



Repeal of Cadillac Tax Protects Affordable Health Care for Millions - Especially Retirees

by Robert Roach, Jr.



The House recently passed H.R. 748, the Middle Class Health Benefits Tax Repeal Act. It repeals the 40 percent tax on employer-provided health care plans scheduled to take effect in 2022.

The excise tax, commonly referred to as the “Cadillac Tax,” H.R. 748 passed by a wide margin with Republican and Democratic members voting for it. Now we need the Senate to pass it and send it to the president for signature.

This excise tax is part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and it was initially conceived as a way to tax wealthy Americans’ high-premium plans to help provide coverage for uninsured individuals and families. In reality, the tax would disproportionately affect middle-class workers and families, and the labor movement has been working hard to repeal it for years.

If it goes into effect, the tax would affect private health care plans, which cost at least \$11,200 annually for individual coverage and \$30,100 for family coverage. 181 million Americans’ employer-provided health plans would be taxed.

Experts say that employers will increase premiums and deductibles and even reduce health coverage to avoid paying it.

Retiree health insurance plans would be especially hard hit. If the tax is implemented, employers could cut benefits for retirees younger than 65 and stop supplemental Medicare coverage for retirees 65 and over.

Passage of this bill is long overdue and a rare bipartisan moment for the House. We must press the Senate to take action and kill this unfair tax immediately.

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.

**“The responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have the wider vision.”
- Eliot**

Passing the Torch



We know that union pride is often passed down through the generations. We feel it when a son or daughter gets a job in the same union shop their parent had retired from; when a union salary makes it possible to send a child to college as a first-generation college student; or when a dental procedure or pair of eyeglasses is affordable because the union negotiated for quality health care.

Oddly enough, anti-union pride can also find its way down through the lineage.

In mid-July, the untimely resignation of Alexander Acosta (a story itself too lengthy to get into here) prompted President Trump to nominate Eugene Scalia, son of the late Supreme Court Justice, Antonin Scalia, to be the next Secretary of Labor.

Following in the footsteps of his father (Antonin), who died in 2016 before he could cast the deciding vote in the anti-union Supreme Court case, *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, Eugene Scalia has long-represented the likes of Walmart and other companies who strongly oppose workers' rights.

The most glaring example of Eugene's favoritism toward employers is his opposition to a regulation intended to protect workers from repetitive stress injuries. In 2001, the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate blocked his nomination to the Labor Department on the grounds he had dismissed the regulation because he believed it was based on "unreliable science."

Eugene Scalia also prevailed in a 2006 case where he served as legal counsel to Walmart, helping them defeat a Maryland law that would have required employers of 10,000 or more to spend at least 8 percent of their payroll on employee health care costs.

Come 2020, please remember the power to decide who is the next Secretary of Labor rests in the hands of the United States Congress and President who WE elect.

Sources:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/18/us/politics/eugene-scalia-labor-secretary.html>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/02/scalia-friedrichs/462936/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/mar/29/supreme-court-scalia-public-sector-unions>

Julie Stein, SOAR Director

Lady Liberty and the Pursuit of American Freedom



I recently visited the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in New York and came away with some strong feelings on the present immigration issue. My grandfather came to the United States from Poland, alone when he was 17 without any other family members and no immediate family living in the U.S. We found the documents recording his arrival and saw some of the questions required to enter the country. He declared that he was not insane and was not a criminal. He also possessed no real skills. It was very emotional to see his name, where he came from, the ship he was on and other information like his lack of knowledge of the English language in document form.

I felt something special when I was reminded of the rebuilding of Lady Liberty and the small role his descendants played in the rebuilding. His son and grandson worked at a mill that donated stainless steel rod towards the rebuilding of the Statue of Liberty to replace the old steel skeleton that had rusted.

I was less surprised to learn that two of the top three jobs held by Polish immigrants were working in mines and steel mills. My grandfather worked digging ditches and ultimately became a boss for a small gas company in Western New York. My grandfather's legacy lives on through my grandchildren, who are the fourth generation of Americans born in this country.

I wonder what would happen today if an unaccompanied 17-year-old boy who could not read, write or speak English, and had no identifiable skills, showed up at immigration and asked to enter our country to start a new life.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



National Committee president Max Richtman is urging the House Ways and Means Committee to [boost Social Security](#) — and keep the system financially sound for the rest of the century — as it takes up the [Social Security 2100 Act](#). The bill, introduced by Congressman John Larson (D-CT), receives its first full committee hearing today after years of inaction by the former House majority. In his testimony to the committee, Richtman emphasizes that the National Committee enthusiastically endorses the bill on behalf of its millions of members and supporters.

Source: National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare

Lady Liberty y la búsqueda de la libertad americana



Hace poco visité la Estatua de la Libertad y Ellis Island en Nueva York y obtuve algunos sentimientos fuertes sobre el tema actual de la inmigración. Mi abuelo vino a los Estados Unidos, desde Polonia, solo cuando él tenía 17 años sin ningún otro miembro de la familia y ninguna familia de los Estados Unidos viviendo en los Estados Unidos. Vimos los documentos que registraban su llegada y vimos algunas de las preguntas necesarias para ingresar al país. Declaró que no estaba loco y que no era un criminal. Tampoco poseía habilidades reales. Fue muy emocionante ver su nombre, de dónde venía, el barco en el que viajaba y otra información como su falta de conocimiento del idioma inglés en forma de documento.

Sentí algo especial cuando recordé la reconstrucción de Lady Liberty y el pequeño rollo que su descendiente jugó en la reconstrucción. Su hijo y su nieto trabajaron en un molino que donó varillas de acero inoxidable para la reconstrucción de la Estatua de la Libertad para reemplazar el viejo esqueleto de acero que se había oxidado.

Me sorprendió menos ganar que dos de los tres trabajos principales ocupados por inmigrantes polacos estaban trabajando en minas y fábricas de acero. Mi abuelo trabajó cavando zanjas y finalmente se convirtió en jefe de una pequeña empresa de gas en el oeste de Nueva York.

El legado de mi abuelo vive a través de mis nietos que son la cuarta generación de America nacidos en este país.

Me pregunto qué pasaría hoy si un niño de 17 años no compenetrado que no pudiera leer, escribir o hablar inglés y que no tuviera habilidades identificables se presentó en la inmigración y pidió ingresar a nuestro país para comenzar una nueva vida.

Presidente de SOAR, Bill Pienta

Aging in Place: Safety at Home

Many people want to remain in their homes as they age, and there are an increasing number of resources and services to aid those who wish to “age in place.” For improved safety, you will likely want to do home modifications. Some modifications are easy; others take more serious renovations.

About four out of five older people own their homes. To continue to live safely in them, many need modifications. Here are some tips from the [National Institute on Aging](#), [AARP](#) and [Aging in Place](#) Easy modifications to eliminate tripping hazards and prevent falls:

- Remove throw rugs
- Take care to keep electrical and phone cords out of the way
- Remove low furniture
- Remove or create a place for the bedspread; many an older person has tripped on a bedspread spilling out onto the floor
- Move or remove all clutter

Source: justcareusa.org written by Dr. Susan Molchan



Changes Announced to the SOAR Executive Board

Greetings to all from Pittsburgh. I am especially pleased to inform you of the following recent changes made to the SOAR Executive Board:

In April, Int'l President Leo W. Gerard honored SOAR Vice President Harry Hynd for his considerable contribution to the growth of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, and to the many years of service to our union, by appointing him to the position of Vice President, Emeritus.

Further, Brother Gerard then appointed Doug Macpherson to fill the vacancy of Vice President that was created by the above mentioned appointment of Harry Hynd. Doug will fulfill the remainder of Harry's term, effective June 1, 2019. In addition, Doug will continue to serve the Canadian National Office (CNO) in his role as the Canadian National SOAR Coordinator.

Lastly, I am especially pleased to inform you that Brother Gerard, in consultation with District 6 Director Marty Warren, has appointed SOAR Coordinator Lena Sutton as the District 6 SOAR Executive Board Member. Lena will fulfill the remainder of Doug's term, effective, June 1, 2019.

On behalf of the entire SOAR organization, I congratulate each of them on their newly appointed positions; and, I welcome Lena to the SOAR Executive Board. I trust they will serve in their position well as we continue our mission to represent and improve the quality of life for our members.

Lena will attend the SOAR Executive Board Meeting to be held, late October, in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the 2019 Rapid Response and Legislative Conference. For those of you also planning to attend, please take the opportunity to meet Lena and become better acquainted with her.

Thanks for all you do to build SOAR.

In solidarity, Julie Stein, SOAR Director

Photos below left to right are: Harry Hynd, SOAR Vice President Emeritus; Doug MacPherson, SOAR Vice President (he also serves as the Canadian National SOAR Coordinator) and Lena Sutton, District 6 SOAR Board Member.



SOAR Chapter Connection

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Elaine Says...



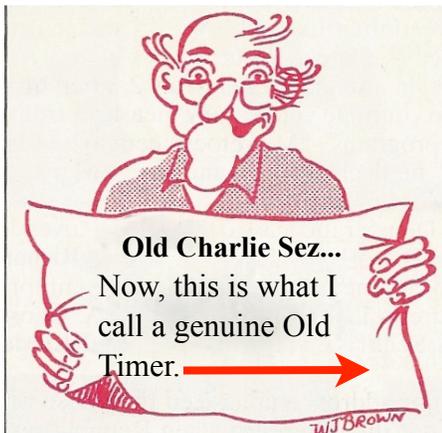
Summer is my favorite time of the year to read. I have a nice shady spot in our “woods” where I go every afternoon, lay on my hammock, and enjoy a little “alone time.”

I have always hesitated to recommend restaurants, movies, or books. However, I’ll go out on a limb here. I am currently reading “Becoming” by Michelle Obama, and it is excellent. If you haven't read it, I highly recommend it. What an amazing, intelligent, and caring First Lady we had for eight years. Enjoy your summer!



The McNeil Report

Who the heck is Dan McNeil you ask?



Well, Dan McNeil began his work career at the STELCO Swansea Works in 1951. During his years at STELCO, he was often on leave to the Ontario Federation of Labour and the New Democratic Party. A year later, he became involved with the Steelworkers Union by becoming a Trustee for the local and served in every office of the local with the exception of Financial Secretary. He also served on the negotiating committee many times.

Many thanks to all of our members who made phone calls, signed our postcards, or wrote letters about our need to get the Butch Lewis Act passed.

It's good news that it passed the House, now on to the Senate.

Read all about it on page 8.

In the early 90's, Dan was asked to represent the Steelworkers in the formation of the CLC retirement organization that would unite all the unions across Canada. The founding convention was held in 1993, and the organization became “The Congress of Union Retirees” (CURC). Dan was elected as 2nd Vice President and in 2007, he became President. He has recently retired from the Presidency and now holds the position of Immediate Past President.

Dan is an Emeritus Member of SOAR and currently is the longest-serving SOAR Board member from the original Board.

Retirees Celebrate Medicare and Medicaid's 54th Anniversaries

Birthdays Come as Drug Prices Continue to Skyrocket



Recognizing the critical role that Medicare and Medicaid have played in enabling older Americans to live healthier, longer and more financially secure lives, members of the Alliance for Retired Americans are hosting dozens of events nationally to educate the public about the importance of the programs on their 54th birthday, July 30.



The events are part of the Alliance's Anniversary Summer campaign, calling attention to the continued importance of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to the well-being of older Americans. The anniversaries offer an opportunity to strengthen and preserve the programs for future generations.

"Prescriptions drug prices are the biggest driver of Medicare costs," said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. "Allowing Medicare to negotiate prices would reduce out-of-pocket costs for seniors and would save taxpayers \$16 billion a year. The Veterans Administration and Medicaid negotiate drug prices today. Medicare must, too."

Eleven percent of Americans, many of them seniors, have skipped doses or delayed filling a prescription because of the cost. "Allowing the safe re-importation of drugs from other countries would also go a long way in lowering prices, to the advantage of Medicare beneficiaries and all taxpayers," added Fiesta.

Alliance members will be celebrating the anniversaries from coast to coast with events that commemorate the signing of Medicare into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 30th, 1965.

New Leadership for USW

The International Executive Board met May 28-30 and passed a resolution approving a plan to transition the union leadership. The result was unanimous support for the following candidates, who will now join Vice President Fred Redmond and Canadian National Director Ken Neumann in leading our union. These new officers were sworn into office on July 15.

- Thomas M. Conway, International President
- John Shinn, International Secretary-Treasurer
- David R. McCall, International Vice President/Administration
- Roxanne Brown, International Vice President At Large
- Leeann Foster, International Vice President

Source: USW.org

House Passes Butch Lewis Act to Save Earned Pension Benefits; Senate Must Now Follow Suit

The following statement was issued by Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, regarding the House passage of [H.R. 397](#), the Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act, also known as the Butch Lewis Act:

“Today’s bipartisan vote to pass the Butch Lewis Act by the U.S. House of Representatives is welcome news for 1.3 million pension plan participants. The pension benefits they earned over many years could be cut by 50-75% because their pension plans are at risk of insolvency, not because of anything they did.

“The Butch Lewis Act would provide a loan to these plans, to be repaid in full in 30 years. There is ample precedent for this action. Time and again, the U.S. government has provided bailouts or loan guarantees to troubled industries facing dire circumstances. Billions of dollars in bailouts have gone to banks and corporations. Congress should extend the same assistance to these workers.

“The Senate must now also pass this critical legislation. If they do not act quickly, dozens of plans will become insolvent. These loans will not only help the workers, but also save the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation \$47 billion in potential liabilities.

“The members of the Alliance for Retired Americans will be watching the Senate actions on this bill carefully.”

Note: A video reaction to this vote by Alliance President Robert Roach, Jr. is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEzw5tXv8V4&feature=youtu.be>.

Source: ARA Press Release, July 24

Congress Votes to Raise the Federal Minimum Wage to \$15

40 million Americans, including nearly 6 million workers over the age of 55, are one step closer to getting a much needed raise. On July 19, Congress passed H.R. 582, the Raise the Wage Act, with a vote of 231 to 199. If passed by the Senate and signed by the president, it would raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 by 2025.

The minimum wage has not increased in ten years and is today \$7.25. “This increase is long overdue,” said Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance. “Let’s thank the House and tell the Senate it’s time to move it now.” Raising the wage will also help older Americans and retirees. Higher wages would provide more payroll tax revenue and bolster the Social Security Trust Fund for current and future retirees.

Source: ARA Friday Alert, July 19



Lifting Up the Voices of Social Security Beneficiaries

Elder Abuse is something most people don't like to talk about. Yet, research shows that as many as two million elders are abused in the United States every year. With the help of our partners at Social Security, the National Center on Elder Abuse believes we can all find a solution to physical, emotional, sexual, financial, and neglectful abuse against the elderly.

The [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) provides the latest information, research, training, best practices, and resources on elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Our agency was first established by the U.S. Administration on Aging in 1988 as a national elder abuse resource center.

At the heart of elder abuse is a leading factor of abuse — social isolation. Isolation, in this context, means a scarce amount of close relationships and social contact with family and/or friends. Research shows that older adults who have poor social networks are consistently more at risk. Although social isolation can show up in many ways, [building strong community support](#) is essential to deterring abuse.

Social Security is a pinnacle of reliability and steadfastness for older adults. When Social Security speaks, people listen. We applaud the agency's efforts to communicate with and provide resources for the elderly.

The Purpose of SOAR

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

The Organization shall concern itself with and deal with the social, economic, educational, legislative and political developments and concerns of its members and spouses, the USW and the labor movement. In addition, the purpose of this Organization is to better the communities in which said members live, to advance in every way the policies of the United Steelworkers, and to engage in political and legislative action directed at bettering our nation and safeguarding and enhancing the economic security and general wellbeing of all its members and older and retired persons in general through educational, legislative, political, civic, social, and community activities.

Source: ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND BYLAWS FOR THE STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES



Andres “Andy” Rosas, District 13 SOAR Executive Board Member



In February, 1968, at age 28, I was hired at Reynolds Metals Sherwin Plant and started my 33 years as a union member of Aluminum Brick and Glass Local 235A (later USW Local 235). Ten years later, I went through the three-year Union Millwright apprenticeship program where I learned what I needed to work as a mechanic until I retired in 2001. My union involvement includes work as a shop steward, maintenance negotiating committeeman, financial secretary, grievance chairman and local union president.

I am husband to Enedina, who I married in 1962, and father to four children, Cynthia, Debra, Andres and Brian.

When I retired, I wanted to stay politically involved, found out about SOAR, and I applied for a charter. Our SOAR Chapter 13-1 was chartered on February 3, 2009, and we celebrated our 10th anniversary on February 3, 2019.

Editor’s Note: Int’l President Leo W. Gerard, in consultation with District 13 Director Ruben Garza, appointed Andres “Andy” Rosas as the District 13 SOAR Executive Board Member. On February 1, 2019, Andy began fulfilling the remaining term of John Patrick.



Upcoming Executive Board Meeting

I’m looking forward to attending our SOAR Executive Board meeting in October and taking part in the Rapid Response Conference. It will be fun to see and visit with our newest board members.

Charlie

Yes, Elections Really Have Consequences!



Elections have consequences, and it's so important that we all vote and encourage others to vote.

The actions of President Trump and some of his appointees couldn't be clearer. The negative impact on unions and workers is clear. Based on appointees to the National Labor Relations Board, we are seeing very bad decisions for unions and workers. We are also seeing similar bad decisions being considered or coming out of the Department of Labor. His pick for the next labor secretary, Eugene Scalia, has represented Corporate America and has fought against the interest of workers.

It has also been reported that Mick Mulvaney, the president's acting chief of staff, has encouraged various heads of government agencies to reduce or eliminate certain regulations.

Keep in mind that the Supreme Court and Lower Court Justices are also being appointed based on having conservative opinions regarding matters that could be very important to all of us. Many of these appointees will be with us for decades.

Bill Gibbons, SOAR Executive Board, PACE Representative

America's Steel Communities Make a Comeback



For the past 20 years, the American steel industry and its USW steel-sector members have suffered at the hands of surging imports of steel from China. Many American steel mills closed, tens of thousands of workers were laid off, and many communities were devastated by a lack of revenue.

But during the past year, there has been a resurgence in the steel industry with companies rehiring laid-off workers, bringing on new-hires and investing billions of dollars in their mills and factories.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing team recently traveled to four of America's traditional steel producing areas – Northwest Indiana (Gary area); Fairfield, Alabama; Granite City, Illinois and Coatesville, Pennsylvania – to observe and discuss how conditions are today at these once renowned bastions of steelmaking.

The AAM team spoke with steelworkers, USW officials, company executives, members of the supply chains, community leaders and local business owners affected by the loss of business during the steel industry slowdowns.

It is a comprehensive look at the history and present-day conditions of how these workers and communities fought through the struggles of the 21st Century.

We encourage you to visit our website and read the full details of the visits as well as listen to the podcasts held in each city. For the complete rundown, please visit AAM online at –

<http://www.americanmanufacturing.org/campaign/entry/americas-steel-communities-make-a-comeback>

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

Hey Employers: It's Not About You!

*By Eric Russell, Technician
USW Political Department*



In 2014, the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) decided to begin including in its regular reports the names of workers who had died in workplace incidents. In the years following, the CSB has published five consecutive reports that have memorialized 24 workers in a dedication page that is included with each report.

Our union supported this change in procedure because it is a simple, yet powerful way to acknowledge that these individuals are not statistics. They are our spouses, siblings, parents, friends and coworkers whose deaths were untimely and preventable.

In June, however, the CSB excluded from its most recent report the names of five fallen workers who had died in a fatal blowout at the Pryor Trust gas well in Pittsburgh County, Oklahoma. The workers' names were Roger Cunningham, 55; Josh Ray, 35; Cody Risk, 26; Matthew Smith, 29; and Parker Waldrige, 60.



This prompted more than 50 occupational safety experts and advocates, including Mike Wright, Director of Health Safety and Environment for the USW, to pen a letter to the Chemical Safety Board (CSB) denouncing the change in procedure.

When the report was released in June, Hillary Cohen, spokesperson for the CSB, offered the explanation “Our (the CSB) mission is not to determine blame, fault of liability of individuals, parties or organizations, connected with the investigation.....Placing the names of individuals that were fatally injured as a result of the incident and dedicating the report to them may infer culpability on the part of the entity responsible for the operation of the facility where the incident occurred.”

What the CSB fails to understand that the inclusion of these names is not a statement about the CSB's role, and it is also not an attempt to assign blame to any employer.

As Mike Wright explained, “in the 42 years I've been with the USW HSE Department, we have never had a family object to releasing or publishing a name. Many have said that they appreciate the fact that, to the union, their loved one was a person and not a nameless statistic.

True friends visit us in prosperity only when invited, but in adversity they come without invitation.

-Theophrastus