

SOAR Rallies For Retirement Security!

CLEVELAND, Ohio – SOAR joined the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans, Cleveland Senior Voice! coalition, and over 20 other organizations in enhancing the voices being raised at the White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA) Cleveland Regional meeting Monday, April 27, 2015 in downtown Cleveland. The rally addressed the real threats on retirement security and addressed issues important to our nation's aging community.

The rally was held in conjunction with the WHCoA meeting to ensure that Social Security, Medicare, pensions and other programs important to retirees were highlighted. Over 150 people, mostly seniors, braved the chilly weather, wind and the occasional raindrops to make sure their voices were heard.

SOAR's International President, Bill Pienta, spoke about the need to preserve Medicare and Social Security. "We ought to increase and expand Social Security benefits and improve the cost-of-living adjustment...and pay for it by scrapping the cap on wealthy individuals and asking them to pay contributions on all their earnings." Pienta went on to describe real retirement security being earned through productive work from good jobs with reasonable pay and solid benefits saying, "You can't save what you've not been allowed to earn." "It's extremely important that our retiree voice be heard in these regional meetings because the White House Conference on Aging only comes around once every ten years. We rally today because Medicare and Social Security are constantly threatened by those in Congress who have proposed cuts to these essential programs, while at the same time seek to extend tax breaks for our country's most powerful corporations and wealthiest individuals."

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BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

Understanding Trade Deals

Recently, my Congressman put out a press release explaining his vote regarding the removal of the country of origin label from chicken, beef and pork sold in stores in the United States. His explanation of voting for removal of the notification was that the labeling was a violation of a trade agreement and that there could be a claim for damages filed if the labeling was not removed. Why I cannot know where the food I purchase comes from should not be part of a trade agreement, but it is.

I wonder how many seniors would be in support of the most recent trade agreement being discussed, the TPP, if they knew that the cost of prescription drugs would rise if it is passed in its present form and that it will be much harder to move a drug to generic status. Or, if they knew that

Congress is trying to use money earmarked for Medicare to pay for retraining people who would lose their jobs as a result of this agreement.

It also bothers me that I am being told the TPP will create many jobs for us but it includes language for training people who lose their job as a result of this agreement. Which is it? Will we gain jobs or lose jobs under this agreement? If history is any indicator, the working man will come out on the short end of the deal as we have in the past.

I believe these are good examples of why we need to understand what is included in our trade agreements before we agree to them; rather than finding out later. Even some members of Congress might take a different position on these trade agreements if they had access to the information and shared that information with their constituents back in their home districts prior to any voting.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



JIM CENTNER
SOAR Director

A Few Thoughts on Trade

As I watched and listened to the recent debate on trade, I had to scratch my head and wonder. What the hell is our government thinking? I have been a steelworker since 1977 and we have been fighting unfair trade since the day I became a member and probably longer. Each and every trade bill is supposed to increase jobs, benefit our communities and improve our quality of life. All of these bills have built in protections to ensure that rules are in place to protect us from products being dumped on our shores; and to train any worker who may be displaced to develop new skills for the new jobs these bills create. Sounds good in theory, but that theory has been blown out of the water with nearly 40 years of reality!

It doesn't take an MBA in economics to see the havoc and destruction brought on by these so called Free Trade Agreements. All you have to do is drive through any city or small town to see the devastation wrought by unfettered trade. Where are the jobs they promised, the prosperity?

When I was growing up in the sixties I experienced the American Dream. My parents lived in the suburbs; we had two cars in the driveway and a swimming pool in our backyard. Something happened to that dream and I believe a case can be made that our trade policies took that dream away.

Our trade laws have destroyed manufacturing in this country. As manufacturing disappeared union density fell. The loss of good paying union manufacturing jobs destroyed our nation's economy and stole the American Dream.

It is time for us to wake up and demand that Congress put a stop to this insanity! Congress must act to reestablish a manufacturing base in the U.S., enforce the trade laws that are on the books and take back our sovereignty from the WTO (World Trade Organization)!



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SOAR Rallies For Retirement Security!

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Ohio ARA president Norm Wernet said, “We are here today to say — we who are now retired and retiring from America’s workforce built this economy, way of life and standard of living; in spite of the multiple economic downturns and issues. We are here today to tell our national and state elected leaders that a life after a life of work — retirement — is an American value and must be secured not weakened or thrown away.” He reminded the crowd that: “Medicare is essential for older Americans to finance our health care. Without Medicare, the private market would not, and will not, provide us with insurance. Medicare’s 50 years of success has provided our communities with

stable financing of all our health care institutions.”

United States Senator Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and Representative Marcy Kaptur, D-Toledo, both spoke at the rally, stressing that Congress is essential in the national public policy debate on the issues of aging and retirement. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, a champion for older Americans said, “During my years of service, I have been privileged to vote for strengthening the Social Security system for this and future generations, including Medicare and disability insurance for all families.” Speaking to the current debate in Congress, Representative Kaptur said, “Former U.S. Senator and Vice President

Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota once advised that the moral test of government is how it cares for its people — from the dawn of life to its twilight.”

Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, another vocal advocate for retirement security who has worked to secure workers’ retirement savings in corporate bankruptcy, proposed a more equitable Cost-Of-Living Allowance for Social Security, and is urging the strengthening of Social Security, encouraged the crowd to keep on being vocal and visible saying that we should ignore those who would have us not make waves, or those who say it is too complicated. But like those of the civil rights movement, we should continue raise our voice to be creative.”



Oliver Montgomery – Retired SOAR Director

Oliver Montgomery, retired SOAR Director, passed away June 6, 2015. He was 86.

Oliver retired as International Director of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees in 1999; a position he held for five years. He joined the United Steelworkers in 1948, when he hired in at Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company (YS&T) in Youngstown, Ohio as a member of Local 2163. In 1950, he transferred his membership to Local 1942; which represented workers at the YS&T, Youngstown Brier Hill facility.

Oliver rose through the ranks of Local 1942; serving in a number of positions, including shop steward, grievance chairperson, job evaluation chairperson, education chairperson, workers' compensation chairperson and secretary to the Civil Rights Committee, to name a few. He was a founder of the "Youngstown Sheet & Tube Credit Union." He served as its Vice President until asked to join the International Union's Research Department in 1969 as a Research Associate and Financial Analyst, where he served for 24 years until named to head SOAR by International President George Becker in 1994.

Brother Montgomery dedicated much of his life to civil rights and civil liberties. A myriad of his contributions range from organizing marches, demonstrations, boycotts from

the Nelson Mandela Free South Africa Movement to Chairing the Labor and Industry Committee of the Youngstown Branch of the NAACP during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. He served as the President of the Penn Hills, Pa. Branch of the NAACP for over ten years. His untiring commitment to community service earned him the Who's Who in Black America 1970-1972 Award.

As a retiree activist, Oliver served as a member of the senior's Advisory Committee of the Democratic National Committee, as well as a board member of the National Council of Senior Citizens. He was also very active with the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

Current SOAR Director Jim Centner stated, "Oliver dedicated his entire life to racial equality and worker's rights. He was a tireless advocate that improved the quality of life of our active and retired members, he will be missed!"



1929-2015



1928-2015

IN MEMORIAM

Robert Saumure – SOAR Board Member

Bob Saumure, past District 5 SOAR Executive Board Member, passed away on May 13, 2015. He was 86.

Bob retired in 1987 from the United Steelworkers. He served our membership as a servicing staff representative for 23 years. He also held the position of Unemployment Insurance Referee for over 30 years; a position he held well into his retirement.

Bob began his working career at the age of 18 at STELCO (The Steel Company of Canada) at their Lachine, Quebec facility as a member of local 3258, retiring from there after 20 years of service. Bob represented his local in various capacities including president for eleven years prior to being appointed to the USWA staff.

Brother Saumure was on the SOAR Executive Board from 2004 through 2014. SOAR Director Jim Centner stated, "As a member of our board, Bob was a true representative of both active and retired workers. His commitment for a just society for workers and retirees on both sides of the border set an example for all of us to follow."



Ohio SOAR Holds 19th Annual District Conference

Nearly 200 delegates from across the state of Ohio gathered in Cleveland, Ohio for the 19th Annual District 1 SOAR Conference April 27, 2015. The annual event was hosted by USW Local 979 and held at the Dave McCall Hall on Independence Road. District Executive Board Member Bruce Bostick opened the meeting and welcomed the delegates.

United Steelworkers District 1 Director Dave McCall addressed the delegates and thanked them for all that they do on behalf of working families. He spoke about the mess in Washington and the attacks from the right on Social Security and Medicare. He stressed the importance of calling, writing and e-mailing our elected representatives. "They need to know that we are angry, and expect them to protect the working class not destroy it," McCall said. He assailed the extreme right wing of the Republican Party and their attacks on workers and retirees.

Bentley Davis, Ohio field coordinator for the Alliance for Retired Americans also addressed the group. She discussed the Alliance activities around the White House Conference on Aging regional meetings and the preparation for Medicare's 50th Anniversary on July 30. She spoke about the Alliance 2015 Legislative Conference that will be held at the Washington Hilton July 7-10, 2015 and urged the delegates to attend this important event.

SOAR International President Bill Pienta thanked the delegates for all that they do for the USW and SOAR. He spoke about the White House Conference on Aging Regional Meetings and the lack of discussion and real substance that was missing from their previous meeting. He thanked Director McCall and SOAR Board Member Bruce Bostick for bringing real retirement issues to the forefront by pursuing the rally to be held later that day and reaching out to Senator Sherrod Brown and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur to attend both the White House meeting and our rally. Their presence at the regional meeting refocused the direction of the discussion and brought much needed attention to the issues surrounding Social Security, Medicare and the decline of defined benefits pension plans.

District Board Member Bruce Bostick closed out the meeting; urging the delegates to jump on the bus and get to the rally, "This is not the time for others to tell us about the problem, we have lived through it. Now is our time to mobilize and raise our voices for justice and for what we earned in our work lives!"



Western Canada Update

Birgit Haggstrom
Vice President, SOAR Chapter 3-14

District Conference

SOAR members welcomed the opportunity to attend the very successful USW District 3 conference held in Edmonton in April. Twelve SOAR members from seven chapters attended as conference delegates—a first for USW District 3.

This was also the first time members of the new TWU-USW Local 1944 attended a USW District 3 conference. Former TWU President Lee Riggs, now President of USW TWU Local 1944, explained why the TWU chose the USW as a merger partner and discussed what lies ahead for the new national local. Lee also introduced a video called “Our Union@Work: Telecommunications Sector,” which featured Local 1944 members at work and some of the challenges and hardships of their jobs. More than 20 delegates attended the conference including two first-time SOAR delegates.

USW International President Leo W. Gerard, District 3 Director Stephen Hunt and Canadian National Director Ken Neumann briefed delegates on the Stop the Killing campaign. The campaign calls on governments to hold corporations and executives accountable when a worker is injured or killed at work. More information is available on the website www.stopthekilling.ca.

Delegates were thrilled by an address from Alberta New Democratic Party Leader Rachel Notley, only days before the party’s historic landslide victory as voters elected Alberta’s first NDP government.

SOAR Caucus

Rod Bezo, District 3 SOAR Executive Board member, reported that two new chapters have been established in Sparwood and Kamloops and efforts are being made to establish more in the district.

Many chapters have difficulty contacting retired members, as locals are often reluctant to share membership lists, due to privacy concerns. Some locals and pension plan administrators also are unwilling to incur the cost of distributing membership materials.

A roundtable discussion also called for updating the USW website to include more SOAR information.

Two NextGen delegates attended the SOAR caucus as guests, followed by Birgit Haggstrom’s attendance as a guest at the NextGen session. SOAR and NextGen members agreed their group should collaborate more to raise awareness of the importance of unions and to share union history.

Birgit Haggstrom also reported on a meeting with Director Hunt in which there was general agreement that a District 3 SOAR web page would be a valuable tool to help keep members informed.

SOAR Chapter 3-14

Report to the USW District 3 Conference
April 14, 2014

Chapter 3-14 has had an active year, participating in several conferences and events, donating to many causes and publishing a quarterly newsletter that is mailed to members.

With the USW-TWU merger, we welcomed a number of new members from the new TWU-USW Local 1944.

We are investigating ways to improve communication with the membership, including developing a website.

Here’s a list of activities and donations the chapter made from March 2014 to March 2015:

Donations

- ▶ New Vista Society
- ▶ B.C. Health Coalition
- ▶ Local 9176 Strike (Crown Holdings)
- ▶ Justice for USW Rail Workers
- ▶ Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation
- ▶ Spinal Cord Injury
- ▶ Steelworkers Humanity Fund—In Memory of Gerry Edwards, past SOAR Director of District 3

Conferences/Events

- ▶ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) Conference on Seniors (System Change for Seniors Care)
- ▶ Two delegates to SOAR International Conference—Las Vegas
- ▶ Attended International Women’s Day
- ▶ Attended Surrey Seniors Multicultural Day and provided tickets to needy seniors and children
- ▶ Attended Day of Mourning
- ▶ Provided registration support at USW Picnic
- ▶ Leafleted Carnival Cruise Ship in support of Local 9176 strike at Crown
- ▶ Attended forum on National Strategy for Dementia in support of private member’s bill by Claude Gravelle, MP and SOAR Member
- ▶ Met twice with District 3 director to discuss items of mutual interest
- ▶ Attended B.C. FORUM board meetings
- ▶ Annual Christmas lunch for all members

Communications

- ▶ Published newsletter four times a year and a special insert for civic elections
- ▶ Letters to B.C. Premier Clark on MSP Premiums
- ▶ Letters to area MPs in support of National Strategy on Dementia
- ▶ Membership in CURC, COSCO and National Pensioners Federation



Seniors' Vote

Let's make it count by voting NDP



*Doug MacPherson,
National Coordinator*

In the last issue I mentioned that the percentage of seniors who vote is far greater than any other demographic group. I suggested we make our voice heard through the ballot box

on issues that are important to us — pension reform and security, health care, housing and income security.

This month I would like to tell you who I am voting for and why I think you should too. In my opinion, only the New Democratic Party (NDP) has stood on the side of millions of ordinary Canadians and not on the side of millionaires. The New Democrats developed a Strategy on Aging that that focuses on health, housing, financial security and quality of life.

Health

An NDP government will work to ensure seniors have better access to health care and better access to prescription medication. The NDP will

work with provinces and territories to provide better home care and long-term care. The NDP will give family members and friends financial support to care for older loved ones. They will also work with the provinces to ensure the growing need for gerontology specialists is met.

Housing

An NDP government will invest in affordable housing with an emphasis on low-income seniors. Working with the provinces and territories, the NDP will develop housing options so that senior couples can live together for as long as possible and will make retrofitting seniors' homes more affordable.

Financial Security

The NDP will restore the age of eligibility for Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to 65 (the current Conservative government increased it to 67.) Working with the provinces and territories, the NDP will provide significant increases to CPP/QPP by instituting a modest increase in premiums. To

Only the New Democrats have a comprehensive Strategy on Aging, focused on health, housing, financial security and quality of life.



ensure that no senior will live in poverty, the NDP will raise the GIS and automatically enroll all eligible seniors for the GIS. In addition, an NDP government will work with the provinces to protect employer pension plans.

Quality of Life

The NDP will fight elder abuse and adopt prevention programs. To ensure that seniors' welfare is reflected in government policies and programs, the NDP will create a Seniors Advocate.

The NDP will provide support to provincial and municipal initiatives that implement adapted day centres and activity centres to promote seniors' physical and mental health.

In this election, let's make our vote count.

GENDER INEQUALITY – UNFAIR AND UNJUST *By Sonja Alton*

My mother, Barbara, was a lovely, energetic, innovative and resourceful woman. She was a published science fiction author who sold her first article when she was only 17. She was an accomplished dressmaker and furniture refinisher. She built her own business around each of these skills. Our home was her workshop. During World War II, she served as a plotter in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

When my father died in 1941, my mother was determined to immigrate to Canada. So, in 1946 we left England and settled in Medicine Hat, Alberta. With two children to support, no relatives and few friends to help her, my mother found a job in a shoe shop on Medicine Hat's Front Street. Soon she realized many of the shop's customers had serious foot problems and she did her best to help them. Eventually, Barbara decided to train as a chiropodist.

Despite of all my mother's resourcefulness, upon retirement she had very little to live on: only an Old Age Security (OAS) pension and a \$100 Veterans' Allowance. Later she would qualify for the Guarantee Income Supplement (GIS).

My mother typified many single mothers, widows and stay-at-home mothers of her era who were unable to save money for retirement because every penny they had was spent on their children and home. There were no private pensions for women who had spent their lives outside the workforce.

For 17 years I volunteered at a care home where the majority of residents were elderly women. I saw firsthand how little money many of these women had to provide even the basic necessities of life.

Substantial progress for women has taken place in the last 50 years or so. Today, my mother would be called an entrepreneur and be classified among the self-employed women in Canada now numbering almost one million. In

British Columbia alone, women form 37 percent of the self-employed, higher than the national average.

Now, most women work outside the home for some part of their lives. Some women have good, well-paying jobs while others earn minimum wage. Nevertheless, statistics show that whatever profession or jobs women hold, there is still an average gender wage gap of 19 percent. This means that for every dollar a man earns a woman earns 81 cents.

There is also a sizable income gap between women who have children and those who do not. Many women move in and out of the workforce to have children and some women must take time off from their job to care for children and senior family members. Often this results in reduced wages, lower pensions and loss of promotion. Women re-entering the workforce after being stay-at-home moms are often forced to take part-time or contract jobs with no benefits or pensions.

Women continue to face gender-based discrimination. Recent examples include women earning less than male counterparts for identical duties due to different job titles, women denied promotions in favour of men with less experience and women receiving less pay and vacation time than subordinate male colleagues. Not only do these unfair practices affect a woman's livelihood, they also affect her pension and benefits in retirement.

While equitable treatment for women is becoming more of a reality, there is more to do. The gender wage gap must be reduced. Gender-based discrimination must be eliminated. Adequate pensions must be provided for all. The minimum wage must be increased to provide a decent standard of living.

To all SOAR members who took part in the Fast Track fight:

We'd be lying if we said we weren't disappointed. Since early 2014, we've worked together to successfully push off Fast Track repeatedly. Many thought we'd lose a long time ago, but they underestimated us. Our union joined with allies and hit back against every deceptive attempt to advance this bill, keeping votes to the slimmest of margins and even getting it voted down along the way. But, it kept coming back. The Senate took a final vote on June 24, passing it and sending it to the President for his signature.

Those lawmakers who backed Fast Track will have to live with the results. Their legacy will be more shuttered factories, devastated communities and Americans who lose their jobs to trade. Please remember these votes, now and moving forward.

Even with this frustrating outcome, we're also energized and determined. Here's why:

- ▶ **Our champions in the House and Senate had our backs.** They led the charge, told our stories and just fought like hell to stop Fast Track. We must support them and grow their ranks.
- ▶ **There was a groundswell of Steelworker involvement.** Some made their first call, signed their first petition and lobbied for the first time. Rapid Response Coordinators and Teams delivered again and again. There was union-wide participation with SOAR, Women of Steel, NextGen and others all taking action. This experience strengthens our union and will get us long-term results.
- ▶ **A new energy developed.** The labor movement showed unprecedented unity. Our progressive allies—environmental, religious and others—stood firmly at our sides. Most Americans get it too. These corporate deals put jobs, the environment, food safety and so much more in jeopardy. With this broad solidarity, there is hope for change.

If you're down, we get it. But, please don't stay there for long. There is education to be done. There are lawmakers that must be held accountable. And, there is a future to keep fighting for.

We deeply appreciate every SOAR member who acted in this fight.

In solidarity,
USW Rapid Response

P.S. Make sure that EVERY member of your SOAR chapter knows how their Representative and Senators voted.

SUMMARY OF THE FINAL VOTES

Final Senate Vote (June 24, 60-38):

All Democrats and Independents voted RIGHT (against Fast Track) except: Bennet (Colo.), Cantwell (Wash.), Carper (Del.), Coons (Del.), Feinstein (Calif.), Heitkamp (N.D.), Kaine (V.Va.), McCaskill (Mo.), Murray (Wash.), Nelson (Fla.), Shaheen (N.H.), Warner (Va.) and Wyden (Ore.)

All Republicans voted WRONG (for Fast Track) except: Collins (Maine), Cruz (Texas), Paul (Ky.), Sessions (Ala.) and Shelby (Ala.)

The following did not vote: Lee (R-Utah) and Rubio (R-Fla.)

Final House Vote (June 18, 218-208):

All Democrats voted RIGHT (against Fast Track) except: Ashford (Neb.), Bera (Calif.), Beyer (Va.), Blumenauer (Ore.), Bonamici (Ore.), Connolly (Va.), Cooper (Tenn.), Costa (Calif.), Cuellar (Texas), Davis (Calif.), Delaney (Md.), DelBene (Wash.), Farr (Calif.), Himes (Conn.), Hinojosa (Texas), Johnson, E. B. (Texas), Kilmer (Wash.), Kind (Wis.), Larsen (Wash.), Meeks (N.Y.), O'Rourke (Texas), Peters (Calif.), Polis (Colo.), Quigley (Ill.), Rice (N.Y.), Schrader (Ore.), Sewell (Ala.), and Wasserman Schultz (Fla.)

All Republicans voted WRONG (for Fast Track) except: Aderholt (Ala.), Amash (Mich.), Brat (Va.), Bridenstine (Okla.), Brooks (Ala.), Buck (Colo.), Burgess (Texas), Clawson (Fla.), Collins (Ga.), Collins (N.Y.), Cook (Calif.), Donovan (N.Y.), Duncan (S.C.), Duncan (Tenn.), Farenthold (Texas), Fleming (La.), Garrett (N.J.), Gibson (N.Y.), Gohmert (Texas), Griffith (Va.), Harris (M.D.), Hunter (Calif.), Jenkins (W.Va.), Jones (N.C.), Jordan (Ohio), Joyce (Ohio), Katko (N.Y.), Labrador (Idaho), LoBiondo (N.J.), Lummis (Wyo.), MacArthur (N.J.), Massie (Ky.), McKinley (W.Va.), Meadows (N.C.), Mooney (W.Va.), Mulvaney (S.C.), Nugent (Fla.), Palmer (Ala.), Pearce (N.M.), Perry (Pa.), Poliquin (Maine), Posey (Fla.), Rohrabacher (Calif.), Rothfus (Pa.), Russell (Okla.), Smith (N.J.), Webster (Fla.), Westmoreland (Ga.), Wittman (Va.), and Zeldin (N.Y.)

The following Representatives did not vote: Young (Ark.), Payne (N.J.), Kelly (Miss.), Jolly (Fla.), Gosar (Ariz.), Davis (Ill.-13), Clyburn (S.C.), and Byrne (Ala.)



INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

For a Healthier Environment

We need a national manufacturing strategy and a long-term infrastructure funding plan that gives American industry the certainty it needs to make sound investments. Why? Because doing so would create lots of jobs in construction and manufacturing, while improving access to vital resources.

Extreme weather patterns, resource scarcity, and increased air pollution have made sustainability initiatives urgent to implement. And it will take commitment from the public and long-term investments from our legislators to ensure a sustainable world.



Resources Going Right Down the Drain

Our aging infrastructure is in dire need of repair. In many communities across the country, there are roads and bridges showing visible signs of stress. And water transmission pipes, buried out of sight, out of mind in big cities and small towns alike, are in desperate need of an upgrade.

There are an estimated 240,000 water main breaks in the U.S. annually, due to aging water infrastructure, according to the National Association of Water Companies. It's a huge problem in states like California, which is in the middle of a severe drought at the same time it's losing millions of gallons of water from decaying transmission lines. But instead of working toward a long term funding plan, Congress has kicked the can down the road for years.

Something as essential as water must be invested in, protected, and secured, because Mother Nature won't wait for Congressional gridlock to end.



**Is your city in a state of disrepair?
Share your story at
info@aamfg.org.**

Congressman Mike Bost Disappoints SOAR Chapter 34-2

Members of Chapter 34-2, in Granite City, Ill., signed 90 letters at their May meeting urging Congressman Mike Bost to vote "NO" on Fast Track and to not support the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP).

Two days later, a delegation of Illinois steelworkers met with Representative Bost at his Washington, D.C., office. They presented him with 1,500 letters signed by U.S. Steel-Granite City Works employees who are in danger of losing their jobs thanks to past

unfair trade deals that were also negotiated behind closed doors, just like these. The letters also appealed to Bost to vote NO on both of these disastrous trade bills.

As expected, Bost was noncommittal, even though the steelworker's delegation pointed out the devastation this agreement will deliver to Southern Illinois and across the country if passed. Unfortunately, Bost voted wrong on Fast Track and failed on his Constitutional duty. He decided to pass off his responsibility to corporations, trade lawyers and the President.

He also supported TPP that will deliver another death blow to our manufacturing economy and eventually our quality of life!

Chapter Vice President Dennis Barker stated, "Disappointed is probably not the best word to use for our feelings about Representative Bost, but it is the only one suitable for print!"



Washington Wrap

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

Workers Deserve Better



While the Congress continues its legislative path to finalize the 2016 fiscal year budget, the Secretary of the Treasury, in June, announced plans to examine applications from troubled multi-employer plans. Kenneth Feinberg, a pension expert, was appointed to study and recommend ways to avoid plan insolvency. As you would expect, the options include cutting previously agreed to benefits. An estimated one million participants, including current retirees in 1,400 multi-employer plans, could be affected. The warning came from the federal government stating these plans could run out of money in the near future.

Mr. Feinberg has stated he wants to be sure that all planners consider all responsible measures such as increasing employer/employee contributions and reducing benefits to pensioners to keep a plan solvent. Be aware, that late last year Congress passed legislation that for the first time allowed current retiree beneficiaries of multi-employer plans to be cut as part of a deal to address pension plan problems. This vote was aggressively opposed by unions and pension advocates citing that cutting agreed-to benefits violates the promise of pensions for life. None the less, the legislation passed.

Our union blazed the trail for workers' pensions. Many current retirees will

remember the World War II freeze on wages. During those years, since wages were off the table, our union leadership turned it's focused to benefits. One of which, was pension plans. Employers refused to bargain on the pension issues citing their contributions to the Social Security Trust Fund. USW and Local 1010, in East Chicago, Indiana, took the Inland Steel Company to court and won a decisive District Court decision that pensions are a legitimate collective bargaining issue in contract negotiations. On appeal, the Supreme Court refused to accept the case; allowing the lower court decision to stand.

During the following contract negotiation in 1949, the Steelworkers, after a one-month strike, won a pension plan, wage improvements and other benefits. Other unions joined in and successfully negotiated and won pension plans for their members. Later, a long, hard-fought fight in Congress resulted in the passage of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) signed into law by President Gerald Ford on Labor Day, 1974. That law protected eligible retirees their pension even if their

employer went bankrupt though the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). To the best of my knowledge, employee pension and health insurance benefits paid by employers are tax deductible for the company providing the benefits. The same can be said for Social Security benefits. So why all the fuss, attacks and opposition to employee pension, health plans and SS that allows retirees to live above the poverty level. Business seems to have sufficient funds for substantial salaries for their CEOs. They provide generous pensions, stock options, expense accounts and other perks for the corporate elite, while attacking the workers who provide them with their generous lifestyle.

The shrinking middle class deserves better. Where would those corporate profits and benefits be without the working class? Workers deliver the raw products, manufacture and deliver the finished products on worker built highways, bridges and rails to businesses where we, the consumers, keep the economy rolling. It's time that CEOs recognize that when everyone does well, we all prosper!



Let's All Celebrate Medicare's 50th Anniversary

By Barbara J. Easterling

July 30, 2015 will be the 50th anniversary of Medicare. Committed grass roots advocates fought to enact—and then protect and expand—health care for seniors, and we owe them our gratitude, because Medicare

is without a doubt our most successful health care program in America's history. For half a century, it has provided seniors guaranteed medical care and helped keep them out of poverty. Please check out the Alliance's web site devoted specifically to the anniversary at www.medicare50th.org.

The site includes a timeline of key moments in the program's history. In 1960, supporters of a national health care system for the aged established "Senior Citizens for Kennedy" to help John Fitzgerald Kennedy develop policy proposals for what would become Medicare. The group was later reorganized in 1961 to become the National Council of Senior Citizens (NCSC), the Alliance for Retired Americans' predecessor.

But our timeline of key moments in the program's history begins before that—in 1945—with President Harry

Truman's visionary speech. The Medicare story is highlighted by LBJ signing it into law on July 30, 1965, and goes through today, to remind us that we did not always have coverage for prescription drugs.



Now, we must make sure that we preserve Medicare, keeping it strong, passing it on to future generations, and withstanding all attempts to transform it into a voucher program.

Our website includes the stories of several Alliance members who are alive today only because of the Medicare benefits they earned, and others who are able to live healthy, fulfilling, independent lives thanks to the program. We invite others to share their stories online as well!

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.

Supreme Court Says the Affordable Care Act Subsidies Stay

On June 25, 2015 the Supreme Court made the right decision in upholding the premium tax credits to all Americans under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Any other decision would have penalized citizens in 34 states solely because state leaders refused to act.

The ACA was an important step toward ensuring quality, affordable health care for all Americans. Since its passage, over 16 million uninsured Americans have gained coverage and insurance companies can no longer play tricks and deny coverage to people with illnesses.

This decision is also good news for millions of seniors in Medicare who stand to lose billions in new benefits if health care reform is dismantled. Seniors in Medicare need the Affordable Care Act. Today's Supreme Court ruling helps preserve this vital reform.

Max Richtman, President/CEO of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare stated, "Seniors in Medicare have a stake in this debate as they will save, on average, about \$5,000 over the next ten years due to lower drug costs, preventive services with no out-of-pocket cost and reductions in the growth of health spending. Since passage of Obamacare, more than 8.2 million people with Medicare saved over \$11.5 billion on prescription drugs. These are real people who will face

real threats to their health security, if the quest to dismantle Obamacare is ever successful. No doubt the enemies of health care reform will continue their zealous mission to roll back Obamacare's successes, but today we have reason to celebrate. Tomorrow we'll resume our fight to ensure seniors continue to benefit from the enormous savings Obamacare provides them and their families."

Rich Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans praised the Supreme Court ruling in a recent news release, "The court's decision is particularly helpful to older citizens who are not yet eligible for Medicare. The ACA provides subsidies to millions of workers 50 and older so that they can have access to affordable health care under both the state and federal exchanges. Adults in this demographic are more likely to face increased costs and risks, and the insurance industry has priced coverage out of their reach in many cases. The RAND Corporation has said that 34.9 percent of the current ACA market is comprised of 50-64 year olds, and of that cohort, 72.6 percent are subsidy-eligible."

This is a great victory, but the fight for quality, affordable health care for all is not over! Congress will continue to try to dismantle this vital law and we must continue our fight to protect it!



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