

Boosting Social Security Benefits

By Max Richtman, NCPSSM
President/CEO

Momentum continues to build inside and outside the halls of Congress to reverse course on the single-minded quest to cut Social Security benefits which has dominated our political discourse for years. Not surprisingly, commentators who bought into the billion dollar Wall Street campaign to convince America we can't afford a strong Social Security system are distressed at this turn of events.

Apocalyptic screeds with headlines like "Increasing Social Security Benefits Would Wreck Retirement Security" portray efforts to boost these earned benefits as partisan pandering. They conveniently ignore the fact that legislation increasing benefits would also extend Social Security's long-term solvency by decades. The American people have never bought into the false choice that the only way to "save Social Security" is to slash benefits. Congress now has the opportunity to plot a course that addresses our looming retirement crisis while also strengthening Social Security's long-term finances.

There's no doubt that, for years now, the steady drumbeat for cutting Social Security benefits has been so deafening

as to drown out any discussion about what those cuts would actually mean for millions of Americans. According to the 2014 Retirement Confidence Survey by the Employee Benefit Research Institute, a sizable percentage of workers report they have virtually no savings and investments. More than a third (36 percent) of retired civilian workers say they have less than \$1,000 (up from 28 percent in 2013). A quarter of workers and 17 percent of retirees indicate that their current level of debt is higher than it was five years ago. Social Security remains the only stable source of income for many families who are still rebuilding after our nation's recent brush with economic collapse. Yet, rather than address this retirement crisis head-on, we have wasted years of political energy focused on cutting benefits to pay down the deficit rather than strengthening the Social Security program—until now.

Legislation sponsored by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.) would change the benefit calculation formula the Social Security Administration uses, so that benefits would gradually increase by approximately \$70 per month. The Strengthening Social Security Act would also change the way the Social Security Administration calculates the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), ensuring that benefits more accurately

reflect the increasing costs facing seniors today. Finally, this legislation would phase out the current payroll tax cap so that all Americans contribute to Social Security taxes fairly. In 2014, workers who earn less than \$117,000 contribute 6.2 percent of their wages in Social Security payroll taxes. Workers who earned above \$117,000 pay no Social Security payroll taxes above that level, meaning the effective tax rate for Social Security actually decreases for America's higher income workers. In fact, workers who earn over a \$1 million per year only pay Social Security tax on one-tenth or less of their earnings, which creates a gaping loophole for millionaires. The "Strengthen Social Security Act of 2013" gets rid of this loophole, boosts benefits, and would extend the solvency of Social Security by almost two additional decades, until 2049.

The latest survey by the National Academy of Social Insurance shows large majorities of Americans, both Republicans and Democrats, agree on ways to strengthen Social Security, without cutting benefits. Of those polled, 74 percent of Republicans and 88 percent of Democrats agree that, "It is critical to preserve Social Security even if it means increasing Social Security taxes paid by working Americans." Simply put, the American people are willing to pay more for Social Security. They understand the growing impact

continued on page 2

Social Security remains the only stable source of income for many families who are still rebuilding after our nation's recent brush with economic collapse.



BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

The Affordable Care Act is Good for Seniors

The most recent government study published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, reported historically low increases in health care spending for the fourth straight year. The Kaiser Foundation, in an article by Drew Altman, claims in its analysis that changes in health insurance and health care have played a significant role in the reduction.

Despite this information, 60 percent of Americans believe that the cost of health care has been going up faster than usual in recent years. Only four percent believe costs have been growing slower than usual. Much of this belief is the result of employers passing premium increases and higher deductibles onto employees, while their wages remain stagnant or are being reduced.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) addresses both the health spending and affordability in part, by reducing future increases in Medicare payments. Other provisions, such as the review of premium, increases and the requirement that insurance companies put most of their dollars into patient services further control cost.

The Congressional Budget Office projects Medicare costs will increase much slower in the future than previously thought, because of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

Maybe the 54 times the House has voted to repeal the ACA, or some of the alleged horror stories reported by the news media, have helped to give the ACA the negative approval it presently has. But, one thing is for sure, if seniors see lower increases in their Medicare premiums, we will have more of our Social Security benefit to use on other necessary expenses.



JIM CENTNER
SOAR Director

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Why Does Paul Ryan Hate US?

On April 1, 2014 Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) released his annual budget proposal. Unfortunately, it wasn't an "April Fools" joke. In this budget we all are played the fool!

Ryan's budget protects tax breaks for the very rich and big corporations, while it cuts \$5.1 trillion dollars from programs that build the middle class and protects those most vulnerable in our society. Medicare is privatized. Food stamps, college aid, support for schools, Head Start, child nutrition are destroyed and, of course, it repeals the Affordable Care Act and guts Medicaid.

This budget will broaden the gap between the haves and have nots. Our representatives in Congress should condemn this proposal and make it clear that they will not stand idly by while Ryan and his cronies on the right destroy Medicare by turning it into a voucher system to preserve tax breaks for the Wall Street elite.

There is a better way. The Congressional Progressive Congress has proposed their own budget; the "Better Off Budget." It reduces our long-term deficit by putting people to work. It will create nearly nine (9) million jobs that will fix our crumbling infrastructure and put teachers, fire fighters and cops back to work. It strengthens Medicare and Medicaid and provides for high quality, low cost medical coverage to millions of Americans, when they need it most.

It is time for us to stand up and fight! We must say NO to Ryan's harmful budget proposals and let our representatives know that we support the "Better Off Budget" and are willing to work with them to get it passed.

Boosting Social Security Benefits

continued from page 1

these benefits have on individual lives and on our larger economy.

Families spend \$816 billion in Social Security benefits nationwide each year. When 57 million Americans use the purchasing power of those modest benefits, they are supporting local businesses and jobs, communities and state economies with billions of dollars they simply wouldn't have without Social Security. Boosting Social Security now makes sense not only for millions of Americans and their families but also for our economic recovery. The waning anti-Social Security lobby will try to stop our progress, but the American people understand that boosting benefits is the right thing to do and now is the right time to do it, for millions of middle-class families and our nation's economic recovery.



SOAR in ACTION

Published as an edition to *USW@Work* for the United Steelworkers
 Five Gateway Center
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Winner of ICLA's journalistic competition awards for General Excellence in 1986, 1990 and 1993

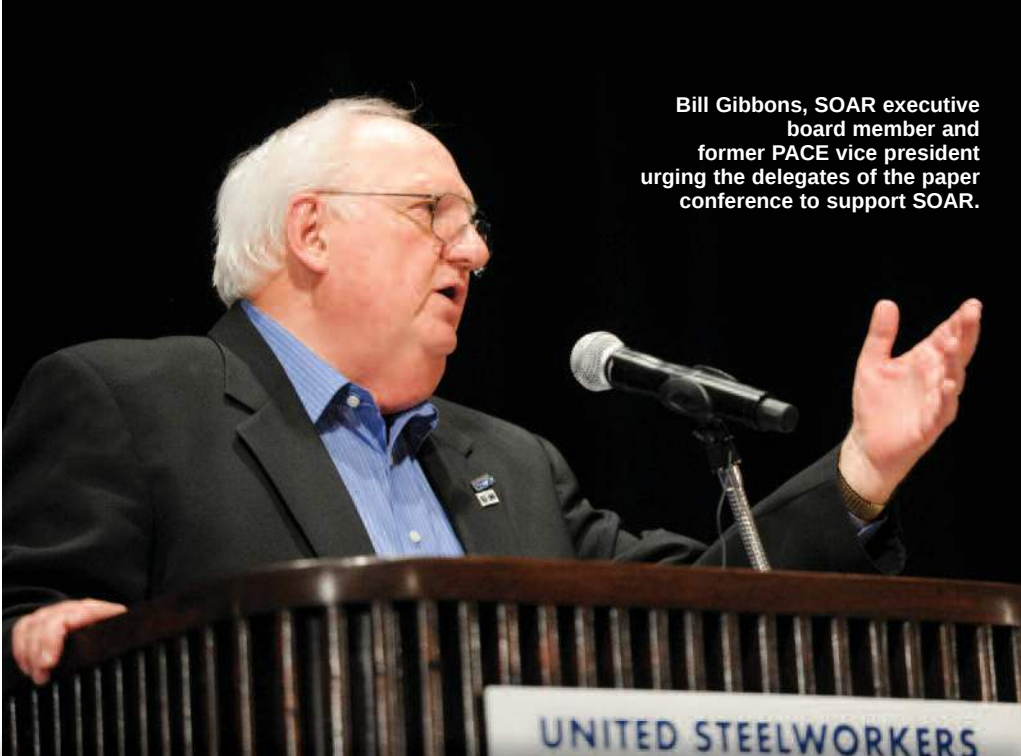
Jim Centner, Director/Editor
 Lee Etta Hairston, Copy Editor

Address editorial material to:
 Editor, *USW@Work*, *SOAR in Action*
 United Steelworkers
 Five Gateway Center
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1209

Send address changes only to:
 USW Membership Department
 3340 Perimeter Hill Drive
 Nashville, TN 37211

When submitting address change, please include address label from last issue.

USW@Work (ISSN 0883-3141) is published four times a year by the United Steelworkers AFL-CIO-CLC Five Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Subscriptions to non-members: \$12 for one year; \$20 for two years. Periodicals postage paid at Pittsburgh, PA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: **USW@Work**, USW Membership Dept., 3340 Perimeter Hill Rd., Nashville, TN 37211.

A photograph of Bill Gibbons, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and a blue shirt. He is standing behind a wooden podium with a microphone, gesturing with his right hand. The podium has a sign that reads "UNITED STEELWORKERS".

Bill Gibbons, SOAR executive board member and former PACE vice president urging the delegates of the paper conference to support SOAR.

SOAR ACTIVIST ADDRESSES USW PAPER CONFERENCE

When SOAR leader Bill Gibbons asked the crowd of 550-plus members at the USW paper sector conference in Pittsburgh how many locals had SOAR participation, only two people raised their hand. It proved that it was a perfect opportunity to have this former paper worker speak about the Steelworker Organization of Active Retirees and encourage future retirees to join.

Many paper workers recognized Gibbons, who was an international vice president in the former PACE union. He told the members at the April 1-3 conference that, "SOAR brings a dynamic, retiree activism, which is significantly important.

"It provides an untapped source of individuals to help local unions on topics we have been talking about this morning. I consider SOAR to be an integral part of a dynamic union, one that can contribute so much to our cause," he said.

He gave information about SOAR — how to join and how to form a chapter within a local or within an area. He also emphasized the importance of SOAR in the legislative and political arena.

"We have to take advantage of all resources," Gibbons said. "The right-wing conservative groups will not stop in attacking our programs like Medicare and Social Security. If we are not involved, they will run us over. There is an unprecedented attack on labor unions."

He said that over 60 SOAR chapters are active in the USW's Rapid Response program, an on-the-ground grassroots effort to get members involved in lobbying their state and federal elected officials.

Gibbons told how SOAR members engaged in demonstrations and protests, especially in Indiana, where the right-wing Republicans are trying to destroy labor like they are across the country.

"We have an opportunity to mobilize an army of retirees," Gibbons said at the end of his presentation. "If we don't mobilize, we won't succeed."

Lawrence McBrearty Appointed to SOAR Board

USW International President Leo W. Gerard appointed retired Canadian National Director Lawrence McBrearty, to the SOAR Executive Board to fill the vacancy created when District 5 Executive Board Member Bob Saumure retired.

Lawrence traces his union roots to the last historic campaign of the late 1950s and early 60s to represent workers at the Gaspé Copper mine in Murdochville, Quebec. He was only 19 years old when he got involved in that bitter struggle. He was quickly elected to the local union executive board and, in 1970, was elected president of Local 6086. He held the position until he was appointed to the Steelworkers' staff in 1974.

As a staff representative, he served Steelworker members on the North Shore of Quebec, the Gaspé Peninsula, Madeleine Islands, Labrador and Newfoundland. In 1991, McBrearty was appointed director of District 5 by the international executive board and was elected Canadian national director in 1993 a position he held until he retired in 2004.

Prior to his appointment to the board, Lawrence served as District 5 coordinator working to build SOAR in District 5 and the Atlantic Provinces.



Senator Jay Rockefeller Honored

Weirton, W.Va.—SOAR members from across the state were on hand on March 17 in Weirton, W.Va., when the United Steelworkers and International President Leo W. Gerard honored Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) with a lifetime achievement award.

Senator Rockefeller, who recently announced he will retire from the Senate when his term expires next year, has worked tirelessly for decades on behalf of steelworkers, their families and their communities. It was fitting that the ceremony was held in Weirton, where in 1982 Senator Rockefeller played a significant role in rescuing Weirton Steel from bankruptcy.

Rockefeller has stood against unfair trade practices, supported tariffs on unfair cheap foreign steel and is an ardent supporter of The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program. TAA provides job training and other assistance to U.S. workers who have lost their jobs as a result of foreign trade. The Senator was the driving force behind the effort to provide the Health Care Tax Credit (HCTC), which made health insurance more affordable for individuals under the age of 65 and their families, who lost their benefits through bankruptcy, by paying a significant portion of their health insurance premiums for tax years 2002 through 2013; when the Affordable Care made the tax credit no longer necessary.

As Jay leaves the Senate, he passes on the Chair of the Senate Steel Caucus to Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, who was also on hand to honor Senator Rockefeller.

President Gerard remarked, "It's hard to imagine a public servant more committed to the well-being of American workers than our friend, Senator Jay Rockefeller."

As Jay began to address the crowd he asked "Is Karen Gorrell and her retirees here today?" She and the Century retiree group were there and stood with their signs. Jay said, "God bless you, and I stand with you in your continuing fight to receive the health care promised to you from Century Aluminum."



Century Aluminum retirees with Senator Jay Rockefeller and USW International President Leo W. Gerard.

Chapter 4-AB1 Sponsors Retiree Seminar

March 25, 2014—SOAR Chapter 4-AB1 in Massena, New York, held an informational meeting for members considering early retirement due to the shutdown of the Alcoa East Smelting facility. Shortly after Alcoa announced they were shutting down the plant, the union negotiated an early retirement package for the workers impacted by that decision. This agreement involves members of USW Locals 450A Massena East Plant and 420A Massena West Plant.

The SOAR Chapter wanted to help the two locals. They knew that, David LaClair Jr., president of Local 450

and Robert Smith, president of Local 420 had their hands full dealing with the shutdown. The SOAR group scheduled a meeting that brought in the affected union members and their spouses to meet with financial advisers, tax experts, a CPA and Workforce Development representatives.

The meeting was a huge success. The assembled panel answered many questions and made themselves available for one-on-one consultations in the future. It really addressed the issue of, "I wish I knew that when I retired," that we so often hear from our retirees.



SOAR DISTRICT 7 – *in ACTION*

Solidarity Works!

On March 18, 2014 a lively group of SOAR members along with members from USW District 7, were among the several hundred demonstrators rallying in solidarity with Local 2001 against Neo Industries in Portage, Indiana.

Twenty-two USW members had been working without a contract since November 2013. In early February 2014, Neo Industries began unilaterally contracting out truck driving jobs. This brazen action by the employer, forced the members to take matters into their own hands and on February 7, they walked out in an unfair labor practice strike.

For weeks, Local 2003 members kept a constant picket line at the plant, in the sub-zero weather. USW locals and SOAR chapters joined them on



their picket line and helped raise money to support the strikers. District 7 Director Mike Millsap called the March 18 solidarity action at Neo, just a couple of days before he was

scheduled to resume negotiations. Neo Industries got the solidarity message and within a few days agreed to a new contract that ended the strike and put our members back to work.

More District 7 SOAR Solidarity

District 7 SOAR activists joined, with labor and community groups, in a spirited march on April 2, 2014. The march was in support of the Warehouse Workers for Justice (WWJ); members who work at a Walmart warehouse distribution center in Hammond, Indiana.



The demonstrators marched to the front gate of the center, while several warehouse workers presented management with petitions calling for permanent jobs, family-supporting livable wages and safety on the job.

This is the second time SOAR members have shown their support. In January, our members joined WWJ in an action presenting petitions at a local Walmart store demanding that Walmart provide heat in the same warehouse complex. The workers were being forced to work in bitter cold and dangerously icy conditions.

The protest was successful. Shortly after the demonstration, heaters were installed in the warehouse facility. SOAR Chapter 31-9 is in this fight for the long haul. They have “adopted” a workers’ group at a local Walmart store to continue the fight to organize, and improve working conditions and wages for those who work for the nation’s largest retail chain.

NEXTGEN/LEGENDS SYMPOSIUM

New Tools to Build Steelworker Activism

By Lena Sutton

SOAR Chapter 10 President

Hamilton, Ontario ~ March 24-26, 2014 —

“Unionism is not a spectator sport. We must engage like never before,” says USW District 6 Director Marty Warren.

District 6 Director Marty Warren opened the NextGen/Legends symposium with a keynote address that described his vision to make our union stronger in its fight against the anti-worker agenda of big business and government. Marty encouraged all to take part in activities in their local unions and in their communities and to become politically active to get more New Democrats elected to our provincial and federal governments.

The symposium’s goals were to help participants develop strategies for member engagement and to learn about the best use of social and traditional media. Participants were introduced to the new D6Connect/TUBE, the District 6 communication network. By signing up to D6Connect, members will receive updates on the union’s activities through e-mail, Twitter and text messages.

Workshops included video/photography, social media and traditional media. One of the exercises from the video/photography workshop included making a short video. Sean McMullen, a young member from Local 7135 of Hamilton, gave people two words— UNION and



USW Local 5328 Vice President Terry Willock, Hamilton singer/songwriter Brian Melo, SOAR Chapter 10 president Lena Sutton and USW District 6 Director Marty Warren.

ONION—and asked them which word they preferred. Only one person, a worker in the hotel lobby, answered UNION.

We still have a great deal of work to do to engage our members and educate the public about the benefits of unions. Steelworkers, from the NextGen to our Legends, are up to the task.

USW Members at Crown Holdings **NEED YOUR HELP**

Eight months ago, 120 USW members at Crown Holdings in Toronto were forced on strike after their employer demanded severe concessions on wages, pensions and benefits.

Crown, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of food and beverage cans, has prolonged the strike with its demands for huge cuts, including a two-tier wage structure that would relegate young workers to low-wage survival jobs.

These USW members are the only workers among Crown’s 147 facilities worldwide that have been forced out on strike. They cannot win this strike on their own—they need our support.

A key member of the Crown Holdings board of directors is Arnold Donald, who also serves as the CEO of cruise ship company Carnival

Corporation. For this reason, the Ontario Federation of Labour, IndustriALL global union, Congress of Union Retirees of Canada and SOAR Canada have all endorsed a boycott of all Carnival cruise lines

Seniors are among the largest group of consumers of cruises and we appeal to you, your friends, families and all SOAR members to look for another cruise line or another vacation option.

Crown’s demand for a 42 percent pay cut for young workers is a direct

attack on the next generation, our children and grandchildren. We cannot stand back and allow that to happen.

We ask you to join with other unionists around the world and support the LabourStart campaign, endorsed by USW National Director for Canada Ken Neumann and District 6 Director Marty Warren. Send an e-mail message to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and tell her to stand up for Ontario workers and the next generation in this struggle.

Send your message at www.usw.ca/crown.

Learn more about the USW campaign at www.takebacksnomore.ca.

Canada's National Health Accord: RIP

On March 31, 2014 Canada's Health Accord expired. The accord was negotiated 10 years ago by the federal, provincial and territorial governments, to provide stable funding and set common goals on wait times, home care and prescription drugs.

On March 31, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has always favoured American pay-as-you-go health care, began the process of eroding our public health care system by taking \$36 billion out of federal transfers over the next 10 years. The Conservative government has further undermined public health care by cancelling the National Health Coalition, an organization of experts that monitored progress and provided advice on crucial issues.

Canadians took to the streets in over 40 communities on March 31 to protest the Harper government's failure to renew or renegotiate the Health Accord.

This is just the beginning of a major campaign to save Medicare as we know it. Please, if you value our Canadian health care system, and studies show 94 percent of Canadians do, then we need to fight back. We must tell our elected representatives, at every level, that we need collaboration and not confrontation to strengthen our health care system.

► Sign an online petition of support at www.leadnow.ca/defend-health-care.

► Learn more about Canada's Health Coalition at www.healthcoalition.ca.



Colourful demonstrators at our nation's capital.



Red umbrellas symbolize our support for health care.



SOAR activists and local 1005 members stand up for Canada's Health Accord.

What is the **Ryan Budget**?

The Paul Ryan budget would have scary consequences for seniors. It was just approved by the House along party lines. The Senate will not take up the measure, but we must remain ready to act if these proposals come back in other forms.

Cuts for Americans

Advocates of the budget promised a balanced budget by 2024 but would do so at the expense of poor people and seniors on Medicaid, lower-income workers receiving Obamacare subsidies, and people receiving food stamps and Pell Grants. The bill cuts billions of federal dollars from the Medicaid program, which not only provides health care for the poor, but pays for most Americans' nursing home care. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Ryan budget gets 69 percent of its cuts from programs to people with low or moderate incomes.



Repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA)

The Ryan budget largely repeals the ACA, including popular aspects of the law, such as prohibiting insurance companies from denying coverage to people with preexisting medical conditions, allowing young adults to stay on their parents' health policies until age 26, gradually closing the "doughnut hole" in Medicare's prescription drug benefit and more.

A Voucher Program for Medicare

Under the plan, future enrollees of Medicare now under the age of 55 would be given a subsidy—dubbed "premium support," but essentially a voucher system—with which they would purchase health insurance on the open market. The problem with that is Medicare subsidies won't keep up with inflation and will require sharply higher out-of-pocket costs for future seniors. A Congressional Budget Office review of the Ryan plan estimates that by 2030, typical 65-year-olds would pay 68 percent of the cost of their coverage out-of-pocket, compared with the 25 percent share they pay now. In dollar terms, the average 65-year-old's costs would more than double from about \$6,000 a year under current law to \$12,500 by 2022. This leaves seniors potentially knee-deep in out-of-pocket costs, a far cry from the guaranteed coverage that Medicare currently gives.

Large Tax Breaks for the Wealthiest

The Ryan budget makes the Bush tax cuts permanent and adds new tax cuts that are both expensive and tilted toward high-income households. It would cut the top individual tax rate to 25 percent, the lowest level since the Hoover administration more than 80 years ago. Many low-income working families would actually see an increase in their tax burdens under the Ryan plan.

Congressman Ryan's budget is a disgrace to our seniors and hurts the most vulnerable in our communities all while passing on tax breaks to the richest and most fortunate. Stay involved with Rapid Response and join us to keep bad policies such as the Ryan budget at bay!

The McCutcheon Decision Is Disastrous

In a case some have called "Citizens United 2.0," the Supreme Court struck down caps on the total amount a donor can contribute to political candidates, parties and political action committees. The case, *McCutcheon v. FEC*, involved a coal tycoon who argued that the laws limiting individual donations to political candidates and parties to \$123,200 total over two years violated his first amendment rights. Now, wealthy donors can give more than \$3.5 million over that same period. Citizens United allowed Big Business to spend literally as much as it wants. But Citizens United money can go only to outside groups. Now McCutcheon removes meaningful limits on the total amount an individual can directly contribute to candidates, political parties and political committees.

As *The Nation's* John Nichols points out, the ruling makes it crystal clear that rather than work to protect democracy, "the court has opted for full-on plutocracy."

The good news is that people across the nation are responding with protests to this outrageous decision building on the widespread outrage generated by Citizens United. States and cities across the country have called for a "Democracy Is For People" amendment to end unlimited and undisclosed corporate financing of American elections and to enable the government to regulate spending by individuals. The amendment would effectively reverse much of the damage of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* and help to mitigate the worst excesses of the McCutcheon decision.

Sixteen states and hundreds of cities and towns across the country have already demanded that Congress act to end the ever-growing influx of big money into politics. Join the fight! Call your member of Congress ask them to support the "Democracy Is For People" amendment.

PREPARING FOR OUR UNION'S FUTURE: Next Generation Program Growing Fast

Our union's newest program, Next Generation, aims to inspire, engage and educate the USW's youngest members and to get members of all ages to work together to ensure our union survives and thrives for generations to come.



The Next Generation program has three main goals:

- ▶ Build our union from within by reaching out to younger members and inspiring them to become involved as activists;
- ▶ Build our union in our communities so that we change the perception of who we are and join forces with others who want to fight for social and economic justice; and,
- ▶ Build our future leadership by mentoring those who show potential to rise through the ranks.

Since its creation by Resolution No.4 at the 2011 Constitutional Convention, Next Generation has grown into one of the labor movement's most successful young worker programs, with rank-and-file coordinators in each district working with members of all ages to get everyone involved.

Many SOAR members have taken on an important role in building the program.

"Those who came before us have so much to teach about being good leaders and about our past, but they also have a lot to keep giving right now," said Nick Gaitaud, a young member from USW Local 7150 in Albany, Oregon, who also serves on the AFL-CIO's Young Workers Advisory Committee. "SOAR and Next Gen have teamed up on actions, such as fighting to protect Social Security and Medicare and they have been there for us, helping to support efforts to end the tiered wage systems that are dividing us on the shop floor."

Members of the USW's Next Generation have shown they have boundless energy and a hunger to learn, work and honor history.

USW International Vice President for Human Affairs Fred Redmond, who leads the Steelworkers Next Generation program, said, "We have amazing young members who are emerging as strong leaders and effective activists. They want to continue our traditions, as well as see us adapt and grow so we can succeed for a new generation. This is really exciting because for every major milestone in our nation's history—from the Civil Rights movement to the fight for workers rights and economic justice— young people have led the way along with labor."

International President Leo W. Gerard said he is proud of how far Next Generation has come in a short time.

"Our young members are showing they understand, appreciate and respect our history and have a sense of responsibility to those who came before us," Gerard said. "This is a tremendous testament to our values and shows that we truly are more than a union, we're family. It's our duty to engage and prepare our future leaders so that our union will survive and thrive. Like every family, we want to leave behind something truly great for our kids and grandkids."

Next Gen members have been getting active in their local unions in various roles, including bargaining and building local and regional young member groups. They have been attending various USW trainings and

are becoming involved in Rapid Response, Health and Safety, and other union programs. They also have become leaders in their communities by mentoring school children, leading school supplies drives, supporting food banks and raising money and items for shelter pets, among other things.

For more information, visit www.usw.org/nextgen.



SOAR International Conference Scheduled

August 2014 in Las Vegas

The SOAR International Conference is scheduled for August 8-9, 2014, at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nev.

For those of you planning on submitting resolutions to the Conference, all resolutions must be received in the SOAR office in Pittsburgh no later than July 9, 2014.



Washington Wrap

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

Midterm Elections are Important!



In the last issue, I appealed to all of you to reach out to your friends and family to join SOAR. That appeal remains. A larger membership makes us strong and our solidarity makes us even stronger.

Together, we have a very big job in front of us that is going to require each and every one of us to be involved. That is, getting out the vote for the November 4 election. Consider the following: There

are about 190 million eligible voters who have the opportunity to decide the victors of 435 House seats, 33 Senate seats, 36 governors' races, 48 state legislators plus mayoral races. What scares me is the serious drop off in voter participation in mid-term elections. Historically, voter participation is about 60 percent in presidential races and shamefully drops to about 40 percent in midterm elections. If we are to be successful, we must get our members, friends and families out to vote—and to vote for the right candidates. We need to vote for candidates that support our issues, not those that seek to destroy what we have earned and fought for our entire lives.

Turning out the vote is no less important in the 36 governor's races. We all know that several Republican governors have pushed for "so called" reforms that make voting more difficult. Many of these governors support "Right-to-Work" (for less) legislation and have been in the forefront to eliminate bargaining rights for state employees.

We need to work for the upcoming election harder than any election in the past. Those that seek to get rich on the backs of the poor and working class will spend huge sums of money in support of their candidates and their agenda. We can't back away from this fight or feel hopeless about the huge amounts of money that will be spent during this election cycle.

The political and legislative arenas have become our battle ground. Our only defense against these well financed opponents is to do everything we can to be engaged in this fight. We have too much to lose if we don't!

These midterm elections can decide whether or not Social Security and Medicare will continue to be the safety nets they were intended to be. The very survival of these two vital programs is at stake. We cannot match the opposition dollar for dollar. But, we can win these fights and elect our candidates, if we can get our members to the polls!

Increase the Minimum Wage – for Everyone's Sake



By Barbara J. Easterling

The federal minimum wage is actually lower, in today's dollars, than in was in 1968. That's right, today's \$7.25 used to be the equivalent of \$9.39, in today's dollars, back then. Because many seniors work in minimum wage jobs to supplement their Social Security benefits, this is an issue that affects older workers. A stronger mini-

imum wage would reduce elderly poverty and raise the floor of retirement security. Restoring the minimum wage, and indexing it to inflation, would not only increase the wages of the 28 million workers affected, it would also improve Social Security's finances, by having those workers pay payroll taxes on an estimated \$35 billion in additional earnings by 2016. Since Social Security benefits are tied to earnings, women would particularly benefit from an increase in the minimum wage. That is because their lifetime earnings are frequently affected by lower wages and family care time spent out of the work force.

In an economy in which adults and parents increasingly rely on low-wage jobs, restoring the minimum wage is a modest but important step toward lifting families out of poverty. One example is the fast-food industry. Studies show that a majority of front-line fast-food workers are enrolled in Medicaid, food stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or other public-assistance programs. That means that raising the minimum wage would spare taxpayers some of that expense. Hard work should be rewarded with a degree of economic security and dignity.



Barbara J. Easterling is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans. She was previously the secretary-treasurer of the Communications Workers of America. For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org or call 1-800-333-7212.

SOAR and AAM Working in Colorado to KEEP IT MADE IN AMERICA

Rachel Bennet Steury and Ken Poweski, Field Coordinators with the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), recently spent 10 days working alongside SOAR activists in Colorado to educate elected officials, candidates, union members and the general public about the importance of revitalizing the manufacturing sector of the U.S. economy.

Rachel and Ken spoke to the Boulder Area Labor Council and the Colorado Labor & Education committee of the Steelworkers in Commerce City. UA Pipefitters Local 208 hosted a reception for the Colorado AFL-CIO COPE Convention, where Rachel and Ken joined labor leaders, state-elected officials and many candidates for state, local and Congressional offices. SOAR District 12 Executive Board Member, Joel Buchanan, SOAR 38-3 President Al Becco, and SOAR 12-01 President David Nefzger introduced Rachel and Ken to many of the labor leaders and candidates. This provided a good opportunity for them to discuss

the important issues on their agenda, in a less formal and relaxed environment.

David, Al, Joel and USW Local 2102 Vice President Sam Pantello joined Rachel and Ken for a number of meetings with top staff from the offices of Congresswoman DeGette, Congressmen Perlmutter, Coffman and Tipton, and Senators Udall and Bennet. They focused on providing information about currency manipulation, infrastructure investment, international trade and Buy America policies. They also met with Adams County Commissioner and fellow Steelworker Chaz Tedesco about state and county-level Buy America policies and their importance to job creation.

Al, Joel and David joined Rachel, Ken and Colorado State AFL-CIO Political Director, Phil Hayes in Denver, for a meeting with Governor Hickenlooper's top policy staff, who shared details of the "Colorado Blueprint" that is designed to spur the economy and create jobs. Rachel and Ken shared AAM's "Blueprint for the Future" which is very similar but also



includes enforcing our nation's trade laws, infrastructure investment, industrial energy efficiency and a strong "Buy American" component.

The Colorado Alliance for Retired Americans welcomed Rachel as their guest speaker where she led a spirited discussion on manufacturing issues and the power of being active in politics. Rachel and Ken also enjoyed a tour of the Pueblo Colorado Fuel & Iron Steelworks Museum led by Al and Joel, both mill retirees. While in Pueblo Joel and Al introduced them to several SOAR members and toured the USW Local 2102 union hall.

Saturday April 12 culminated Rachel and Ken's visit to the state. They set up an information booth at the Republican State Assembly in Boulder and shared important facts about manufacturing and job creation in Colorado with delegates. On the same day Al, Joel, David Nefzger and Dave Kins had an information table at the Democratic assembly in Denver and spoke to Democratic activists and office holders, gave out literature and got over 200 signatures on AAM's letter to Congress and the President to pass common sense laws to return manufacturing to the USA. At both conventions, they gave away American-made gift baskets to show that, yes, there are still MANY things proudly made in the USA!

Article contributors: Joel Buchanan and David Nefzger



Left to right: Dave Kins, retired USW staff representative; Al Becco, SOAR vice president; Joel Buchanan, SOAR executive board member District 12 and David Nefzger, president Chapter 12-1.



USW Membership Department
3340 Perimeter Hill Drive
Nashville, TN 37211

JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE UNION.



Union Plus Pet Savings were created just for you — because America's hard-working union members only want the best for their best friends. Here are just some of the savings available through Union Plus:

- Save on pet insurance for all breeds of cats and dogs
- 25% savings on vet visits, shots, x-rays, surgery, more
- Vet discounts valid for all pets of all ages at participating vets
- 10% off pet food, toys and supplies

**Discover great pet savings at
UnionPlus.org/Pets**