not clear how small U.S. businesses will be able to use the TPP to fight back.

How will the TPP "help Americans buy American?" The TPP will require many government purchasing decisions to treat bidders from the 11 TPP countries with exactly the same preferences as U.S. bidders. Won't this actually reduce the likelihood that Americans can use their own tax money to create jobs here in the United States?



If you feel like you've already read a version of *Financing the Highway Trust Fund* in the Alliance for American Manufacturing SOAR report space, you wouldn't be mistaken. It's an eight-year battle that AAM has been fighting with the United States Congress.

The temporary, short-term extension for the fund that helps repair and build our nation's roads, highways and bridges will expire on October 29, 2015. It was only a three-month extension passed by Congress in July. The U.S. Senate and House of Representatives are currently working on a bipartisan, six-year, \$325 billion funding bill but that appropriation is most likely targeted to be realized by December, 2015, if at all.

We wonder why this Congress can't seem to get anything done and the Highway bill is certainly a prime example. If, as expected, another short-term stopgap measure is put in place to keep the fund solvent through December, it will be the 35th consecutive time Congress has failed to act on long-term funding since 2008. Yes, 35 straight times Congress has failed to pass any meaningful, long-term legislation to rebuild America's crumbling infrastructure.

"This is unacceptable: Congress is ready to kick the can down the road on infrastructure investment for the 35th time," said AAM President Scott Paul. "The United States is long overdue for a



A badly rusted, unsafe bridge in Dawson, Pennsylvania—it is just one of the approximately 156,000 deficient bridges in the U.S.

It's Time for a **LONG-TERM FIX** For Our Infrastructure

long-term, fully funded transportation bill. We currently rank 16th in the world for transportation infrastructure. One in five of our roads need major repair. One in five bridges is structurally unsound."

Even though \$325 billion over six years is woefully inadequate to recreate the world's top transportation system, it is a step in the right direction. State and local transportation departments will be able to plan and complete future projects without the constant worry of whether funding dollars will be available.

And in the export business, time is money. Unsafe bridges and roads take a big bite out of America's ability to export and import products in a timely fashion resulting in a loss of huge profits for Made in America businesses. Every dollar invested in transportation infrastructure returns \$3.54 in economic impact according to a report commissioned by AAM and prepared by the Duke University Center of Globalization, Governance (CGGC).

A fully-funded Highway bill will also create U.S. manufacturing jobs and decrease the average Americans stuck-in-traffic commuter time of more than 60 hours per year. Every \$1 billion spent on infrastructure will create more than 21,000 jobs. According to the CGGC report, a low-end investment such as the one Congress is attempting to pass could create more than one million American jobs.

On the high end of funding, a long term transportation bill annually of \$114 billion would create nearly 2.5 million jobs for U.S. workers.

When you factor in other essential infrastructure improvements such as waterways, ports, airports, railways, drinking water pipelines and the electrical grid, a long-term investment over the next ten years approaches another \$80 billion dollars per year according to the CGGC study. Funding for these necessary improvements is not part of the Highway Trust Fund. Freight bottlenecks and other forms of congestion costs the American economy \$200 billion annually or 1.6 percent of our GDP.

It's time for a major investment in American infrastructure to return the U.S. to previous dominance in moving goods, services and workers across our great nation. Contact your U.S. Senator's office or your local member of the U.S. House of Representatives and let them know that this is money well spent and is a win-win situation for both American business and U.S. workers.

To reach your member of Congress in Washington you can visit their individual websites or call the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for your representative by name and you will be connected to their Washington, D.C. office.



Deteriorating support structure of an Adirondack Northway bridge in upstate New York.

Learn more about American infrastructure and how to take action at www.americanmanufacturing.org.



Washington Wrap

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

Let's Hear it for Senator Barbara Ann Mikulski



While serving as the Secretary Treasurer of the Consumer Federation of America (CFA), I had the rare pleasure to introduce Representative Mikulski to an audience of activists during our national consumer conference. Recognizing her height, about five feet

two inches, I requested a riser allowing her to appear above the lectern. Mikulski refused my assistance, and before being facially visible to the audience stated, "Look at me. Do I look like big government?" That statement captured the audience with applause and laughter. She then stepped on the riser, gave a rousing speech including high praise to CFA activists and pledged her support for our consumer issues.

Who is Barbara Ann Mikulski?

Having served in public office for 30 years, she announced last March that she would not seek reelection. But, what about this woman, she's a first generation American of immigrant Polish parents, influenced by strong women and a strong work ethic. Barbara was a student of the Sisters of Mercy and earned a degree in Sociology at Mount St. Mary's College, where she developed a passion for life-long learning. She went on to earn her Master's Degree at the University of Maryland, while developing a strong social consciousness for serving others.



Barbara became a social worker, a community leader and led a bitter fight against the City of Baltimore leaders to stop a 16-lane highway from being built through an older established residential area. Home owners would have been evicted, (Imminent Domain) no moving benefits were going to be provided and their properties undervalued. The city leaders harassed her stating "you can't do this." "Why don't you go home and shut up." To their amazement, Mikulski won that battle with the help of her coalition, the Southeast Council Against the Road (SCAR).

Soon after, she ran for and won a seat on the Baltimore City Council. In 1976, she won her first election to the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1986 Mikulski became the first woman Democrat to win a Senate seat in her own right and became the first female Senator to Chair the Senate Appropriations Committee. Today, Mikulski is the longest serving woman Senator and the Dean of female legislators.

Her Congressional Record

During her 30 years in Congress she truly left her mark! She was a consistent supporter of family and

workers' issues. She advocated for women's issues, for affordable health care, nutrition programs and nursing home care. She fought for State Children's Health Insurance programs, consumer issues, voting rights, education, justice and equal rights for all. Barbara was a champion for older Americans, fighting to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Her lifetime voting record on issues listed by the AFL-CIO is 95 percent favorable. Likewise, her voting record on senior citizen issues listed by the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) is 96 percent.

Outstanding! You can bet the house on it. Her retirement in January, 2017, will leave a gaping hole not easily filled. However, there are those that believe Senator Mikulski will not retire and drift into the woodwork. An interviewer asked about her retirement. Her response was typical stating, "Do I spend my time raising more money (for elections) or do I spend my time raising hell?"

Senator Mikulski will be missed. She waged the good fight, the people's fight. We recognize and applaud her record of many accomplishments and her high standard of ethics. We wish her well as she starts the next chapter of her life!



Zero Percent Social Security COLA in 2016 Will Affect Medicare Beneficiaries

by Robert Roach, Jr.

On October 15, the Social Security Administration officially announced a zero percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) in 2016 for Social Security beneficiaries.

The zero percent COLA also triggers a huge increase in costs for nearly one-third of all Medicare Part B recipients in 2016. For 16 million people with Medicare, the Part B premium will increase by 52 percent, to \$159 per month. Deductibles will increase from \$147 to \$223 for every person with Medicare.

Here's why: when seniors don't receive a COLA, a provision known as "hold harmless" protects 70 percent of beneficiaries from higher Medicare Part B premiums. This was created to ensure that seniors' Social Security checks do not go down from one year to the next. Those beneficiaries held harmless will continue to pay \$104.90 for their monthly premiums. Unfortunately, 30 percent of seniors and persons with disabilities are not protected. These include new Medicare beneficiaries, public sector retirees not receiving Social Security, higher income beneficiaries and low-income beneficiaries who have both Medicare and Medicaid. The

beneficiaries who are not protected will have to pick up the cost for all those who are held harmless.

Alliance for Retired Americans activists are extremely disappointed about the Social Security COLA announcement. We will take immediate action to limit the damage by addressing the effect this news will have on Medicare beneficiaries.

Legislation has been introduced in Congress to address the problem: the Medicare Premium Fairness Act of 2015 (S. 2148 and H.R. 3696), recently introduced by Sen. Ron Wyden (Ore.) and Rep. Dina Titus (Nev.). This bill will prevent next year's massive spike in out-of-pocket Medicare expenses for seniors and people with disabilities. The Alliance is working hard to try and pass this legislation. **Please call your Representative and Senators at 202-224-3121 and ask them to support these important bills.**

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

For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org.



SOAR CONTINUES TO GROW IN DISTRICT 9



Greg England Receives Lynn R. Williams Award

September 1, 2015: Greg England was honored for his commitment and dedication to SOAR at the District 9 Education Conference held in Destin, Fla.

Pictured presenting the award are from left to right: SOAR Director, Jim Centner; District 9 Director, Daniel Flippo; Greg England and SOAR District 9 Executive Board Member Claude Karr. The Lynn R. Williams Award for Service is given to a SOAR member who demonstrates exemplary leadership and commitment to the mandate of SOAR. This award is the highest tribute a member can receive from the International Executive Board.

District 9 Adds Another Chapter in Tennessee

Local 1155L, which represent the members at the Bridgestone/Firestone facility in Morrison, Tenn. is the latest local to establish a SOAR chapter in the district. The organizing effort was led by local union President Billy Dycus, who stated "he is happy to see the chapter is up and running and gearing up for future actions." District 9 Director, Daniel Flippo said, "Local 1155L has always led in activism." He went on to say, "We are certain that this chapter working with the local, will lead the way in strength and activism going forward."



Pictured above receiving their charter from District Coordinator, Greg England and Board Member Claude Karr are: Chapter, President David Amado; Local 1155L President, Billy Dycus; Past President and ICD Coordinator, Ron Vining and Area 2 Divisional Stewart, Tom Westlake.



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