

USW@Work

A Regular Publication of the United Steelworkers

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A Powerful Voice for Workers



The corporate push for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is on. We need your help pushing back.

In January, the Business Roundtable, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other corporate lobbies formally launched their campaigns to get the TPP passed early this year and the President used his final State of the Union address to try to make the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement a reality.

TAKE ACTION NOW

Please contact your members of Congress and urge them to oppose calls to pass the TPP.

To reach your Senators call **877-607-0705**.

To contact your Congressional Representative, call **866-202-5409**.

Make the calls today!

The Time is **NOW!** Tell Congress to Say **NO** to the TPP!

The TPP would force U.S. employers into direct competition with corporations exploiting people in countries like Vietnam, where workers are often paid less than 65 cents an hour. That's no way to build our economy.

The administration's only major economic impact study on the TPP found it would result in 0.00 percent increased U.S. economic growth. A more recent study out of Tufts University concluded that the TPP would actually reduce U.S. economic growth over its first decade and cost nearly a half million U.S. jobs.

Yet another study found that the TPP would put a downward pressure on wages for the bottom 90 percent of American households.

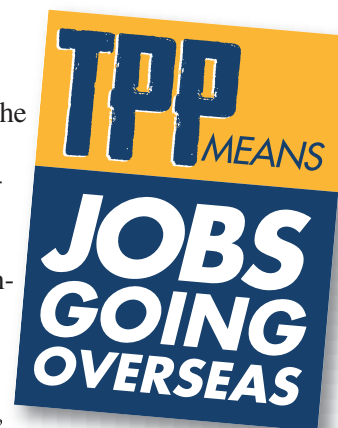
The TPP would have a tremendously harmful impact on U.S. jobs and wages. But it doesn't end there. The TPP is also a disaster for the environment, food safety, access to medicines and democracy itself. What more should we expect from a trade deal that was negotiated behind closed doors, with the aid of hundreds of corporate advisors, while the public and press were shut out?

The good news here is that, with your help, we are able to stop this horrible trade agreement. Unlike almost any other line in the State of the Union, the President's mention of the TPP did not receive thunderous applause from

either side of the aisle. It seemed like the only ones to give it a standing ovation were the President's own cabinet members. This election year, Congress is finally getting the message that support for job-killing trade deals like the TPP is very dangerous politics.

Amplifying that message, in early January, SOAR and the USW signed on to a Citizens Trade Campaign that united a cross-sector movement of labor, environmental, family farm, consumer, faith, LGBT, women's, student and other groups in delivering a letter signed by over 1,500 organizations calling on Congress to oppose the TPP. Our "movement of movements" is getting stronger every day.

Understanding that they're really in a "now or never" moment, corporate interests groups are pushing hard for a TPP vote this year. But if we push back hard enough, we will overcome them. Please take action now by urging your members of Congress to say NO to the TPP. This could very well be the final nail in the coffin for U.S. manufacturing. **TPP must be stopped!**





BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

WE Need to be Engaged in Elections

As someone who has worked in a facility where there was exposure to asbestos, I am mad as hell about the recent legislation that was rammed through Congress on an almost party-line vote. This legislation is aimed to curb class action lawsuits and throw open asbestos victims' medical records and payments.

There are very few of us old-timers who do not know someone who has suffered and or died because of exposure to asbestos at their work site. We know of the families suffering and high medical bills, along with the problem of trying to prove exposure from the job site, many of which are closed or torn down.

"The AFL-CIO is well aware that the system for compensating asbestos disease victims has had its share of problems, with victims facing delays and inadequate compensation and too much money being spent on defendant and plaintiff lawyers," said Legislative Director Bill Samuel.

The House bill "does nothing to improve compensation for asbestos victims and would in fact make the situation even worse. In our view, the bill is simply an effort by asbestos manufacturers, who are still subject to asbestos lawsuits, to avoid liability for diseases caused by exposure to their products," Samuel added.

For those out there who say there is no difference between political parties, I ask that you go see who voted for this legislation and who didn't. Ask yourself if this legislation is supportive of workers or employers. Retirees' and workers' rights are under attack at a level unseen in recent history. The best way to protect our rights is to make sure the people we elect have our best interest at heart not the interest of big money.

We have no choice but to get involved in elections and make sure our interests are protected. This year we will have the opportunity to make a difference. Get active, get involved while you still can and work like your future depends on it because it probably does.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



JIM CENTNER
SOAR Director

New Year—The Fight Continues

On behalf of the SOAR Executive Board and staff, I want to wish you all a Happy New Year and the best for you and your family.

The last few years have not been easy for retirees and working families. The slow recovery from the long recession has had a real impact on our quality of life. Even though we have turned a page to a new year, our struggles continue.

We hit the ground running with the fight to defeat the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP). This trade deal will decimate our manufacturing base and deliver a critical blow to workers across both our countries.

Here in the United States, we are beginning the New Year in the midst of another race to the White House and an election to determine which party will control Congress. There is a great deal at stake. For retirees, the future of Medicare and Social Security, two programs that have real impact on senior's quality of life, will be on the table. Other issues that concern all of us, such as the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, will all be determined by the people we elect.

There will be a major discussion of the role of government in our society; pay close attention to this debate. Where would we be today without our federal highway system, OSHA, EPA or regulations dealing with commerce? These are just a few examples of how government has improved our lives and helped to build and maintain the middle class.

Over the next few months we will be monitoring the political debate and will continue to provide information on the candidates and their positions; in order for you to make an informed decision in November. We will be asking you to get involved and help us elect the candidates that support an agenda that will fight to protect and enhance the quality of life of retirees and working families.

We have our work cut out for us this coming year. We look forward to the challenge and know that we can count on all of you, as we continue our march to November.



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New SOAR Chapter Established in District 7

January 21, 2016 — USW Local 9231 established our newest chapter. The local represents members and retirees who work, or have worked at the I/N Tek-I/N Kote facilities in New Carlisle, Indiana.

Local President, Todd Kegley, recognized the importance of having their retirees organized and has wanted to start a chapter for quite a while; but something always came up and it got pushed aside. While in Pittsburgh, Pa., negotiating with ArcelorMittal, he and the leadership of the local decided the time was now. He designated the local's Financial Secretary, Matt Stefaniak, to make it happen.

Matt contacted SOAR's International Secretary-Treasurer, Charlie Averill, to find out how to get started. The local was off to a good start; since the membership already approved a motion to pay the first five years of dues for all 68 retirees, scheduled a meeting, and sent a letter to the 68 inviting them to attend to learn about SOAR.

Charlie immediately cleared his schedule to make sure he could be present at that meeting, which was held in

Pictured left to right above are the newly-elected officers: Ray Skwartz, Trustee; Frank Fanno, Trustee; Eric Roper, Treasurer; Mike Kingston, Vice President; Ed Rosado, President; Scott Marshall, District 7 Board Member; Todd Kegley, Local 9231 President; Phyllis Frost, District 7 SOAR Rapid Response Coordinator; Charlie Averill, SOAR International Secretary-Treasurer and Mike O'Brien, District 7 Sub.- 4 Director. Not shown in the photo are Janet Schweitzer, Recording Secretary and Dave Hachlica, Trustee.

November. After informing those who attended what SOAR was all about, officer jobs were filled, a list of all 68 retirees along with a check was mailed to Pittsburgh. The charter was prepared in time to be presented at their first official chapter meeting.

Secretary-Treasurer Averill stated, "This was easy. It just goes to show you, when you have a committed local union to work with, a chapter can be up and running in no time. Many thanks to President, Todd Kegley, Financial Secretary, Matt Stefaniak, and the members of Local 9231. They took the bull by the horns and got the job done."

Chapter 34-2 Continues to Support Our Troops

Chapter 34-2 decided to make Christmas a little bit nicer for the troops serving in the Middle East. They collected a variety of items ranging from snacks and drink mixes to socks and t-shirts, to make life a little more enjoyable for our soldiers serving overseas. All totaled, the chapter collected enough material to stuff 16 boxes to send, along with a letter from the chapter, wishing them a Merry Christmas. The letter also included thanks for making the world a safer place, and for their sacrifice and service.

President Jeff Rains and member Shirley Luffman headed up the effort. Chapter members collected and donated items during their November and December meetings. Shirley took the items home, organized the gifts, packed the boxes and she, along with Jeff and chapter member George Cook, took them to the post office for mailing. The chapter covered the postage.

Shirley has been doing this for our troops since the 1999 Kosovo Conflict.

Over the last years she has sent over 660 boxes to military personnel serving around the globe. Her desire to get involved in this effort started over a conversation with her son, Captain Jeffrey Luffman, who was serving in Kosovo at the time. He mentioned to her that some soldiers in his unit were not receiving anything from home. She thought that wasn't right and decided to do something about it.



Chapter President Jeff Rains, SOAR members George Cook and Shirley Luffman; delivering the gifts at the Granite City Post Office just in time for Christmas.

SOAR MEMBER ART KUBE *Receives Lynn Williams Award for Service*



Art Kube receives award from Doug Macpherson.

On January 13, 2016, we were honoured to present the Lynn Williams Award for Service to Brother Art Kube at a reception in Surrey, B.C.

The Lynn Williams Award is given annually to a Canadian SOAR member who, in retirement, has demonstrated exemplary leadership and commitment to SOAR's mandate.

A past president of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, a long-time Steelworker and SOAR Chapter 3-14 member, Art continued his fierce advocacy into retirement. He worked tirelessly with organizations; including the National Pensioners Federation, BC Federation of Retired Union Members (BC FORUM), Council of Senior Citizens Organizations (COSCO) and SOAR. Art was a strong voice for the rights of older Canadians and an outstanding advocate for retirees and seniors throughout Canada.

The award was presented by Doug Macpherson, Canadian National SOAR Coordinator, who said in his opening remarks, "We are here today to do something that quite frankly we do not do often enough, and that is to celebrate and honour one of our own. Because when we do so we not only honour the recipient of this award but we validate what each and every one in this room does every day. Art, you set a particularly high bar for us to emulate. Congratulations from all."

USW National Director for Canada Ken Neumann sent a letter stating, "Art, on behalf of the United Steelworkers, I offer you my congratulations on receiving this award, it is truly deserved. I wish you all the best and good health for this New Year. You are truly an inspiration to us all."



Kay Noonan, Vice President of Chapter 3-14, presents plant to Mary Kube.

Lobbying Pays Off Reducing Hospital Parking Fees

Toronto – Determined lobbying by seniors groups has convinced the Ontario government to freeze all hospital parking fees and to introduce multi-day passes at reduced rates.

"We believe that parking fees should not be a barrier to accessing health care," Health Minister Eric Hoskins announced January 18.

Hospitals will be asked to work with Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) to ensure they can accommodate the changes:

- ▶ Immediate freeze on hospital parking fees for three years, followed by inflationary increases.
- ▶ October 1: Hospitals that charge more than \$10 a day in parking fees must bring in passes for five, 10 and 30 days at 50 percent of the daily rate. About 35 hospitals in Ontario charge more than \$10 a day to park.
- ▶ October 1: Hospitals must make multi-day passes transferable between patients and caregivers, including in-and-out privileges over a 24-hour period, and remain valid for up to one year from date of purchase.

While this is a beginning, NDP health critic France G  linas says it's too little, too late. Last year, Ontarians were forced to pay at least \$172 million in hospital parking fees, nearly \$500,000 each day. And now they will have to wait another 256 days to see any relief.

This issue is one that SOAR chapters and other seniors groups have been raising across the country.

Lillian Greene

Activist and Charter Member of SOAR Chapter 6-01 Posthumously Honoured

Toronto – Lillian (Lil) Greene was recently honoured posthumously by the City of Toronto for her achievements as a lifelong peace, political and social activist and pillar of the community until her death in 2007.

As a concerned parent of three daughters, Lil was active in home, school, political and peace associations; in addition to her career as a secretary for the United Steelworkers.

Lil's roots in social justice activism date back to the Great Depression, when she worked as a stenographer for the unemployed and the Workers' Education League. In fact, she was the stenographer who recorded the historic encounter between the Relief Camp Workers Union, led by Arthur Evans and Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett in 1935. For Bennett, the meeting was a ploy to derail the "On to Ottawa Trek" that sought to

highlight the demand for jobs and compensation for the jobless. While Evans and the trekkers were held up in Regina, hundreds were injured as RCMP officers used tear gas, batons and guns to quash the protest. This confrontation was a milestone that would eventually lead to the downfall of the Bennett government and the creation of the unemployment insurance system in Canada.

Lil's activism continued in her work with the USW and in retirement as a founding member of SOAR chapter 6-01; the first SOAR chapter chartered in Canada.

A lifelong swimmer, Lil advocated that the community should be able to use Toronto's Christie Pits swimming pool free of charge. She did this by canvassing door-to-door with her daughters and presented a petition to her city councillor. Lil kept up her community activism throughout her 90 years; being the first person on the block to organize an official



complaint against an illegal housing addition, to spearheading action to stop people from dumping garbage in the laneways behind homes. Many people in the neighbourhood knew Lil and continue to respect her for the role she played throughout her life in making the community and our country better.

To honour her memory, her neighbourhood petitioned the City of Toronto to name the laneway running east and west between Pendrith Street and Essex Street—the street where she lived—the "Lillian Greene Lane." A ceremony was held in 2015 to unveil a plaque with her name.



SOAR Chapter 3-19 Making the Community Better

Regina, Saskatchewan—Chapter 3-19 continues to fulfill one of SOAR's primary tenets: "Better the community in which you live." In December, Dennis Carrigan, Chapter President, along with fellow member Al Gibbons, presented a \$500 check to Steve Compton, CEO of the Regina Food Bank. The Regina Food Bank is a charitable community-based organization; working to eliminate hunger and insecurity through nutritious food distribution, education and support programs in partnership and cooperation with the community.

They believe that feeding a community is much more than the provision of food. They continue to innovate and provide services and support that address the complex long-term issues that create hunger and insecurity.

The chapter also donated \$500 to the Carmichael Outreach Program's Executive Director, Cora Seller. The Carmichael Outreach Program helps people struggling with addiction, poverty and health issues.

Carmichael Outreach is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization providing Regina's core surrounding areas with everything from clothing and food, to harm-reduction services, health, education and counselling referrals. No fees are ever charged, their doors are always open to whoever needs their assistance and everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

Chapter President Dennis Carrigan said, "These two programs are extremely important to our community. Our members are proud to support these valuable organizations."

From left to right: Regina Food bank CEO Steve Compton and Allen Gibbons of SOAR 3-19.



From left to right: SOAR 3-19 Treasurer, Allen Gibbons, Cora Seller, Executive Director of Carmichael Outreach, SOAR 3-19 President Dennis Carrigan.



PREPARING FOR
Canadian
National
SOAR
Conference

Montreal
April 3-4, 2016

THE CALL IS OUT SOAR chapters in Canada may now register delegates to the fourth Canadian National SOAR Conference, April 3-4, 2016, to be held at Sheraton Centre Hotel in Montreal.

If your chapter has not received conference information, you may call or e-mail Monica Mark at 416-487-1571 or mmark@usw.ca.

The conference theme is "Better Together"—Better communities, better relationship with our local unions, better political action!

IMPORTANT DATES

- ▶ Resolution deadline February 26, 2016
- ▶ Conference registration deadline March 4, 2016
- ▶ Delegate travel arrangement deadline March 4, 2016

November 5, 2105—SOAR members from across the district joined with hundreds of steelworkers in downtown Crown Point, Ind., to demand a fair contract with ArcelorMittal and U.S. Steel. The rally demonstrated the strong support our members have in their quest for a fair and equitable agreement. Both steelmakers are trying to take advantage of the downturn in the market to slash benefits; forcing their employees to pay thousands more out of pocket for health insurance. They also want to turn back the clock and strip our agreements from the gains we achieved over decades of collective bargaining.

The demonstration made it clear; our members are standing firm. They will not allow their contract and quality of life to be destroyed by a fluctuating market and greed.



District 7 SOAR members join USW Rally for a fair contract in Crown Point, Indiana.

SOAR District 7 ACTIVE IN EVERY FIGHT



District 7 SOAR delegation joins with union members and retirees in Springfield, Illinois, to lobby against Governor Rauner's anti-labor agenda.

November 11, 2015—SOAR members jumped on a bus and travelled to Springfield, Ill., to join hundreds of other union activists, senior organizations, community groups, health care and childcare workers, to protest Illinois Governor Rauner's draconian cuts to home health care and childcare programs. The protest rally and lobby effort highlighted the devastating effects of these cuts. They have already forced over 70,000 low and minimum wage workers in the state, including single mothers, quitting their jobs in order to take care of their children, driving them even further in to poverty.

This is just another example of the billionaire governor's attack on the working class of our state. SOAR will continue to highlight his anti-worker/anti-labor agenda and work tirelessly to reverse the course of Rauner's right wing agenda!

Bad Trade KILLS Good Jobs and THREATENS RETIREMENT SECURITY

Retirees and SOAR Chapters are encouraged to take part in a national postcard action!



For too long, our trade policy has failed us. Whether it is China flooding their extra product into our market, currency manipulation undercutting jobs, trade laws that demand harm to our jobs and industries before relief is granted or the pending Trans-Pacific Partnership, things must change.

Our union leads the way in the fight for fairness in the global economy because we know the results of an unfair system: It's a retiree whose benefits are threatened when his former employer goes bankrupt from illegal trade. It's a parent who can't figure out how to make ends meet when her job goes overseas. It's the global worker stuck in a sweatshop job because trade deals encourage a race to the bottom rather than the top.

We've come a long way in this fight, but we have further to go. Demand that our lawmakers take action by taking part in our national trade postcard action.



National Trade Postcard Action: Get Yours Today!

USW locals will begin receiving packages of postcards in February. We're encouraging SOAR chapters and retirees to take part in this important effort as well. These cards will be delivered in a variety of ways to lawmakers' local and Washington, D.C. offices on an ongoing basis over the next few months.

To Get Postcards and Additional Instructions

Check in with the local that you or your SOAR chapter are affiliated with OR contact USW Rapid Response at 412-562-2291 and cards can be mailed to you.

Win a Windbreaker

Any retiree who signs up for Rapid Response e-mails through this effort or joins our mobile alerts program by texting **savejobs** to **69866** will be eligible to win a Rapid Response windbreaker. (For texts, message and data rates may apply. You can opt out by texting STOP at any time.) Additional details on the drawing are included with the postcards. It will take place in early May.



Questions?
Call Rapid Response at
412-562-2291

Manufacturing Continues to Struggle



President Obama delivered his eighth and final State of the Union address on Tuesday evening, January 12, and laid out his administration's accomplishments since he took office in 2009 at the height of the Great Recession.

The President deserves praise on a number of issues including the automobile industry bailout and the creation of manufacturing training hubs across the country. The unemployment rate now stands at 5.0 percent and many Americans are back to work or learning new job skills.

But, as far as the manufacturing sector and steelworkers in general, he missed the opportunity to return many Americans to a comfortable, middle-class life. Manufacturing is in a recession and American steel companies can't compete with China's steel dumping and overcapacity.



The private sector economy lodged 2.65 million new jobs last year according to the Labor Department but only 30,000 of those jobs were in factories. Our trade deficit with China in 2015 will break an all-time record set in 2014.

"While the President was right to highlight economic progress, he missed an opportunity to address some of the core concerns that are holding back manufacturing," said AAM President Scott Paul. "Yes, manufacturing has added 900,000 jobs over the past six years but that represents less than 40 percent of the factory jobs lost over the recession. Only 30,000 jobs were created in 2015.

"Manufacturing is struggling right now, primarily due to a surging imbalance in the manufacturing goods trade, particularly with China. Layoffs are already occurring in steel and other industries and those jobs are very difficult to reclaim. And the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) won't be of much help to manufacturing if it doesn't address currency manipulation in a serious way."

On the 2012 campaign trail, the president pledged to create one million new manufacturing jobs during his second term. He will fall far short of that goal as only 384,000 jobs had been created at the end of 2015.

And because of China's cheating ways, the U.S. steel industry is suffering the most. More than 12,000 steelworkers were laid off across the country in 2015. Major mills in Alabama, Illinois, Ohio and Texas have been idled because of market conditions caused by China's unfair trade practices.

America's steelmakers filed several trade cases in June alleging that some products from China had been dumped in the United States. In December, the Commerce Department sided with the companies in one of these cases announcing some steel imports will be taxed at 256 percent.

But trade cases alone won't reverse this trend.

With China's currency devaluing, and its industrial overcapacity causing havoc around the globe, we can expect more bad news for American steel and manufacturing in the months to come.

Jeff Bonior is a staff writer for the Alliance for American Manufacturing.



Washington Wrap

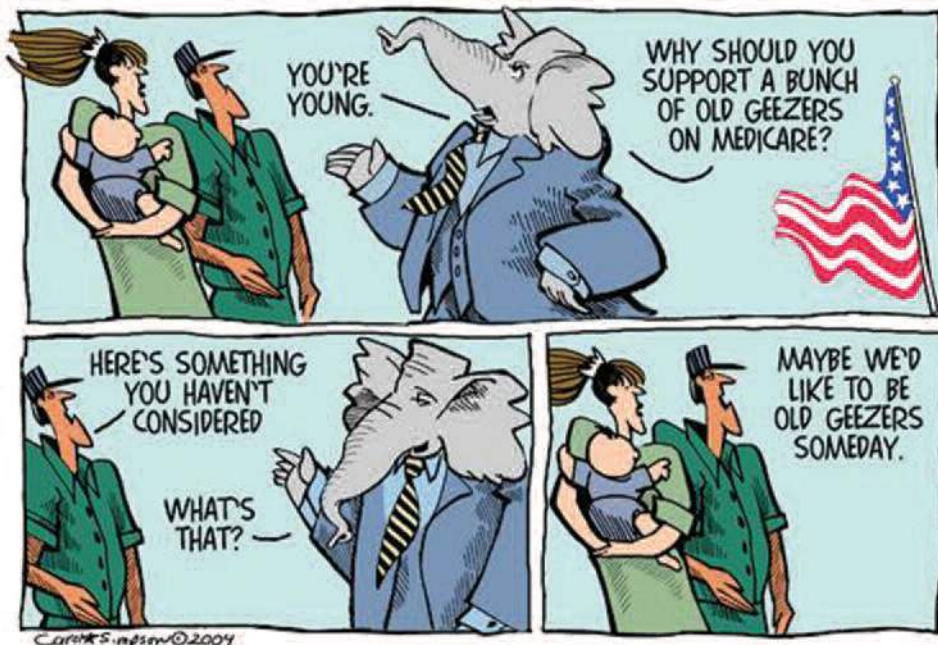
By Ken Kovack
SOAR Legislative Director
Washington, D.C.

Election Year



It was President Abraham Lincoln that issued a statement one Thanksgiving that noted, in part, that, **“Citizens must acknowledge their share of responsibility for the country’s predicament.”**

When I read this statement today, I feel that it really speaks to the numerous back-benchers that do not vote. Their lack of voter participation in our democracy allows for a dysfunctional Congress that is tasked with doing the nation’s business. When a large number of our country’s citizens decide not to participate in an election, their indifference allows those with a vested interest to overrule the needs of the majority.



A good example of this is the opposition to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obama Care). Poll after poll demonstrates that the majority of Americans like it and want to keep it. Yet the conservative members of congress have wasted valuable time and millions of dollars by voting 60 times trying to kill it. Our elected representatives still have not addressed the long term need to repair our crumbling infrastructure, which is important to all of us, and they continue to ignore

the damage done to manufacturing through unfettered trade.

If we truly want a democracy that is a “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” we must exercise our civic duty and VOTE! It’s never been more important. The issues are many and the consequence of our inaction is too great.

See you at the polls!

Bill Could Save Medicare Beneficiaries Billions of Dollars

If you’ve made a trip to the pharmacy recently, you know the cost of prescription drugs continues to go up and up. And for many, the high prices for the medicines they need are simply out of reach. **So what can we do to curb rising drug costs?**

To begin with, you can call your Congressional Representative today, urging them to pass the **“Medicare Fair Drug Pricing Act” (H.R. 4207)**, introduced by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (IL-09). This vital legislation would allow Medicare to negotiate prices for prescription drugs with limited to no competition, currently forbidden by law, and could save the Medicare program and millions of beneficiaries billions of dollars.

This important legislation also comes at a time when the Senate Special Committee on Aging has launched an investigation into recent cases of possible price gouging by pharmaceutical companies.

But Congress will not act unless they hear from constituents like you — especially when big pharmaceutical corporations are using their massive influence in Washington to try and block this legislation. So please **TAKE ACTION RIGHT NOW** to help the National Committee and SOAR to put pressure on Washington lawmakers to pass this bill.

There is nothing wrong with being successful in business. But it’s not fair that pharmaceutical companies are making record profits at the expense of consumers, who are seeing their health care costs soar. It’s time to stand up to Big Pharma and send a message that they can’t charge consumers whatever they want for the prescription drugs you rely on!

We need your voice in this fight!

Please call today 866-202-5409. Tell Congress to pass the “Medicare Fair Drug Pricing Act”!





Affordable Prescription Drug Prices Require an Effort on Multiple Fronts

by Robert Roach, Jr.

Significantly higher drug prices contributed to increased Medicare spending in 2014; according to government data released in December. In fact, at least five

drugs covered under Medicare Part D had increases of 100 percent or more from 2013 to 2014. *The Wall Street Journal* first reported the story.

The Alliance for Retired Americans is fighting high prescription drug prices on several fronts. One solution would be to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices for seniors.

Together with other organizations, 11,000 of our activists signed a petition to Congress, arguing that it is time to hold the pharmaceutical industry accountable for questionable business practices. Drug companies cannot be allowed to rake in billions in profits while price gouging our nation's most vulnerable.

Alliance members are also fighting to prevent the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal from being approved by Congress. The House Committee on Ways and Means Democrats held a hearing late last year on the TPP and how it could affect access to medicine. The Alliance submitted a statement that noted several provisions that will

keep drug prices high for all Americans and restrict the government's ability to hold down costs in the future.

We followed that with rallies across the country at the beginning of this year. Just before President Obama gave his final State of the Union address on January 12, Alliance members held events in 20 cities to highlight our opposition to the TPP, which would later be mentioned in the President's speech.

We held those events because the TPP could jeopardize Medicare's ability to use cheaper and more cost-effective drugs over higher priced alternatives. And that is the last thing seniors in this country need!

Learn more about how you can help stop the TPP at <http://www.aflcio.org/Issues/Trade/Trans-Pacific-Partnership-Free-Trade-Agreement-TPP>.

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.



Five Ways Congress Can Strengthen Social Security Now WITHOUT CUTTING BENEFITS

Social Security faces a funding shortfall in 2033 which, if not addressed, could result in across the board benefit cuts of about 23 percent. While this shortfall does not pose an immediate crisis, there are reasonable changes that Congress should enact to keep Social Security solvent and strengthen it for current and future generations:

1 Eliminate the cap on Social Security payroll contributions.

In 2014, only wages up to \$117,000 will be subject to the Social Security payroll deduction. Lifting the cap will subject all wages to the payroll contribution which will help address the majority of Social Security's projected funding shortfall.

2 Slowly increase the payroll contribution rate by 1/20th of one percent over 20 years. This gradual increase in the rate will significantly strengthen Social Security's financial condition well into the future.

3 Treat all salary reduction plans like 401ks. All workers pay Social Security and Medicare taxes on their contributions to retirement accounts but no payroll taxes are collected from workers flexible spending accounts such as HSAs, transit and dependent care plans. This change will add money to the program.

4 Increase the basic benefit for all current and future retirees by five percent of the basic benefit (about \$55 per month). This modest but meaningful benefit improvement

is a long-overdue boost, especially for low-to-middle income beneficiaries who rely upon their Social Security benefit for the majority of their income.

5 Provide Social Security credits for caregivers.

When computing the Social Security benefit, grant up to five family service years to workers who leave paid employment to provide care to children under the age of six or to elderly or disabled family members. This will provide greater parity for women's benefits which are typically less than men's due to interruptions to paid employment caused by family caregiving needs.





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