



Just do the Right Thing, Already!!!



In this Connection newsletter, I wanted to share my thoughts about the Alliance for Retired Americans' (ARA) annual congressional voting record that was released in May, which is recognized as Older Americans Month.

The ARA has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the labor movement to assure all Americans the right to a secure and dignified retirement.

Their report assesses votes taken between January 2018 and December 2018 that could impact the well-being of current and future retirees. (Any actions that have been taken by the newly-elected Congress in November 2018 will appear on the report that will be released by the ARA next year.)

The ARA report shows what many Americans knew already: that a vast majority of Congress was not looking out for the best interests of retirees. This explains why Americans voted to oust the largest number of incumbents since the Watergate scandal in 1974. In fact:

- Only 42% of Senators voted *right* on 100% of ARA-scored bills, compared to just 28% of U.S. House members; and,
- Only 49% of Senators and 41% of U.S. House members voted *right* on 2/3 of the ARA-scored bills in 2018.

All 41 of the U.S. House seats that flipped from Republican to Democratic control in the 2017 election were represented by a legislator who voted *wrong* on at least 50% of the bills scored by the ARA. In fact, 12 of the 17 members who voted *wrong* 100% of the time were either defeated or retired in 2018. Meanwhile, 99% of the members who voted *right* on all of the ARA-scored bills won reelection.

So, if there are any members of Congress reading this who are concerned about reelection in 2020, I have one bit of advice that could go a long way...**Doing right by retirees will help your chances more than you can imagine!**

To see the full report, click [here](#)

Or, go to: <https://retiredamericans.org/voting-record/>

Julie Stein, SOAR Director

SOARing Reports



This year, during the Rapid Response Conference, SOAR will hold their annual Executive Board meeting. This meeting will extend over 2 to 2-1/2 days, covering many topics of interest. At this meeting, we will plan our activities for the upcoming year and give reports on the activities and involvement of SOAR Chapters in each District. While we continue to talk about the “good-ole-days,” SOAR has long since transformed into an organization tackling many crucial issues concerning the need to maintain a well-earned, comfortable standard of living in retirement today and into the

future.

SOAR Chapters also work hand-in-hand with their district or local offices, to aide in the fights that many of our locals face with greedy employers and branches of government that try to weaken Unions and/or suppress workers’ rights and benefits. In our Districts, SOAR is working with other organizations that share our concerns and values, which makes SOAR an even more dynamic and respected organization within our community.

At the upcoming SOAR Executive Board meeting, when it is time for reports, what will your Executive Board member have to report regarding your SOAR Chapter? If your SOAR Chapter has not been as active as you would like, please raise the issue at your next meeting, in an attempt to stimulate discussion of ideas about how your Chapter can become more involved.

Please provide pictures and a short write-up of any activities that your group participated in to assist your EBoard member in their report.

On Memorial Day, please take the time to remember those that have made great sacrifices so we can continue to be who we are and do what we do.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



“In some locals the SOAR chapter is 150 or 200 people who are active all the time. In some others, it’s just a hand-full of retirees, but bring them together and you’ve got a movement.”

-Leo W. Gerard

Informes de SOARing



Este año, durante la Conferencia de Respuestas Rápidas, SOAR tendrá su reunión anual de la Junta Ejecutiva. Esta reunión durará de 2 a 2 días y medio y abarcará muchos temas de interés, además de planificar nuestras actividades para el próximo año e informar sobre las actividades y la participación de los Capítulos de SOAR en cada Distrito. Nuestra Organización (SOAR) se ha transformado durante mucho tiempo de ser una Organización donde los jubilados se reúnen para hablar de los años pasados. Si bien aún hablamos de los "buenos tiempos", tenemos muchos problemas que afrontar en relación con el mantenimiento de un nivel de vida cómodo en la jubilación hoy y en el futuro.

Muchos capítulos de SOAR también trabajan de la mano con sus ayudantes distritales o locales en las luchas en que se encuentran muchos de nuestros residentes locales con empleadores codiciosos o ramas de gobierno que intentan debilitar a los sindicatos y / o suprimir los derechos y beneficios de los trabajadores.

En la próxima reunión de la Junta Ejecutiva, cuando sea el momento de los informes, ¿qué tendrá que informar su miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva con respecto a su capítulo SOAR? Si su capítulo de SOAR no ha sido tan activo como le gustaría, plantee el tema en su próxima reunión de SOAR en un intento por estimular la discusión sobre ideas sobre cómo su Capítulo puede involucrarse más.

Proporcione fotografías y un breve resumen de las actividades en las que participó su grupo para ayudar a los miembros de la Junta en su informe.

Por favor, tómese un tiempo en este Día de los Caídos para recordar a los que se han sacrificado para que podamos ser quienes somos y hacer lo que hacemos.

Bill Pienta, Presidente de SOAR



"En algunos locales, el capítulo de SOAR es de 150 o 200 personas que están activas todo el tiempo. En algunos otros, es solo una mano llena de jubilados, pero júntalos y tendrás un movimiento."

-Leo W. Gerard

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Elaine Says...



"Listening is just as important as talking." This was said by Robert Redford in an interview on Turner Classic Movies on Oct. 12, 2018. Since Redford and I share the same birthday, I figured he wouldn't mind me quoting him. We are Leo's.

McNeil Report

This issue of the Connection newsletter is being put together during the Memorial Day weekend celebration.

I've been brought down to earth, so to speak, after watching all the episodes of the Netflix movie "The Vietnam War, a film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick," followed by the complete series of the episodes of the "Victory at Sea" videos found on Youtube. I'll bet you remember when they ran on television.

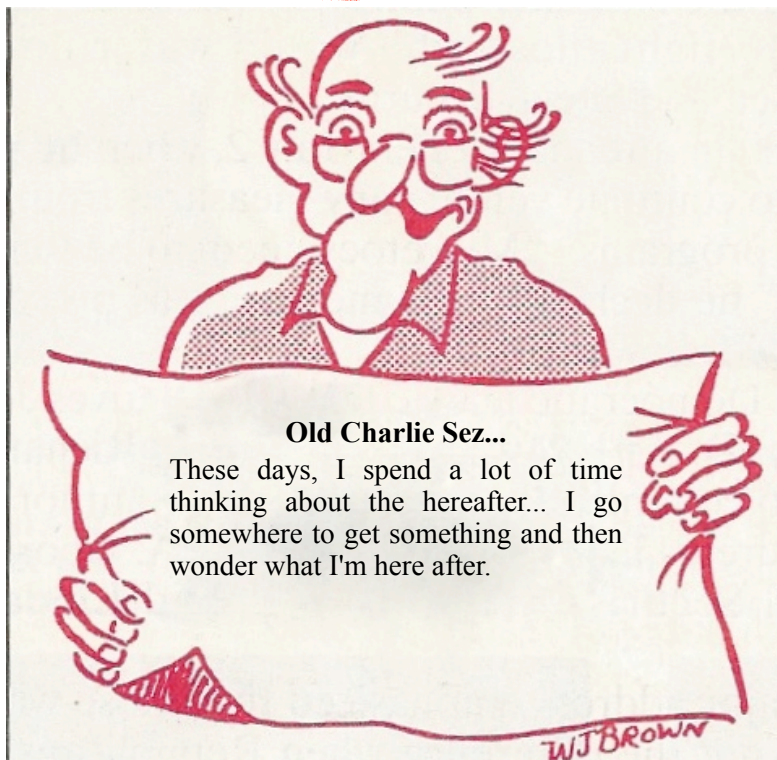
I must say that I got more than a lump in my throat.

I remember when I was in Washington D.C. several years ago when I got a phone call from my son, Matthew, who was going to school at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oakridge, Tennessee. He asked me if I had ever seen the Vietnam Memorial (I hadn't) and that he would come up, so we could go to dinner and then to the Memorial.

For me, that was the experience of a life time. Remember that song, "I Fall to Pieces" by Patsy Cline? Well, that's where I fell to pieces.

I hope you all had a nice long Memorial Day weekend.

Charlie



House Legislation Would Help Lower Prescription Drug Prices, Protect the Affordable Care Act

by Robert Roach, Jr.



House Democrats recently passed legislation to lower prescription drug costs and reverse the Administration’s attempts to undermine the Affordable Care Act (ACA). H.R. 987, the “Strengthening Health Care and Lowering Prescription Drug Costs Act,” passed 234-183.

The prescription drug provisions have significant bipartisan support, reflecting the fact that Americans pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. Yet only four GOP House members voted for it.

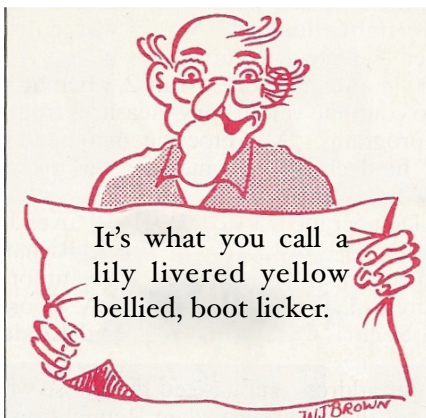
The bill would make it easier for generic drugs to enter the market. Currently, some pharmaceutical corporations purposely delay the introduction of affordable generic alternatives. For example, they make brand-name samples of their drug unavailable to generic manufacturers for testing. By removing these and other barriers, H.R. 987 can reduce drug costs for millions of Americans.

The bill also blocks some of the most harmful elements of the Administration’s ACA sabotage by making it more difficult to sell inadequate short-term insurance plans that destabilize health care exchanges.

The legislation improves outreach to help more Americans obtain health insurance, provides funds to create more state health exchanges and reduces health care costs for people with pre-existing conditions. Twenty-five million Americans aged 50 to 64 years old have one or more pre-existing conditions.

The House leadership passed this important legislation despite resistance from powerful drug corporations. Now we must dig in and urge Senators to follow suit. We have our work cut out for us.

Robert Roach, Jr. is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans. He was previously General Secretary–Treasurer of the IAMAW. For more information, visit www.retiredamericans.org.



I Never Could Understand Politics...

I will never be able to figure out how a congressman could vote against what he/she must believe would be good for Americans.

My own Representative in Congress always scores so low on the Alliance for Retired Americans voting records that many believe that trying to meet with her at any time, even during the Rapid Response Conference, is simply like spitting into the wind.

Charlie

Miners, Alliance Members Storm Capitol Hill



Retired coal miners, their families, and Alliance members gathered on Capitol Hill this week to urge members of Congress to pass H.R. 935, the Miners Pension Protection Act, and preserve their hard-earned pensions. On Wednesday the activists held a press conference with a group of bipartisan House and Senate members, including Sens. Joe Manchin (WV), Shelley Moore Capito (WV) and Rob Portman (OH), as well as Reps. Rodney Davis (IL), David McKinley (WV), Terri Sewell (AL) and Peter

Welch (VT) who are all sponsors or co-sponsors of the legislation.

United Mine Workers (UMWA) International President Cecil Roberts and Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson also spoke. Pennsylvania Alliance state president Dwayne Thomas, a retired mine worker himself, led an Alliance delegation who traveled from Pennsylvania. Alliance President Robert Roach, Jr. joined them at the Capitol.

The UMWA 1974 Pension Plan has been decimated by a series of coal company bankruptcies and is projected to go insolvent in 2022. The miners, who risked their lives for years to provide a key source of energy to the nation, and their widows will lose the pension benefits they earned unless Congress passes the legislation.

“This is one of the labor movement’s most important issues,” said President Roach. “The mine workers were promised these benefits, and find themselves in this situation through no fault of their own. Legislative action is needed to preserve the pensions of about 87,000 retirees and another 20,000 working miners.”

President Roach sent a letter Monday to Rep. Richard Neal (MA), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, expressing the Alliance’s strong endorsement of the legislation. The letter urged the committee to pass the Miners Pension Protection Act quickly and send it to the full House for a vote.

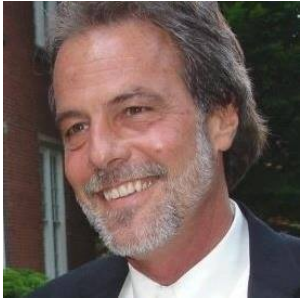
The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) has said that if the UMWA 1974 Pension Plan were to become insolvent and end up the responsibility of the PBGC, it could only pay benefits at reduced levels for a short time before the PBGC multi-employer program itself became insolvent, putting the pensions of millions of retirees at risk.

Source: ARA Friday Alert May 10, 2019

“Death after all is only a matter of a few hours, a few minutes, but a **pension** is like poverty, it lasts a whole lifetime”.

Louis-Ferdinand Céline

Make That Phone Call!



By Jeff Bonior

Just when we thought an agreement between Congress and the White House to finally address America's neglected infrastructure was about to happen, President Trump once again quashed the first steps of a deal.

On April 30, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer met with the President and had a productive conversation about a \$2 trillion bipartisan plan. The sticking point, as usual, was how to fund such an ambitious project.

They agreed to meet three weeks later, on May 22, to discuss ways to fund the repair and rebuild of America's crumbling infrastructure.

That meeting lasted less than four minutes as the President walked into the room and berated the Democratic leaders saying he would not negotiate with them until all the investigations into his personal dealings ended.

He is clearly playing politics, hitting back at Democrats for their ongoing investigations of him and his administration.

Repairing and rebuilding our infrastructure is the one issue that an overwhelming majority of Americans agree upon. If our leaders cannot agree on this bipartisan issue, it is likely a divided Congress will not agree on passing any other meaningful, major legislation.

Meanwhile, Americans will continue to endure the burdens of inadequate roads, bridges, water systems, transportation systems, the electric grid and many more conveniences they rely upon daily.

An aggressive agreement on infrastructure would be a boon to the steel industry and create many thousands of well-paying jobs. A larger and stronger USW membership would be welcomed by SOAR members to help preserve pensions and healthcare.

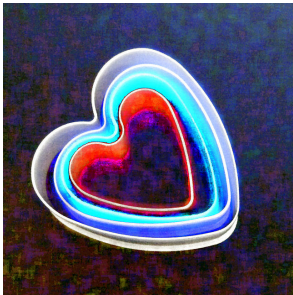
It is now doubtful that a sincere infrastructure plan will materialize before the 2020 presidential election although the President promised to tackle this problem during his first year in office.

This is an issue that isn't going away. Our failing infrastructure is making America less competitive and it is also becoming a public safety risk.

We urge you to reach out to your members of Congress and the White House to demand that plans for our infrastructure resume immediately. You can contact your members of Congress at their district offices or by calling the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 where you will be connected to their Washington, D.C. office. To reach the White House and leave your comments call (202) 456-1111.

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

Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease. Exercise!



To reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, just as with reducing your risk of stroke, the best thing you can do is exercise. Indeed, the more you exercise, the more likely you are to prolong your life.

[The New York Times](#) reports on a study, published in the [Journal of American College of Cardiology](#), for which researchers in Norway followed 3,307 people with coronary [heart disease](#) over an average of 16 years. During that time, more than 40 percent of them died. Others, who exercised for 150 minutes each week, reduced their risk of death by 19 percent. Those who exercised more

reduced their risk by 36 percent.

In this observational study, weight loss did not contribute to longer life for people of normal weight. Indeed, people of normal weight who decreased their body mass index by more than .10 had a 30 percent greater chance of dying. They did not increase their risk of dying if they gained weight. The lead author explained that because the study was observational, it could be that the normal weight individuals who lost weight were more likely to die because they were in poorer health than others.

For people who are overweight, exercise is more important than losing weight, but losing weight is good! If you're looking for help losing weight, you should know that Medicare covers [weight-loss counseling](#). It also covers [nutrition counseling](#).

Source: justcareusa.org



To Lose Weight, Try Eating Dinner at Lunch



A 2016 article in the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#) reports on results of a randomized clinical trial of healthy overweight women enrolled in a weight-loss program. The trial found that eating a large meal midday and a light meal in the evening helped them lose more weight. What you eat matters, of course; but to lose weight, try eating dinner, your bigger meal, at lunch.



“You don’t get the butt you want by sitting on it.”

-Author Unknown

The Fight to Strengthen Social Security Is About Intergenerational Justice



The latest Social Security Trustees' [annual report](#) shows that Social Security has an accumulated surplus of about \$2.9 trillion and can pay benefits in full for the next 16 years. After that, even if Congress does nothing to protect it, Social Security will be able to pay 80 percent of benefits. Older adults overwhelmingly support Social Security. It is an American success story, a highly effective anti-poverty program that improves the lives of all Americans. What not everyone realizes is that the fight to strengthen it is about intergenerational justice.

Democrats in Congress are proposing to strengthen Social Security so that it can pay full benefits for the next 75 years or more. Congressman John Larson's [Social Security 2100 Act](#) would raise minimum Social Security benefits and adjust the formula for calculating cost-of-living adjustments so that benefits increase for everyone. It already has more than 200 co-sponsors.

Strengthening Social Security is easily affordable. Larson proposes a 2.4 percent payroll tax increase phased in slowly over several decades and also requires everyone with incomes over \$400,000 to pay into Social Security up to the current cap and then on income above \$400,000.

Before the 2020 election, we must broaden public support for Social Security by engaging younger generations who benefit directly and indirectly from Social Security in ways they may not yet grasp.

To win, millennials need to understand the value of Social Security to themselves, not simply that it makes their parents and grandparents more economically secure. As a result of stagnating wages, millennials, unfortunately, are the [first generation to earn less than their parents](#). And there are other economic reasons that [two in three millennials have no retirement savings](#). Wages have stagnated. Student debt is huge because college and graduate school education is so expensive. Thus, Social Security will protect millennials down the road, when their savings are likely to be less than those of their parents. Additionally, millennials will likely live longer and therefore have even greater dependence on Social Security.

Republicans are wrong. Younger Americans may benefit now from Social Security's disability insurance and survivor benefits for families, but they will all definitely benefit when they reach retirement age. Americans of all ages have a stake in strengthening Social Security. If we all work together, we can ensure Social Security's long-term political and financial viability.

Source: justcareusa.org written by Peter S. Arno, Ph.D, May 2, 2019



“Out of the Navy - Into the Mines”

After graduating from high school in 1961, I joined the Navy and became a “Seabee” (Construction Battalion). I was sent to Alaska and later to Okinawa with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 9 (MCB-9) and was there when President Kennedy was assassinated; discharged in 1966.

In 1967, I hired in at Butler Taconite as a truck driver, where I worked for 36 years. Retiring in 2003 from Keewatin Taconite, I find that I am an active and proud USW retiree. For nearly a year now I have been the President of the West Range SOAR Retirees Chapter 33-5, having chapter meetings in Marble, Minnesota.

SOAR has made a positive difference in my life; allowing me to keep in touch with some of my Brothers and Sisters from the mines and to help our retirees and our union whenever and however I can.

We try to have interesting, informative speakers at our chapter meetings and we stand ready to help our union, when needed, on the picket line. However, we all agreed that picketing, when it is 65 degrees below zero, is where we draw the line!

Like any group of retirees, the number of members attending the monthly meetings has decreased. Many have passed away, dwindling our meeting participation from about twenty to eight members. I have set as one of my goals to increase meeting attendance and will be looking for ways to do just that.

Roger Holmstrom, President SOAR Chapter 33-5, Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Tell Us Your SOAR Story

Are you an active USW retiree or member of an active SOAR chapter?
 Has SOAR made a difference in your life? Your community?
 How are you or your chapter promoting SOAR? Tell us your SOAR story and mail it to the address on page 4, or see the March/April Connection for the submission form.



2017 USW Constitutional Convention RESOLUTION

Resolution No. 8 **Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR)**

WHEREAS, maintaining close ties with retired USW members and their surviving spouses is an essential part of making our union stronger; and

WHEREAS, the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR), an affiliate organization for retired members established in 1985, offers retirees a unique opportunity to advocate for their shared social, economic, educational, legislative and political priorities; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that:

(1) We will offer our full and unwavering support to all SOAR members. Maintaining links between working members and retirees makes both the USW and SOAR greater organizations.

(2) We will honor the memory of Lynn R. Williams and remain grateful for his vision and dynamic leadership that led to the creation of SOAR.

(3) We will assist SOAR in its goal of expanding its membership. We will encourage local unions to **support SOAR by providing first-year membership in SOAR to all retirees** and making it a priority to negotiate the check-off of SOAR membership dues.

(4) We will seek new ways to involve SOAR members and retirees in organizing, corporate campaigns, legislative battles and other endeavors of our union.

(5) We pledge to recognize the commonality of interest between active members and retirees, considering the needs of retired USW members in all our bargaining, social and political efforts. We will work together to combat threats to healthcare, retirement security and other necessary programs that affect both active and retired members.

(6) We will encourage SOAR to continue its political work, backing candidates at all levels of government who support the rights and interests of working people and retirees, and engaging with issues that impact USW members and retired USW members alike.

I Hope Some Local Unions Reconsider Their Policy



It's a shame that we no longer have bulletin boards to post meeting dates and such to communicate with our chapter members. However, we do have the internet and a Facebook page for those who use a computer. Our SOAR in Action magazine also help to get information to our members by letting them know about serious legislation affecting workers and retirees. We also have this newsletter which gets posted to the Steelworker website for easy access.

That's why it's so hard for me to understand why many local unions don't go by the intent of their resolve to provide the whopping first-year membership dues of twelve dollars for a retiree to be a member of a chapter; but, instead make the retiree go through hoops to get this meager retirement gift.

I've run across local union presidents that say such things as:

- "Oh yeah, we'll provide the first-year membership dues by reimbursing the retiree when he joins the chapter."
- "We'll provide the first-year membership dues if the retiree attends the chapter meetings."
- "We'll provide the first-year membership dues if the retiree comes in to our office and asks us."
- "We'll provide the first-year membership dues if the retiree signs for his dues check off with the company."

What they don't seem to understand is that retirees get older each year. They become less mobile, they can't always walk distances required for marches, and may not be able to stand for long lengths of time. Gosh, many are in nursing homes or being cared for by a loved one or others. But, by golly, sometimes they are still able to write a letter, make a phone call, sign a postcard and vote in elections.

I'm so grateful that the two local unions sponsoring my own chapter (USW Locals 12775 and 13796) provide the first-year membership dues for their retirees and have done so for the past twenty years without any "ifs, ands, butts, or catches." There is no need to join the chapter and then get reimbursed; no requirement to attend the chapter meeting (heck, we have members residing in twenty different states); no need to go to the local union office and ask them to provide the first-year membership; no need to sign a dues check off card.

These retirees devoted their working lives to our union by paying dues for each hour they worked and faithfully supported their local union. I trust they will continue to help the union in any way possible. This is simply a reminder to local unions who read this that a retirement party is nice, a wrist watch is thoughtful, but a membership in a SOAR chapter is truly the gift that will keep on giving back to the union. SOAR is not only how retirees stay connected, but how they continue the fight for retired and working families, by helping to defend vital programs like Social Security and Medicare.

Charlie