

USW@Work

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A Powerful Voice for Workers

SOAR Pushes Workers' Issues on Capitol Hill

Dozens of SOAR members joined hundreds of other USW activists in Washington, D.C., this May for the union's annual Rapid Response, Legislative and Policy Conference.

The three-day conference, preceded by the two-day SOAR Int'l. Executive Board meeting, gave union activists an opportunity to learn from each other and then take that knowledge to Capitol Hill, where they used it to pay dozens of visits to lawmakers to lobby on behalf of their fellow workers and retirees.

"Older people vote, and that matters," said David McLimans, a longtime SOAR member from Pennsylvania, who said he enjoyed the opportunity to interact with other union leaders of all ages.

"When I was younger, I had a lot of respect for the older guys, because I learned a lot from them," McLimans said. "Now, I'm one of the older guys."

Pioneering Woman

Bonnie Carey, retired from Alcoa (now Arconic) Davenport Works in Iowa, was one of the first women to perform a number of jobs at her facility, including operating overhead cranes. Later on, she formed SOAR Chapter 11-4.

This year, she came to Washington with her fellow SOAR members to help push the union's core issues,

including secure retirement, quality, affordable health care, workplace safety, and labor rights.

Carey said retirees who are able should stay as active as possible so that they can help younger generations carry on the strong tradition of the labor movement.

"We are an aging population, and if we don't get young people involved, who's going to be there to carry on our history?" she asked.

A Strong Example

As she opened the 2024 conference, Rapid Response Director Amber Miller spoke of that theme, asking each of the nearly 700 members in attendance to take a moment to think of their "person," the one who most inspired them to get involved in the labor movement.

Miller said it was her mother, Jill Stough of Local 7248 at Wieland Chase in Montpelier, Ohio, who started her on her path to union activism.

"Everyone has someone who inspired them to step up," Miller said as she spoke of her mother's upcoming retirement, an announcement that was met with a standing ovation. "My someone who asked me to step up was my mom. She's the reason I'm an activist."

Focus on the Future

International President David McCall continued the theme of connecting the past with the present in his address to the delegation, noting that the union's guiding principle must always be to do what's best for workers and their families.

"We are rooted in the past, but we must remain focused on the future," McCall said. "Our union remains strong and resilient, we face ever-changing challenges, but we must remember to always remain focused on the future and our members. It is our basic value."

McCall noted that the conference included dozens of retirees, along with dozens of young NextGen activists, and that the two groups could work together and learn from each other.



Bonnie Carey



David McLimans



Amber Miller



David McCall



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BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

Why We Participate

We are commencing with the latest round of elections, including the presidential election. With this, members raise the same old question: “Why should we participate in these elections?”

Early in my involvement with the union, I was one of those asking that question. Over the years, I have found out why.

When I first became a member of the local union negotiation team, I wanted to make proposals or take positions regarding our contract. However:

- ▶ I found out that there were laws or regulations limiting or preventing those issues from being put on the table.
- ▶ I learned a company could file a waiver under certain circumstances, preventing an increase in the pension benefit being negotiated.
- ▶ I also learned that the union could not negotiate for past retiree improvements without the company’s approval.
- ▶ I discovered that bargaining proposals fell into different categories: mandatory, permissive, and prohibited.
- ▶ I learned that in bankruptcy, certain benefit provisions of a contract are not enforceable.

Some of us old-timers remember when appointed judges ruled that “lifetime benefit” meant “only for the life of the CURRENT agreement.”

It is becoming more common for insurance companies to purchase pension plans and private equity firms to

acquire healthcare service providers. Private equity firms are estimated to own eight percent of all private hospitals in the United States.

What do these issues, and many others not listed, have in common? These regulations, laws or interpretations were all made or enforced by elected officials or someone they appointed to a position.

Ask someone from the USW Health, Safety and Environment Department if it makes a difference who is in office when they call OSHA about a safety complaint. Call the legal department to see if it matters who is in

office when issues arise regarding the enforcement or interpretation of rules of the NLRB or ERISA.

I recently read testimony from two people at a Senate hearing on pensions. One was a UAW retiree, and the other was an employee of the Heritage Foundation. If you are not familiar with the Heritage Foundation, look them up.

One spoke about strengthening defined benefit plans, and the other spoke about the advantages of eliminating them. I will let you guess who spoke about terminating pension plans.

I hope this article helps to explain why we must continue to be active during election cycles and why one candidate is selected over another. We cannot sit idly on the sidelines and hope the people who represent and share our interests will get elected. Instead, we must do all we can to ensure that they do.

I strongly urge you to participate in the USW’s Your Union, Your Voice program. Visit www.uswvoices.org to learn how you can get involved today.



SOAR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SCHEDULED

The 14th SOAR International Conference is scheduled for April 4-5, 2025, at Caesars Forum Conference Center in Las Vegas, NV. Chapters large enough to send delegates will be notified by mail.

For those chapters planning to submit resolutions to the conference, all resolutions must be received in the SOAR office in Pittsburgh, by February 3, 2025.

What Happens in Washington Matters



JULIE STEIN
SOAR Director

In mid-May, Tammie Botelho, a retiree from Bic Corporation and proud member of USW Local 134L in Milford, Connecticut, joined dozens of SOAR members and hundreds of rank-and-file Steelworkers for the USW's annual Rapid Response conference in Washington, D.C.

This three-day conference included plenary sessions, workshops, and opportunities to build solidarity with USW local unions and SOAR chapters. On the final day, conferencegoers met face-to-face with federal lawmakers and their staff to discuss various issues, including health care, union rights, workplace issues, retirement security, and more.

In meetings with two members of Congress and one Senator, Tammie expressed her concerns about a controversial proposal to fast-track cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

"Our lawmakers need to hear from folks like me who have worked for decades and paid into programs like Social Security and Medicare, so we could someday retire with the dignity we deserve," said Botelho.

"But it's not just retirees' issues that concern me. We need to fight against all efforts to undercut the protections Steelworkers are fighting for on the job, and Rapid Response offers all of us an opportunity to do exactly that."

However, like so many SOAR members, Tammie's activism extends beyond attending the annual Rapid Response Conference.

As a new SOAR chapter president, Tammie leads by example in her community.

"I wanted to start a SOAR chapter to stay involved in our union's work and help younger members and fellow retirees understand that what happens in Washington matters," she said.

During one of the conference's plenary sessions, Cheryl Omlor, a former health care worker who now works as an administrative assistant in the USW's SOAR office, participated in a panel discussion about unsafe staffing ratios in nursing homes.



During a panel discussion, Cheryl Omlor shares her experience as a former healthcare worker, discussing how unsafe staffing ratios in nursing homes impact patients' quality of care and the well-being of those working in the industry.

During the panel discussion, Omlor reflected upon her time as an evening receptionist and Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at a senior living and supportive care community.

"Understaffing impacts the quality of care patients receive, as well as the mental and physical well-being of those working in the industry," Omlor explained to Steelworkers attending the panel discussion.

"One time, I found a resident on the floor who needed immediate help from a qualified nurse. However, with only one nurse working in the entire facility at the time of the emergency, they ended up passing away before they could get the appropriate care," she said.

The resident's family eventually sued the facility, and an investigation revealed a number of other families with similar stories of their loved ones not receiving assistance when their call bells were pressed.

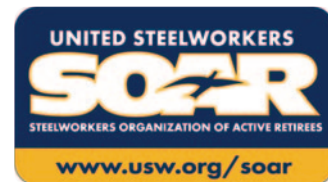
Omlor testified in a hearing that their death resulted from understaffing and not an accidental fall like management alleged.

After the hearing concluded, the family did receive some monetary compensation. However, the family of the resident who passed away did express

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On April 16, Tammie Botelho, president of SOAR Chapter 4-21, christened the chapter's new SOAR flag at an informational picket in New Haven, Connecticut. Above, Botelho stays involved in our union's work by supporting USW Local 12160 on the picket line. At the time, the local was in arbitration with its employer and trying to settle its contract.




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SOAR in ACTION

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BILL MAHONEY Recognized with Lynn Williams Service Award

By Lena Sutton, SOAR Canadian National Co-ordinator

As SOAR National Co-ordinator, I had the honour of presenting the 2023 Lynn Williams Award for Service to Hamilton, Chapter 10 member and trustee, Bill Mahoney, at a ceremony on June 4, 2024.

Awarded annually to a Canadian SOAR member who has demonstrated exemplary leadership and commitment to the mandate of SOAR as described in our bylaws, the Lynn Williams Award is named for the late USW International President Emeritus who was the driving force in founding SOAR as a way for USW retirees to remain involved in the union.

Each local chapter can submit a nomination to the SOAR Canadian National Office. The Canadian board, comprising the vice-president, district board members, national co-ordinator and district coordinators, independently review the submissions and jointly discuss the merits of the submissions and determine the successful recipient. In the case of Brother Mahoney, the vote was unanimous.

Bill Mahoney is a lifelong resident of Hamilton, having grown up in the industrial area of the city. Bill's goal in life was to become a Steelworker because kids he grew up with had fathers working in a unionized manufacturing plant. Those kids had bicycles and clothes which Bill's family could not afford even though his father was a union member. His father's work was seasonal, and the wages were not much at the time even though he had tried many times to get a job in a manufacturing plant.

Bill fulfilled his goal of becoming a Steelworker when 90 days after his June 21, 1968, hiring at Stelco, he became a member of USW Local 1005. This led Bill to be an active

member of the local and the New Democratic Party (NDP).

Bill first started going door to door for politics, helping Reg Gisborn's NDP re-election campaign in Hamilton East. Gisborn was a Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) with the NDP at Queen's Park from 1955 until 1975.

Bill still volunteers in every provincial and federal election, because to him, it is important to have NDP members in government fighting for workers' rights.

After the Ontario provincial NDP lost government in 1995, Bill joined in the numerous "Days of Action" held across the province to protest the anti-worker policies brought in by Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris.

One of the features in the early local demonstrations was the labour and social justice poems that Bill wrote for these events. At the Hamilton Convention Centre when Stelco went into CCAA (Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act) bankruptcy protection the first time, Bill received a standing ovation for his poem on justice for workers.

Since then, Bill is always asked to create and recite a poem at any rally or gathering. Bill has rallied the troops in Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa and in the province of Quebec with his many poems.

Bill has performed recitals of his labour poems at George Brown College, Laurier University, McMaster University and Mohawk College, never forgetting that it's a labour of love for workers. Bill writes and performs his poems for peace rallies, health coalition events and environmental protests.

In 2013, Bill published a book of his poems and directed the over \$2,000 in proceeds to Wesley Urban Ministries in Hamilton.



At a June 4 ceremony in Hamilton, Ontario, Lena Sutton, the Canadian National Co-ordinator for SOAR, presented Bill Mahoney with the 2023 Lynn Williams Award for Service.

Bill has volunteered for Wesley Urban Ministries for over 20 years at the food bank and during the organization's Christmas program. Bill also volunteers at the Hamilton Dream Centre food bank and at Ryerson United Church, serving hot meals for the less fortunate in our community.

In addition to Bill's volunteer work during elections, demonstrations, rallies, picket lines and at food banks, he finds time as a volunteer instructing Tai Chi for a pain management group. Whether Bill is volunteering or reciting one of his poems, he proudly displays his Steelworker and SOAR colours.

Other awards recognizing Bill's contributions include: the Hamilton and District Labour Council Long Term Activist Award 2010; Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award; recognition for community activism from The Hamilton Spectator newspaper.

Bill's poems on health care were highlighted in the July/August 2017 issue of SOAR Connection and Granny in January 2011.

"I have been at the receiving end of organizations helping those in need," said Bill, noting that while growing up his family was so poor the only thing they had to play with was words.

On behalf of all SOAR members, I extend congratulations to Brother Bill Mahoney in receiving this award and thank him for his many years of dedication and continually helping those in need in our community.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference

Steelworkers helped out at the USW booth at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Annual Conference in Calgary in June. Pictured: Boneto Edwards, member of USW Local 360 Irving Steel, now Tree Island; Mike Devine, City Councillor in Cambridge, Ont.; Gord McIntyre, USW Local 7226, president of SOAR Chapter 29 in District 3, and treasurer of the Southern Alberta Area Council; Sylvia Boyce, department head in the USW Canadian National Office for Health, Safety and Environment; and, Andy Ladouceur, USW District 6 Health, Safety and Environment co-ordinator.



Hallowe'en has passed, but...



By Doug Macpherson
SOAR Int'l. Vice President.

While Hallowe'en has passed, we should still be scared. The ghosts of Conservatives past lurk around every dark corner and doorway. Sloganeering, federal conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre's most-recent slogan is "common sense Conservative."

Friends, there is no such thing as Conservative common sense. Most in my generation will remember in the mid-1990s, Mike Harris, then leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives, won an election on the slogan "The Common Sense Revolution."

Once elected, he slashed welfare benefits by 21.6 percent, introduced hallway medicine, closed hospitals, and privatized home care and long-term care homes.

On labour relations, he got rid of card check for union certification, ended first contract arbitration, cancelled anti-scab legislation, made unions responsible for enforcing Employment Standards legislation in regulated workplaces and other minimum standards legislation.

Harris fostered bad relations with the labour movement, refusing to meet with the leadership of the Ontario Federation of Labour, education workers or health care workers.

The labour movement and society in general responded by organizing massive anti-government rallies in every major community in the province, in opposition to his policies.

We do not need a repeat of that history at the federal level. In the current Parliament, Poilievre has opposed progressive programs such as \$10-a-day child care, voted against the national dental care program, against the national pharmacare program, opposed anti-scab legislation, and indicated he would roll back



2SLGBTQIA+ rights at the federal level.

He voted against and encouraged the government to cancel proposed increases to Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions, both measures we fought long and hard to achieve.

If elected, we can expect Poilievre to enact legislation to reverse many of these social programs, notwithstanding that they are putting thousands of dollars back into workers' pockets.

He will enact austerity budgets to balance the books; we know from experience what that policy entails. The two largest expenditures of the federal government are health care transfers to the provinces and territories and transfers to individual citizens, such as Old Age Security (OAS) and support benefits.

You will recall that Poilievre was a part of the Harper Conservative government which raised the age to receive Old Age Security to 67 from 65. Can we expect anything different from him in the next Parliament should he become prime minister?

Meanwhile, the Liberals are finally bringing in long-promised programs, only because the New Democrats are using their power to make Parliament work for people.

Siblings, your vote counts. Do not vote against your and your family's best interests. Vote for the party that cares about workers and families—Jagmeet Singh and the New Democratic Party.

During the recent SOAR International Executive Board Meeting in Washington, D.C., Doug Macpherson explained the differences between the Conservatives and Liberals in parliamentary government. He emphasized the need for our Canadian siblings to support Jagmeet Singh and the New Democrat Party—the party that prioritizes the needs of workers and families.



SOAR Leaders Meet in Washington

SOAR leaders representing each USW district across North America met in Washington this spring in the days leading up to the union's Rapid Response, Legislative and Policy Conference.

The annual meeting of the SOAR Int'l. Executive Board included lively discussions on how to strengthen and grow the organization and other important issues facing retired workers and their families.

Each USW international officer, as well as a majority of the union's district directors, addressed the group during the two-day meeting.

Unable to attend in person due to family obligations, SOAR President Bill Pienta addressed the gathering via video conference, reminding the longtime leaders of the importance of staying active and connected to the union throughout their lives.

"I'm proud of the work that SOAR members do every day, making sure that the issues affecting retired and senior members of our union are heard and addressed," Pienta said, urging retirees to expand their activity on union and political issues.

International President David McCall said retired and active USW members share the same goal—to expand and strengthen the organization so that it can be a more effective voice for workers.

"We are here today, and we are continuing to grow this union," McCall said, "thanks to all of the work you have done and continue to do."

International Vice President Kevin Mapp urged SOAR members to get involved in the upcoming presidential election in the United States.

"We have to save this country, and we have to do it together," Mapp said. "That's true whether you are an R or you are a D. No matter what your color or your creed, we have to do it together."

One way to do that, Mapp and others suggested, is for SOAR members to grow the ranks of their members by talking to their fellow

retirees and also to active members about joining SOAR.

Also addressing the group were International Vice Presidents Roxanne Brown, Luis Mendoza, and Emil Ramirez, as well as representatives of other advocacy groups, including Richard Fiesta, executive director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

District 10 Director Bernie Hall pointed out that the union has undergone numerous changes over the past few years, and that SOAR members help to provide a measure of stability during times of change.

"There's been a lot of transition in our union in recent years, and that makes SOAR more important than ever," said Hall, a former Next Gen leader and one of the union's youngest directors. "When people move on, we lose a lot of knowledge. That makes SOAR invaluable."

SOAR leader Albert "Al" Polk of District 4 said local unions could be one of the keys to growing the retiree program, by providing help to newly retired members with their SOAR dues. Many locals pay for the first year of dues, Polk said, but if they're able,



Al Polk



Denise Edwards

they should consider doing more.

Retirees' voices could end up being important in the upcoming U.S. election, he said.

"Democracy is a nice word," he said. "But we should say it's our way of life that's on the line."

SOAR Secretary-Treasurer Denise Edwards urged retirees who are able to stay as active as possible through SOAR and to educate their fellow retirees about the issues.

"It's so important to stay active," Edwards said.

Hall thanked the SOAR leaders for their efforts, calling their work an "indispensable" part of the USW's mission.

"Having a robust SOAR program is essential to the future of the union," Hall said.

What Happens in Washington Matters *continued from page 3*

to Omlor that it was her testimony and the subsequent termination of the facility director that made them believe justice had been served.

Unfortunately, the issues of understaffing persisted even after a new director was appointed, forcing Omlor to decide a month later that it was time for her to move on.

"The pandemic revealed to many of us the overwhelming struggles health care workers and those who work in nursing homes face each and every day," Omlor said recently. "That's why the voices of USW members are so important in the fight to address issues like staffing ratios, time off, health care, and so much more."

"It was such an honor to represent SOAR at the USW's 2024 Rapid Response Conference and to see firsthand the impact USW members and retirees can have when we work together," said Omlor.

Back in the 1970s, the United States learned the hard way what happens when we become reliant on foreign nations for our energy needs. We fought wars, lost American lives and have been subject to the whims of oil oligarchs.



America Cannot Trade Foreign Oil for Made in China EVs and Solar Panels!

Then during the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. learned the hard way—again—what happens when we become reliant on rival nations like China for critical supplies and even medicine.

Now the U.S. is heading toward a trajectory in which we will be reliant on China for nearly all our energy needs, from the electricity that powers our homes to the cars we drive.

But things can be different this time if we maintain or even raise tariffs on Chinese goods while making smart investments here at home.

The U.S. is rightfully building industries like solar, electric vehicles, wind turbines, and semiconductors along with nuclear, natural gas and more. The goal is to make sure the U.S. can manufacture what we need to power our future.

But China's government is determined to control these industries. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is overseeing an effort to flood the world market with artificially cheap goods and the intent is to run competitors out of business and create a global monopoly.

Control over the U.S. market is part of the CCP's game plan, and that plan will succeed if the U.S. fails to stop Chinese imports from overwhelming our markets.

Americans have two choices: Do what it takes to build out domestic manufacturing in essential industries or cede our energy future to China.

I think we all would agree that the United States must not cede its energy independence to rival nations like China. But that will happen if the U.S. allows Chinese-made goods in sectors like electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, steel, and so many others to overwhelm the U.S. market and drive U.S. manufacturers out of business.

It is within our power to prevent that outcome. Right now, the U.S. is doing the right thing by investing in many of these industries.

Indeed, building a robust energy manufacturing ecosystem is a win-win: Not only will doing so create hundreds of thousands of good jobs—if not more—it will also strengthen our national security. But strong trade enforcement via tariffs and Buy America requirements is essential to ensure these investments will flourish.

Energy in the 21st century must be American made. We must stop the flood of Chinese-made imports across critical clean energy industries and give domestic companies and their workers the first shot at producing these products here in the United States.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing urges SOAR members to stand with us and write or call their members of Congress pledging support in stopping the flood of Chinese-made imports across critical clean energy industries.



You can contact your Senators and Representatives by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to their Washington, D.C. offices.

You can also phone their respective state or district offices.

For an easier way to take action you can sign a petition at: <https://secure.everyaction.com/mjJkTW-WPOCMOMfA67xN0g2>

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



DISTRICT 4 WELCOMES New SOAR Chapter in New York

SOAR members in the Fort Edward area of New York were honored to have their SOAR chapter officially chartered by the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees.

On February 16, 2024, SOAR Chapter 4-22, known as the Adirondack Chapter, was presented its official charter by USW District 4 Director Dave Wasiura at the district’s LM Conference in Syracuse. The new chapter will be home to Steelworker retirees from USW Local 4-00002 (LU 4-2), a local representing Steelworker members employed at Irving Tissue, Inc.

Dave Waters, the treasurer of LU 4-2, will serve as the chapter’s first president.

Al Polk, the District 4 SOAR executive board member, reported that Dave Waters and Bill Winters, the financial secretary of LU 4-2, worked to establish this chapter, which already has approximately 43 members and is growing. Special thanks go out to Cary Eldridge, USW District 4 sub-district director, and LU 4-2 officers: Jeff Stone, president; Nate Madison, vice president; and Tim Cutler, recording secretary, for their continued support of this new chapter and for being among the first-ever officers of the chapter.

“As a new chapter, we are eager to get started with our members volunteering in our communities.”

Chapter President
Dave Waters

The additional first officers of the chapter are Bill Winters, vice president; Tim Cutler, recording secretary; Nick Severance, financial secretary; Jeff Stone, treasurer; Jeremy Fifield; Carl Fritze; and Jeremy Johnson, trustees.

The chapter held its first meeting on June 10. All upstate New York Steelworker retirees and LU 4-2 members, age 45 and older, were invited to attend to learn about SOAR and join the chapter.

The chapter plans to hold quarterly meetings, support the work of USW LU 4-2, engage in community-focused activities, and fight against efforts to compromise vital programs like Medicare and Social Security.

SOAR welcomes our new members from Chapter 4-22, and together, we will continue the “good” fight for retired and working families. In solidarity!

Syracuse, NY — On February 16, 2024, new SOAR Chapter 4-22, also known as the SOAR Adirondack Chapter, received their official charter while at the LM Conference in Syracuse.

Pictured from left: USW Local 4-00002 (LU 4-2) Chief Trustee Josh Stone, LU 4-2 President and SOAR Chapter 4-22 Treasurer Jeff Stone, LU 4-2 Vice President Nate Madison, USW D4 Sub-District Director Cary Eldridge, USW D4 Director Dave Wasiura, LU 4-2 Treasurer and Chapter 4-22 President Dave Waters, LU 4-2 Financial Secretary and Chapter 4-22 Vice President Bill Winters, D4 SOAR Coordinator Richard Knowles, and USW D4 Asst. to the Director Steve Finnegan.

SOAR Pushes Workers’ Issues on Capitol Hill

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“Every time we’ve been challenged, our members have answered the call,” McCall said. “Our solidarity and our determination will prevail, because we’ve proven it time and time again.”

Series of Victories

That determination has helped lead to a series of victories in Washington, D.C., in recent years, said International Vice President Roxanne Brown.

Those wins have included saving the pensions of more than a million workers, including more than 120,000 USW members and retirees. In addition, USW activists helped to achieve a national manufacturing policy that includes massive infrastructure investment, Buy American policies, strong supply chains and other victories.

Other legislative wins included measures to rein in health care and prescription drug costs, while investing in emerging industries.

The measures will have a long-term impact, Brown said, “largely because of all of you in Rapid Response.”

SOAR member Joel Buchanan said he was glad that the annual lobby day gives him and other activists a chance to make their voices heard on topics like retirement security, health care, and other issues of importance to retirees.

Buchanan, who worked at the Evraz steel plant in Pueblo, Colo., said that the best part of events like the 2024 Rapid Response conference is interacting with members from all areas of the country and learning from them.

“It’s about connecting with members from different places and different backgrounds and finding out that a lot of times our issues are the same,” Buchanan said. “You always learn something new.”



Roxanne Brown



Joel Buchanan

IN MEMORIAM

ALBERT V. BECCO

Albert V. Becco, a longtime union activist and SOAR activist, passed away on June 4, 2024, at the age of 90.



**Albert V. Becco
1934-2024**

Becco began his union career shortly after he graduated from high school at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) in Pueblo, CO, becoming a member of USW Local 3267. In March 1952, he was drafted and served in the United States Navy during the Korean Conflict. Following his discharge in September 1954, Becco returned to work at CF&I. It wasn't long before he became active in his local union. Al held various positions, including grievance committeeman, and later, he was elected president, a position he held until he retired in December 1986. It should be noted that Becco was the longest-serving president of Local 3267, which represents the office and technical workers at the mill.

After his retirement, Al became an active member of SOAR and soon afterward was elected president of SOAR Chapter 38-3, the Phillip Murray SOAR Chapter, in Pueblo, Colo.

In 2005, Becco was appointed a SOAR coordinator for USW District 12. He held that position until 2008, when he was appointed SOAR Western Region Vice President, a newly added position to the SOAR International Executive Board created to better serve its membership in the Western United States. Al served in this position until August 2020, when he stepped down to make way for "younger" blood to take over this key leadership role.

Becco took great pride in being a Steelworker and in his involvement with the union. In 2005, the Southern Colorado Labor Council, where he served on its executive board for many years, named him Labor Leader of the Year.

Al also became an active member of the Pueblo County Democratic Party (PCDP), where he served as 2nd Vice Chair for over 15 years and was honored twice as Democrat of the Year. In 2004, he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention for John Kerry. Then again, in 2012, he was a delegate for President Obama.

For over 20 years, Becco unwaveringly volunteered his time to run the Friday Night Bingo fundraiser, with the proceeds supporting the PCDP headquarters. In 2019, the PCDP dedicated their building to Becco and presented him with a plaque honoring him for all he had done for the local party and Democrats throughout the county. Upon learning of his passing, PCDP leaders honored Becco by describing him as the "heart and soul" of the PCDP for many years.

Undeniably, his lifelong work deserved recognition, and in 2020, Becco was inducted into the Steelworks Center of the West's CF&I Hall of Fame.

Other pursuits included serving as a site coordinator for the state of Colorado with the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), whose mission is strengthening American manufacturing and creating new private-sector jobs through innovative public policies. He was also a proud member of the Colorado state chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans. (CARA)

In September 2023, the Southern Colorado Labor Council honored Becco with the Mother Jones Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing his more than seven decades of activism and dedication to labor.

At 90, Becco continued to lead his SOAR chapter. He remained involved with AAM, CARA, and the PCDP, serving as an at-large Pueblo County Executive Committee member until shortly before his passing.

Al was indeed a proud and devoted family man. His family's love and support were always present in everything he did, and his work was very much a family affair, shared with and instilled in his children. In addition to his wife, Norma, he leaves behind four children, eight grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren. Al Becco will be greatly missed by all who were privileged to know him.

On June 14, 2024, at the SOAR chapter's next regular meeting, the members unanimously voted to change the chapter's official title to the "Albert 'Al' Becco SOAR Chapter" to honor his legacy.



May he rest as he served ~ in power and peace.



SOAR EYES ON WASHINGTON

By Jay McMurren, SOAR Legislative Director

WE'RE BACK!



Jay McMurren

That's the message coming from May's SOAR Int'l. Executive Board meeting held in Washington, D.C.

It was the second board meeting since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic began in early 2020 and brought on three

years of struggle for the Steelworkers retirees' program. Seniors were highly vulnerable to the deadly disease. As a result, all SOAR chapter meetings and related activities came to a nearly complete halt. Since May 5, 2023, the official end date of the pandemic, all SOAR activities have resumed. Despite a significant drop in membership, there is a new enthusiasm surrounding its return. In fact, according to reports given by district board members, SOAR added four new chapters in 2023. According to those same reports, the number of new chapters could double in 2024 if all goes according to plan.

Board members were also excited about the prospects of working with existing chapters to help rebuild membership. According to SOAR Director Julie Stein, "Our membership dropped as a result of deaths, disability and falling out of touch due to our lack of activity. However, changing our eligibility requirements will help us grow stronger." Stein is referring to the change in the age requirement for joining SOAR. You no longer have to be retired to join. However, you must be at least 45 years old, typically around when people start paying attention to what will be available to them as future retirees. Potential recruits don't have to be members of the Steelworkers; instead, they must agree with our union's core policies and principles.

SOAR was founded nearly 40 years ago as an organization to help keep our union's retirees connected to and involved in the activism of our local and international union. As SOAR President William Pienta says, "Our seniors have much to offer our union and its members. They have fought the good fight, bargained historic

labor agreements, and helped bring about big changes in our union and the workplace. We can't afford to let their experience and knowledge fall by the wayside."

If your local union is interested in starting a SOAR chapter, contact your district SOAR board member or your USW international staff representative for details on how to get started. It's an easy process and one that could help build your local union to be stronger.

In addition to the board meeting, SOAR leadership stayed in Washington to assist with the USW's Rapid Response and Legislative Policy Conference. The conference featured intense workshops on today's hottest legislative issues, discussions on accomplishing our legislative goals, and a rally to encourage Congress to reauthorize Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) without further delay. It wrapped up with a "Steelworkers Lobby Day." That event featured USW members visiting Capitol Hill to encourage their members of Congress to support the Steelworkers' legislative priorities.

SOAR in ACTION

Schenectady, NY—On Tuesday, April 16, New York State Nurses Association nurses from Ellis Medicine held an informational picket to sound the alarm on cuts to health care services and management's attempt to reduce nurse staffing at the hospital. SOAR Chapter 4-17 activists Gary Cunningham and Mike Blue walked the picket line in support of NYSNA workers. In solidarity! Way to go, SOAR!



New Haven, CT—On Tuesday, April 16, new SOAR Chapter 4-21, also known as the Steelworker Retirees of Connecticut, a multi-local SOAR chapter, christened its SOAR flag by attending an informational picket for USW Local 12160. The local is in arbitration with South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority, trying to settle their contract. SOAR Chapter 4-21 activists Tammie Botelho and Wanda Howard, also a member of Local 12160, were on the picket line! Congrats on your SOAR chapter flag's christening! In solidarity!



Spokane, WA — On Tuesday, April 16, SOAR Chapter 38-1 President Mike Lacy, delivered socks and t-shirts collected by the chapter members over the winter to their area Union Gospel Mission (UGM).

UGM exists to provide food, shelter, and individualized pathways out of homelessness to men, women, and children in need across Eastern Washington and North Idaho.

Thank you to all the members who contributed to this drive and great cause, which marked the SOAR chapter's first year of gathering clothing for people experiencing homelessness. Way to go, SOAR Chapter 38-1!



Older Americans Must Reelect Biden to Protect the Benefits They Earned

By Robert Roach, Jr.

With everything at stake for older Americans in this year's presidential election, the contrast between President Joe Biden and Donald Trump on seniors' issues could not be more stark. For starters, Biden wants to protect and expand our earned Social Security and Medicare benefits, while Trump wants to slash them.

President Biden also forced wealthy pharmaceutical corporations to negotiate lower drug prices with Medicare for the first time in history, which will save seniors and taxpayers billions of dollars over the next several years. He has worked tirelessly to lower prescription drug prices. Donald Trump wants to take away Medicare's ability to negotiate lower prices.

When Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law, he capped monthly insulin copays at \$35 for seniors and capped annual out-of-pocket prescription drug expenses for Medicare beneficiaries at \$3,200. Next year that amount will be \$2,000. And thanks to Biden, all necessary vaccines for Medicare beneficiaries are free.

Biden has been a champion of Medicare for years. In fact, he supports the much-needed expansion of Medicare to include vision, dental, and hearing. The same cannot be said for President Trump. While in office, President Trump proposed massive Medicare cuts in every single one of his budgets. Trump even supports ending Medicare's guaranteed health care benefits.

In addition, Biden made sure retirees with pensions are going to receive the benefits they earned. The Butch Lewis Act, which he signed into law as part of the American Rescue Plan in 2021, is keeping 2 to 3 million workers' pension plans solvent and able to pay full benefits through at least 2051.



President Biden understands the importance of good health care for all Americans, especially seniors, as shown by his Executive Orders improving nursing home safety and increasing staffing levels at long term care facilities. While in office, President Trump attempted to repeal the Affordable Care Act and all its protections for people with pre-existing conditions, while repeatedly proposing cuts to Medicaid.

With another term, President Biden will do even more to strengthen and expand Social Security and Medicare, lower drug prices and protect the pension benefits we have earned.

**The choice is clear.
We need to reelect Joe Biden.**

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.



Duluth, MN — On Sunday, April 14, members of SOAR Chapter 11-5, also known as the Head of the Lakes SOAR Chapter, volunteered at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center for a Shrine Circus show in town. This activity was a fundraising opportunity for the chapter. Pictured from left, SOAR Chapter 11-5 activists Dave Lubbesmeyer, Tim Levens, Lee Popovich and Laurie Popovich helped in food concessions by scooping ice cream and serving pizza and soda for the event. Way to go, SOAR!

Edison, NJ — On Thursday, April 25, new SOAR Chapter 4-23, also known as the North & North Central New Jersey SOAR Chapter, supported the picket line for USW Local 6129. The workers of Silgan Containers voted to strike after contract negotiations took a downturn. After many weeks of negotiations, management proposed that the members pay an increased cost for their health care benefits and gut the overtime provisions of the contract.

Silgan Containers is a profitable company that makes cans for the food industry. They are asking for many more concessions that will hurt our brothers and sisters. The USW 6129 members are fighting for a fair and decent contract that will allow them to feed their families, live in dignity and thrive as members of their communities!

SOAR Chapter 4-23 activists Howard Boyer and his dog Skyler were on the picket line! Rather than pose for this photo, Skyler, the pit bull, seemed to be more interested in the hamburger our union brother was holding! We are stronger together!





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