



### Small Margins Yield Big Results



In March, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which breaks from the tradition of previous stimulus efforts, and delivers significant benefits to working families.

To the great relief of approximately 120,000 Steelworker members and retirees, the plan included the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act. The Butch Lewis Act provides up to \$86 billion for multiemployer pension plans that were facing peril resulting from corporate bankruptcies, industry consolidation and investment losses, and the economic fallout related to the coronavirus. This investment will ensure more than 100 at-risk multiemployer pension plans covering ten million union members, widows and retirees will be fully funded for at least 30 years.

However, the American Recovery Act’s primary focus is to address the protracted health and economic crises stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regarding health, the plan:

- Provides \$48.3 billion for COVID-19 testing and contact tracing,
- Allocates \$7.5 billion for the distribution of vaccines,
- Stimulates domestic job creation with the investment of \$10 billion in the production of PPE, vaccines and medical supplies, and
- Extends COBRA coverage for uninsured workers with a 100 percent subsidy, which is vital because it ensures many of our Steelworker siblings will continue to have access to quality, affordable health care.
- Extend more than \$150 million for COVID-19 worker protections, with \$75 million dedicated to OSHA enforcement in high-risk sectors, and

Regarding the economy, the plan:

- Will immediately direct \$1,400 to lower- and middle-income families who have been hit hardest over the last year,
- Provide an average tax cut of more than \$6,000 to more than 70% of Americans,
- Enhances unemployment benefits through September, providing an additional \$300 for impacted workers.

So much more could be written about how working people will benefit from this historic legislation, and I’d like to close by noting how significant Steelworkers were in making all of this happen. **Continued** →

This legislation was able to reach the President’s desk because it had the support of pro-worker majorities that we helped elect by making phone calls, knocking on doors, and talking to each other in our worksites and communities.

Additionally, the inclusion of the Butch Lewis Act in the American Rescue Plan is a monumental victory for our union and so many of our members, retirees and staff who all worked for nearly a decade to see this through.

Be proud, Steelworkers! **We did it!**

*Julie Stein*, SOAR Director

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## USW and SOAR Applaud Confirmation of Labor Secretary Marty Walsh



The United Steelworkers (USW) union and Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) applaud the confirmation of Marty Walsh as secretary of labor, hailing his appointment as yet another victory for working people.

“As a longtime member of the labor movement, Marty Walsh understands what’s at stake for working families as we seek to rebuild our economy in the wake of the pandemic,” said USW International President Tom Conway. “He’s proven that he’s willing to fight to ensure workers’ needs and rights are always top priorities.”

With Walsh’s confirmation, President Joe Biden’s cabinet is now nearly full, and the union also said that it looked forward to working with all of President Biden’s recently confirmed cabinet members: Pete Buttigieg as transportation secretary, Jennifer Granholm as energy secretary, Gina Raimondo as commerce secretary, Michael Regan as head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Katherine Tai as United States Trade Representative, Janet Yellen as treasury secretary, and many others.

“This is an experienced and extremely capable team. Individually, each of these members of the new administration have proven their commitment to advancing the interests of workers and their families,” said Conway, “but collectively they will be a formidable force as we work to rebuild our nation’s crumbling infrastructure, revitalize our long-neglected supply chains, revive our country’s manufacturing muscle, and ensure widespread, shared prosperity for all Americans.”

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### A Breath of Fresh Air

That’s exactly what President Joe Biden is. Gosh, it sure has been a long time since having an honest Secretary of Labor that will work for workers for a change. Interesting how the pendulum swings to and when you think it’s has gone way too far, it comes right back to where it needs to be... *Charlie*

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## Underfunded Multiemployer Defined Pension Plans – Relief Finally Arrives



Many critics disapproving of the recently-passed American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) are complaining it has a number of provisions in the relief package that are not COVID-19 related.

One such item included in the relief package addresses the multiemployer pensions crisis. Although the crisis began long before the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic consequences of COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges facing many multiemployer plans, employers, and essential workers; therefore, making immediate financial relief crucial. I am certainly glad it was part of the ARPA.

Over 100 multiemployer defined pension plans were expected to run out of money in the next 20 years, some as early as 2025. Due to a combination of the 2008-2009 economic recession, the deregulation and consolidation of certain heavily unionized industries, and an overall demographic shift away from unionized labor has resulted in many, if not most, multiemployer pension plans being underfunded, according to a prominent law firm. But thanks to the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act being passed in the ARPA, this long-overdue legislation to fix the multi-employer pension crisis has been resolved. The Butch Lewis Act has made an immediate impact on the livelihood of over 1.5 million people, with 120,000 of them being present and former USW-represented members.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the pensions' cost savings for these multiemployer plans will be approximately \$86 billion due to the investment from the Butch Lewis Act of 2021. I cannot think of a better use for funds in the American Rescue Plan than to rescue the retirement future for 120,000 USW members and their families.

A significant number of USW-represented retirees who are impacted by this legislation do not actively belong to SOAR, but that did not stop SOAR from fighting for them. SOAR lobbied, wrote postcards, and made phone calls in support of the provisions of the Butch Lewis Act to address this important issue. It would be great if the USW retirees who benefitted from our hard work would reconsider becoming a member of SOAR. But regardless, SOAR will continue to fight for what is right for our retirees.

*Bill Pienta*, SOAR President

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### Mouseland - by Tommy Douglas

There is a video on Youtube that has been around for several years, and many of us have seen it several times; but, occasionally we forget about it and start to wonder how we can see it again.

The premise of the video explains in easy-to-understand terms as to why it's so important to always vote for those who will pass laws that will help us. Here is where you can find it on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/R8EhbOLiv0Q>

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Julie Stein, Content Editor  
Alysse Rico and Eric Russell,  
Copy Editors

Phone: 866-208-4420  
Email: [jstein@usw.org](mailto:jstein@usw.org)

Address editorial material to:  
SOAR  
60 Blvd of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222



**Ole Charlie Sez:**



Elaine bought me an interesting book titled, “MEDICARE FOR THE LAZY MAN” by Douglas B. Jones. It’s a very good and interesting read.

There is also a podcast by the same name. Each episode is only a half-hour long. It sure makes it easy to understand Medicare. Give it a try here: <https://www.medicareforthe lazyman.com/podcasts/mlm-podcast-show.html>

*Charlie*

**Elaine’s Pandemic Pondering’s**

One year ago, when we first were sheltering in place, I made a list of all the little jobs that needed to be done around the house. We now had the time, and no excuses, to get them done. We had no meetings, no social life, no shopping to keep us from our tasks. I knew I could tackle cleaning my closets, getting my cupboards in order, go through all that stuff on my desk, edit my Gmail mailboxes, go through the two thousand photos on my iPad, and so forth. And Charlie would have time to paint the living room, do the floors, repair my kitchen light, and clean the basement. Can you relate? We had good intentions. We made a little progress, but movie watching, yardwork gardening, and just plain relaxing took priority over working. So, one year later, all the above jobs still need doing, and now that things are opening up, we won’t have time to do them. Ha!



**Articles and Photos Requested**

- The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be April 9, and articles should be emailed to the SOAR Director Julie Stein at [jstein@usw.org](mailto:jstein@usw.org)
- The deadline for the next publication of the SOAR Chapter Connection newsletter is May 25 and items should be emailed to Charlie Averill at [soar3@icloud.com](mailto:soar3@icloud.com)

Photos should have a short caption included.

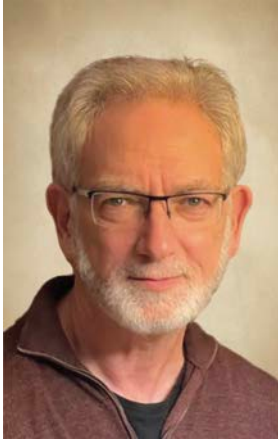
Thanks so much.

*Charlie*

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## It Is Time To Go Back To the Doctor!

By Steven Markowitz, MD



Many people have reduced or skipped out entirely on seeing their doctor over the past year during the COVID pandemic. That is understandable, especially when COVID-19 disease rates were very high and, early on, when doctors' offices and hospitals were not up to speed with proper protective gear or practices. But the pandemic has receded, at least for now and hopefully for good, so getting back to your medical visit routine is both safe and necessary.

If you have been vaccinated against COVID-19, you can feel especially safe when going to public places such as doctors' offices. The chances are high that most people in the medical offices' waiting rooms will also have been vaccinated, since, as of today (March 24, 2021), 2/3 of Americans aged 65 or over have received at least one vaccine dose and will therefore be completely vaccinated within a few weeks. Remember, too, that health care workers were among the first to be vaccinated in the U.S. so that most of the staff of the medical offices that you visit will also be vaccinated.

Why visit the doctor? High blood pressure is silent, so if yours has risen or stayed high over the past year, you would not know it. Checking it at your provider's office will give you that information, which might be reassuring or prompt improved treatment. Likewise, if your diabetes has not been in control, you may not know it unless you go to your provider who can do a simple urine or blood test and change your treatment if needed. And you know those extra pounds that most of us have gained during the pandemic? Having your weight checked and some advice from your doctor can help get you back on track.

Early cancer detection has been especially hurt by the pandemic, as people have not been able to have mammography, colonoscopy, or a low dose chest CT scan to detect early lung cancer. And some people have delayed seeking attention for early cancer symptoms. The result is that cancers – especially lung, breast and colon cancer - are being detected at later stages when they are less treatable. What a terrible shame it is to miss out on life-saving treatment because cancer diagnosis was delayed by six months and is identified not with early-stage limited disease but advanced metastatic cancer.

So, pick up the phone and call your provider for an appointment today. We lost a year. Let's not lose any more!

*Steven Markowitz, MD, DrPH, an occupational medicine physician, who directs the Barry Commoner Center for Health and the Environment at Queens College, City University of New York. Since 1997, Dr. Markowitz has co-directed the Worker Health Protection Program, a national medical screening program that services former DOE nuclear weapons workers, including USW retirees.*

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## U.S. Steel Industry Needs President Biden's Support of Section 232 Tariffs



America's steelworkers were shortchanged in many ways on promises former President Donald Trump made to bolster the struggling U.S. steel industry during his four-year administration.

But the "Section 232" trade enforcement provision the Trump administration initiated in 2018 has been a success, according to a new report from the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). As the old saying goes, even a blind pig can find an acorn once in a while.

Trump promised that America would be teeming with newly built skyscrapers while United Steelworker members would be working countless hours to supply his made in America plans. Of course, we know this rhetoric never came to fruition, but the Section 232 trade enforcement action did help thwart the long-standing problem of dumped, cheap Chinese steel flowing into the U.S. like a river flowing to the sea.

After the Section 232 measures were put into place, America's steel output, employment, capital investment and financial performance all improved. Many of our nation's struggling steel mills that were idled came back online, firing up their blast furnaces and bringing our hard-working USW brothers and sisters back to work.

The EPI report documents how U.S. steel companies announced plans to invest nearly \$16 billion in new or upgraded facilities, creating 3,200 new jobs that also brought back workers who were furloughed because the mills they worked at could not compete with China's state-funded, cheap steel products that were flooding the American market.

But China is not the only problem. Other countries are using false trade data to boost their steel capacity including India, Turkey, Iran, South Korea, Vietnam, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and Taiwan. This is a global problem, and until a global solution is reached, the U.S. needs to maintain the Section 232 tariffs.

The Section 232 tariffs – 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum – have so far received support from President Joe Biden. We know our new President is trying to undo a massive amount of policy damage left behind by the Trump administration, but the Section 232 tariffs need to remain in place. The tariffs are a major bargaining chip for the U.S. on the world stage, and America cannot afford to surrender our point of strength.

The elimination of the Section 232 tariffs on Canada, America's closest ally, will be considered by the Biden administration if steel dumping countries do not use our neighbors to the North as a third-party entryway into the U.S. steel marketplace. With the implementation of the USMCA agreement between Canada, the United States and Mexico, Washington should work in tandem with the Canadian government to preserve "fair trade" for both American and Canadian steel and aluminum producers.

The Section 232 tariffs, despite what some so-called "free traders" will tell you, are a weapon in our arsenal and are most beneficial to America's steel industry and the many USW brothers and sisters it supports.

American steelworkers can compete with anybody. All we need is a level playing field.

*Jeff Bonior*, Staff writer for the Alliance for American Manufacturing

**Editor's Note:** The USW strongly asserts that Canada must be exempted from the Section 232 tariffs.

The United States and Canada have a unique, synergistic relationship in terms of manufacturing and defense. Canada's steel and aluminum exports to the U.S. are fairly traded and Canada has shown its willingness to cooperate with the U.S. to fight unfair trade. The USW & SOAR will continue the fight to protect all of our members in the U.S. and Canada from unfair trade.

**American Rescue Plan Saves Multiemployer Pension Plans From Insolvency**

By Robert Roach, Jr.



One of the most important parts of the American Rescue Plan for union members and numerous other workers and retirees is its provision saving multiemployer pension plans from insolvency. More than ten million Americans, including many SOAR members, will have greatly increased pension security now that President Biden has signed the stimulus relief bill into law.

The Alliance for Retired Americans and the United Steelworkers worked with the labor movement for years to ensure that workers have the retirement income security they earned over a lifetime of hard work. This legislation is the culmination of those efforts.

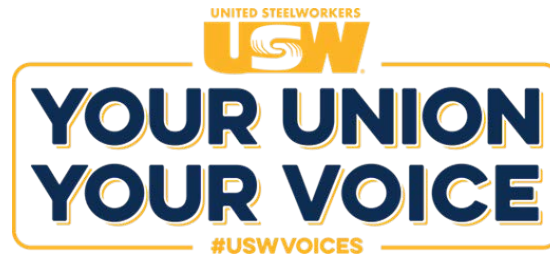
Multiemployer pension plans are collectively bargained pension plans operated jointly by unions and employers, usually within the same or related industries – such as construction, retail, manufacturing, transportation, and mining. Many multiemployer plans are in financial trouble due to the 2008 recession and corporate bankruptcies. The COVID-19 recession exacerbated the situation.

A recent national survey from the National Institute on Retirement Security found that 77% of Americans agree that all workers should have a pension, with support for pensions consistent across party lines.

Millions of Americans can feel confident that the retirement benefits they earned and paid for will be there when they need them. Plans experiencing problems will have the resources they need from the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation to pay benefits for the next thirty years. We salute the U.S. House and Senate for passing this historic legislation and President Biden for his leadership in seeing it through.

***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](http://www.retiredamericans.org).***





As retirees, we were there when our union built this country. And today, our union is ready to do it again.

That’s why our union has launched a new, union-wide campaign aimed at rebuilding our rapidly crumbling infrastructure: [We Supply America](#).



We’re taking a broad, ambitious view that includes rebuilding not only our physical infrastructure – like roads, rail systems, bridges, ports, and waterways – but also the social infrastructure of our schools, communication networks and public health services.

This effort is important both because infrastructure upgrades will make our communities safer and because significant investment will create good, union jobs now and into the future.

Be amongst the many retirees who weigh in on this important issue. [Click here to take the survey](#). Or, go to [www.uswvoices.org](http://www.uswvoices.org)

**To see past issues of the SOAR Chapter Connection newsletter, or to sign up to receive the newsletter via email, click on the link below.**

<https://www.usw.org/act/activism/soar/resources/soar-chapter-connection>