

UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

CONNECTION

WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER



STAY ACTIVE • STAY INVOLVED • STAY CONNECTED

Don't be Fooled by the Smoke Screens



Having just returned from the SOAR Conference and USW Convention, I could easily write an article that would fill many pages, but I will focus on a few critical issues that are important to us.

At the SOAR Conference, the delegates heard from Jessica LaPointe, the President of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) Council 220, representing employees of the Social Security Administration (SSA). I had the fortunate opportunity to have lunch with Jessica, where we continued our discussion about the ongoing dismantling of Social Security offices across the country.

Anyone who has tried to contact a representative from the SSA can attest to how difficult it can be. I was informed that this situation would only worsen with the massive reduction of employees at that agency caused by the imposed layoffs. The inability to speak with someone for assistance will only increase our frustration, and it could lead to a solution favored by those who have long opposed Social Security: "PRIVATIZATION."

I would like to share my recent experience with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) regarding a letter I received.

The letter informed me about a change in a benefit I was receiving, but did not specify which benefit it referred to. It instructed me to contact CMS for clarification. After a lengthy wait, I finally spoke with a representative. After I read the letter to him, he indicated that he did not have any information about my issue, but reassured me that it didn't seem too serious.

When I asked him if he was concerned about the layoffs, he replied that he wasn't worried because he was a contracted employee. Although he could not assist me, he assured me he would keep his job. During that call, he inadvertently changed my preference regarding the sharing of medical information without my authorization. What purpose did he serve other than to frustrate callers who needed help?

Afterward, I received another letter from CMS notifying me of this change in preference, which I did not authorize. This prompted me to call again. After waiting 34 minutes, I finally spoke with a government employee, rather than a sub-contract employee, who corrected the error and provided answers to my initial question.

What does my experience with the CMS have to do with the thousands of employees laid off at the Social Security Administration? My concern is the heightened frustration that recipients like me will face when trying to get help – all in the name of reducing costs.

Don't be fooled. Stay aware of this smokescreen: The current federal administration isn't just looking to cut costs; it aims to privatize Social Security. Privatization removes the security from Social Security. If we don't speak up and fight back, we risk ending up with a system that goes against our true needs.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President

Social Security Changes Fuel Concern Among Recipients, Advocates



In recent months, Social Security recipients and their advocates have been voicing concerns about the Trump administration’s plan to gut more than 7,000 jobs across the Social Security Administration and how it will impact retirees’ ability to receive their monthly benefit checks.

While the administration again claims this is in the name of efficiency, its allegations of waste, fraud and abuse within the agency have already been proven to be untrue.

For example, last July, the social security administration’s inspector general released a report that showed less than 1 percent of the payments authorized by the agency from 2015 to 2022 were deemed as “improper.”

Even so, in March, Musk-led DOGE, announced even more changes that will impact millions of Americans who have paid into Social Security over the course of their working lives, limiting access and effectively curtailing benefits.

The following are just a few of the many SSA changes announced in March:

1. **New requirement for in-person identity checks:** The administration has moved to require in-person identity checks for all new SSA applicants along with anyone who wants to change their direct deposit information. This change will prove to be particularly cumbersome, given the fact that in-person options are limited and shrinking.
2. **Dozens of SSA Offices Closing Nationwide:** The administration plans to shutter nearly 50 Social Security offices in 18 states, with the majority of the closings in the South and Southeast; and,
3. **Discontinuing SSA Payments by Paper Check:** Nearly 500,000 Social Security recipients will no longer be able to receive their monthly benefit by paper check as of September.

While the Trump administration made many promises to leave Social Security untouched, these unnecessary and baseless changes will create significant challenges for millions of America’s elderly and most vulnerable.

Julie Stein, SOAR Director



SOAR Proudly Celebrates Its 40th Birthday!

At the Union’s 30th International Convention on May 23, 1985, USW delegates unanimously voted to amend the USW Constitution, officially recognizing SOAR as an affiliate organization of the USW, solidifying its focus on the unique issues impacting USW retirees and their spouses.

Since then, SOAR has been integral to our union’s mission by actively defending vital programs like Social Security and Medicare, protecting Steelworker pension plans, and more. Furthermore, SOAR has engaged in countless efforts to assure security for current and future generations of retirees, regardless of union membership.

SOAR is how retirees stay connected to our union and where we continue the fight for retired and working families.

The SOAR Store

T-Shirts!

\$15



\$15 each + the cost of shipping. Contact the SOAR Office.

866-208-4420

Ball Caps!



**SOAR ball caps for purchase!
\$20 each + the cost of shipping.
Contact the SOAR Office.
866-208-4420**

\$20

New Item!



**AKWA polo shirts
\$55 each + the cost of shipping.
Available in Size S - 4X**

\$55

**SOAR Chapter
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Articles and Photos Requested

The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be July 15, 2025 and articles should be emailed to the SOAR Director Julie Stein at jstein@usw.org

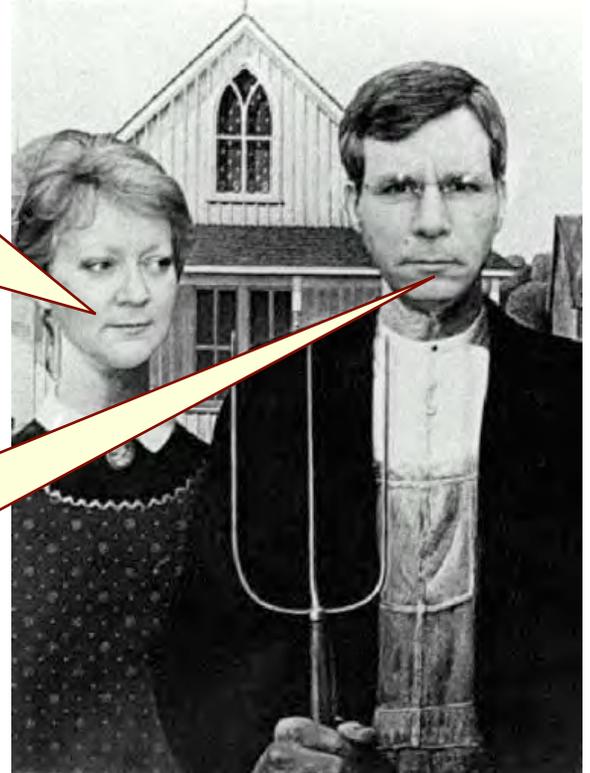


The deadline to submit material for the next issue of the SOAR Connection newsletter is July 25, 2025. Email your article to soar3@icloud.com.

How To Make Humming Bird Food

Measure 1 cup of warm water. Then, add 1/4 cup white sugar. Stir until dissolved. **DO NOT** ever add red food coloring. Pour half into bottle and hang in a safe place. *Charlie*

Elaine And Charlie Say



Charlie... A tornado came through, and a pine tree crashed through the garage roof and landed on my new car! Come quick!!

**Right now I'm working with Julie on this issue of the Connection!
You take care of it!
By the way, have you baked me brownies yet?**

Seniors Won Lower Drug Prices – But Big Pharma Hasn’t Given Up the Fight

by Robert Roach, Jr.



After two decades of advocacy, seniors finally won a hard-fought victory in 2022: Congress passed a law allowing Medicare to negotiate lower prescription drug prices. This historic achievement has already delivered savings for people who take insulin and capped out of pocket drug costs at \$2,000 annually.

It took two decades, because drug corporations used every trick in the book to defeat the legislation. After the law was signed into law by President Biden, the drug corporations went to court to try and block it: so far, the law has been upheld.

A new investigation by Patients for Affordable Drugs exposed another drug corporation tactic to keep drug prices and industry profits high: funding so-called “patient advocacy” groups to oppose. These front groups – posing as grassroots voices – are waging campaigns to undermine Medicare’s new negotiating power and scare the public into opposing reforms that benefit us all.

It’s a familiar tactic: when the drug industry can’t win in the court of public opinion, it creates the illusion of public opposition. These front groups have misled lawmakers and the media, all while Big Pharma continues to spend millions lobbying against policies that help patients but cut into corporate profits.

As retirees, we can’t afford to be silent. Real patient advocacy comes from people who understand the burden of high drug prices – people like us – not corporations protecting their bottom line. We need to keep telling our stories, calling our representatives and senators, and take nothing for granted.

Because as important as the Inflation Reduction Act is, we need to do more to make sure every American can pay for the medicine they need to stay healthy. Let’s remain vigilant, push back against Big Pharma’s misinformation, and ensure that affordable medications are a reality for every American retiree.

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.

A Memorial Day Tribute



“The Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees remembers and honors the heroes who have selflessly given their courage and lives to serve our nation. We will never forget their patriotism.”



New Retiree Voting Record Released



The Alliance for Retired Americans released its 2024 [Congressional Voting Record](#), which scores each U.S. Senator and Representative on important retirement security issues.



“Most members of Congress pay lip service to protecting seniors,” said Robert Roach, Jr., President of the Alliance. “Our annual voting record shows which House and Senate members back up their words with actions and vote in older Americans’ best interests.”

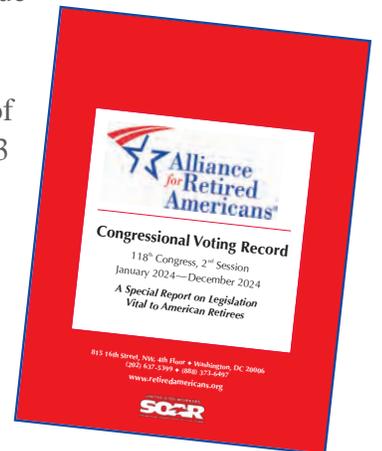
The report evaluates ten Senate and House floor votes in 2024. These include votes to ensure that 2.8 million public sector retirees and survivors receive the full Social Security benefits they’ve earned, to fund nutrition and health care programs that older Americans rely on, and to lower prescription drug prices.

“What House and Senate members do - or fail to do - in Washington has consequences for retirees and their families,” said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. “We will continue to track what our elected officials do so voters have the information they need.”

Forty-seven members of the U.S. Senate and 146 members of the U.S. House of Representatives earned perfect scores of 100 percent. Fourteen senators and 73 House members received scores of zero percent.

“The senior vote is always crucial in any election,” Fiesta added. “The Alliance voting record is a valuable tool for older voters as they consider who to support when it’s time to go to the polls.”

The national 2024 Congressional Voting Record, individual reports for each state delegation, and past voting records are available on the Alliance’s website.



Download the national report or state report by going to <https://retiredamericans.org/voting-record/>

Richard Fiesta, is the Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

To succeed in life, you need three things:

**A backbone,
a wishbone, and
a funny bone.**

How Not to Navigate Medicare?

by Diane Archer



If you're struggling to figure out Medicare, you're not alone. You have a bunch of choices, which are not easy to understand. But, whatever you do, do not rely on insurance agents or for-profit corporations for guidance. Contact your local [State Health Insurance Program](#) or a non-profit senior center for unbiased advice.



First rule: Even when it comes to choosing between government-administered traditional Medicare and a corporate-run Medicare HMO (Advantage) plan, don't rely on someone working for a for-profit corporation to help you make a choice, much less on advertisements. Insurance agents and corporations are making money left and right by steering you to make Medicare choices that help their bottom line and could endanger your health.

In fact, the latest for-profit to help you make Medicare choices, "Chapter," is said to be worth \$1.5 billion already. And, that's because it can profit handsomely from steering you to Medicare options that benefit the corporation and not you. Here's what you should know: There are a large number of Medicare HMOs run by insurers that are bad actors. They deny care inappropriately. They delay care inappropriately. They won't cover your care from the specialists and specialty hospitals you need to use. They charge high copays.

No one can help you distinguish the good HMOs from the bad HMOs. Even the ones with a five-star rating can be engaged in bad acts. Inexcusably, good information is not available to help people. Choosing a Medicare HMO that will meet your needs is a huge gamble.

Imagine buying a house and not being able to check for termites. Or, going to a restaurant that has rats and cockroaches in its kitchen. Or, buying a car with brakes that don't work. Choosing a Medicare HMO is potentially getting yourself into one of those situations. You'll be fine if you don't need a lot of care, just as you'll be fine if you don't eat at the restaurant or use the car with broken brakes. But, if you're diagnosed with cancer or heart disease or another costly or complex condition, you could be endangering your life.

The best advice right now if you want to get the care you need: Traditional Medicare covers your care from most doctors and hospitals anywhere in the United States. And, the government does not second-guess your treating physicians. It covers your care where you want it, when you need it. Again: Do not be swayed by companies that claim to provide independent advice that will help you. They will say that they will. But, they will not.

Diane Archer is founder of the Medicare Rights Center, a resource for boomers, older adults, and care providers. She also serves on the board of directors of the center for Health & Democracy.

Source: justcareusa.org-- the buzz for boomers & carers

Let's Build More Ships



During the past 25 years, the United States has fallen far behind the People's Republic of China in the number of ships we build for both national security protection and the movement of commerce.

The U.S. was once the world's leading shipbuilder, producing 15 to 25 new ships annually in the 1970s. Before that, America's shipbuilding strength played a critical role in our nation's WWII efforts and contributed to economic success.

But the Chinese Communist Party set its sights on the domination of global shipbuilding through unfair and anti-competitive non-market practices and China has left the U.S. in its wake.

Today, there are only 80 U.S.-flagged vessels in international commerce while China boasts 5,500.

Recently, several members of Congress reintroduced the Shipbuilding and Harbor Infrastructure for Prosperity and Security (SHIPS) for America Act that would revitalize American shipbuilding and would establish the Ships for America Act which was first introduced in December. The legislation would create consistent funding for U.S. Maritime policy with a national goal of increasing the U.S.-flagged international fleet by 250 ships in 10 years.

Senator Mark Kelly (D-Ariz.), a U.S. Navy veteran, is a co-sponsor of the bill that will help to rebuild America's shipbuilding supply chain.

"After decades of dangerously neglecting our shipbuilding industry, we're finally doing something about it," said Kelly. "The SHIPS for America Act is the most ambitious effort in a generation to revitalize the U.S. shipbuilding and commercial maritime industries and counter China's dominance over oceans."

The Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), along with the United Steelworkers (USW), urge you to contact your U.S. Senators and House of Representative members asking them to co-sponsor and then quickly pass the SHIPS for America Act/Building Ships in America Act.

You can reach your representatives at their state or district offices, or you can call them at the U.S. Capitol by dialing the switchboard (202) 224-3121 and asking to be connected to your legislator's office.

AAM also has an easy to create form letter to reach your elected officials at www.americanmanufacturing.org

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





2025 United Steelworkers Constitutional Convention

RESOLUTIONS

STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES (SOAR)

| Resolution No. 8

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

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

WHEREAS, SOAR has established itself as an integral part of the USW; and

WHEREAS, SOAR has celebrated 40 years of activism, its power comes from the size and diversity of its membership, making the need to increase SOAR membership fundamental to its success; and

WHEREAS, SOAR's current President William Pienta, a former district director, has brought his energy and commitment to social justice to the organization; his vision and leadership guides SOAR and helped spur its recent growth; and

WHEREAS, SOAR remains an important source of support for retirees, assisting them in matters relating to pension benefits, health insurance questions and numerous quality-of-life issues; and

WHEREAS, SOAR encourages negotiating committees to consider the needs of retirees and surviving spouses at the bargaining table; and

WHEREAS, collective action is the only way to affect meaningful change, and SOAR members recognize the need for solidarity: marching with their USW brothers, sisters and siblings on picket lines, providing assistance to USW families burdened by work stoppages, participating in rallies, filling buses, and joining USW members in legislative and political battles; and

WHEREAS, SOAR activists in both the United States and Canada working with numerous outside political, labor, civil and human rights organizations, and internally with the USW's Rapid Response Network, continue to leave their mark on political and legislative issues that affect both retirees and working families. Their work is crucial in fighting to strengthen pension protections, protecting healthcare rights, combatting devastating cuts to the social safety net – including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security – and drawing attention to voter suppression laws that would disproportionately disenfranchise young people, minorities and retirees.

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. We will notify our members who are aged 45 and older that SOAR membership is open to them, their families, and others who share our interests.
2. We will continue to honor the memory of former USWA International President 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 more ways to involve SOAR membership in organizing, corporate campaigns, legislative battles and other issues impacting 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 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.

As passed at the USW Constitutional Convention held in Las Vegas, NV, April 10th, 2025.



Money-Saving Programs for SOAR Members

Union Plus Health Discount Programs



Cut your family's out-of-pocket health care expenses with discount plans for dental care, vision care, prescription drugs, hearing care and more. Find the plan that fits your needs and budget. Visit unionplus.org/healthsavings.

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*Save up to \$10 per line per month on AT&T's best unlimited plan and access other exclusive benefits. AT&T is the only nationwide unionized wireless carrier. Visit unionplus.org/att to download your coupon and to find local stores (use discount code 3508840).

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