

UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

CONNECTION

WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER



Congratulations to USW Vice President Roxanne Brown, who has been elected as our next international president and will be sworn in on March 1, 2026, to lead our union.

New USW Leaders Prepare to Take Office



President-Elect Roxanne Brown

A historic new slate of officers will take over leadership of the United Steelworkers (USW) in March, following the union's regular four-year nomination and election process that took place this fall.

Roxanne Brown, currently serving as USW international vice president at large, will be sworn in on March 1, 2026, as the union's next international president. Brown replaces David McCall, who did not seek reelection, after serving as USW international president since September 2023.

"Roxanne has devoted her life's work to advancing the interests of working families, fighting for fair wages, affordable health care, dignified retirements and strong labor rights," said McCall. "I can think of no one better qualified to lead our union as we navigate this unprecedented era of largely unchecked corporate greed."

"I am beyond humbled and honored to serve as the USW's next president," said Brown. "I'm committed to the work ahead and pledge to live up to the trust our members have shown in me. Together, we will build an economy that works for all of us, a system that rewards workers rather than corporations, and a bright future for generations to come." Brown will be the USW's tenth international president and the first woman to lead the union.

Also reelected to new four-year terms were Myles Sullivan as secretary-treasurer; Emil Ramirez as vice president (administration); Kevin Mapp as vice president (human affairs); Marty Warren as national director for Canada; and Luis Mendoza as vice president, as well as directors for each of the union's twelve districts.

Amber Miller will take Brown's role as international vice president at large. For the past six years, Miller has directed the USW's grassroots, nonpartisan Rapid Response network.

"I had the pleasure of working with Amber for a long time, watching her grow from a young activist serving as president of her local in northwest Ohio to an extremely capable leader who will be an essential part of moving our union forward," said McCall.

USW National Director for Canada, Marty Warren, congratulated the new and reelected officers, noting that the union's long tradition of democracy is what has helped ensure its strong leadership.



Vice President-Elect Amber Miller

"Our union is based on the principle that all workers, regardless of industry, gender, race or any other consideration, deserve a voice. It's a simple idea and yet one that is constantly under attack. I'm proud to be a part of a union that lives this ideal every day, and I know that under our new leadership, we will continue empowering workers across North America to stand strong in their workplaces and their communities."

Season's Greetings From the SOAR Office



During the holiday season our thoughts turn gratefully to those who contribute to building SOAR. On behalf of the SOAR organization, we wish you a joyful holiday season and a new year filled with hope, good health, and retirement security. May it also bring many opportunities for you to stay active and engaged with SOAR.

Please note: The SOAR office will be closed to observe USW's Headquarters holiday shutdown from Monday, December 22, 2025, and will reopen on Friday, January 2, 2026.

In solidarity and in the spirit of the season,

Cheryl Omlor and Julie Stein



When Retirees Stand United, We Can Make Real Change



Across the country, retirees are feeling the squeeze of rising healthcare costs. Premiums, prescription drug prices, and out-of-pocket expenses are climbing faster than Social Security benefits, leaving many older Americans struggling to keep up. But retirees are not powerless – together, we can push back and demand the fair treatment we have earned through a lifetime of hard work.

One retiree alone can be ignored – but thousands working together cannot. That's why it's vital to stay active in organizations like SOAR and the Alliance for Retired Americans, as well as other senior advocacy groups. These groups provide retirees with a powerful, unified voice in the fight for affordable healthcare and prescription drug reform. Through collective action, we can pressure lawmakers to protect Medicare and put an end to corporations profiteering at our expense.

Congress has already begun allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices – a significant victory made possible by years of advocacy from unions and retiree groups. Yet more work remains to be done. Retirees should call, write, and meet with their elected officials to demand fair prescription pricing, expanded Medicare coverage for dental, vision, and hearing care, and stronger protections for retiree health benefits. Actions like this can be organized by your SOAR Chapter.

During Medicare's open enrollment each fall, retirees should carefully review their coverage. Health Plans and drug formularies change every year, and comparing your options can often save you hundreds of dollars. Free, unbiased assistance is available through State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIP) in every state or through your County Office for Aging Services. Consider inviting them to speak at your SOAR meeting.

Members of SOAR are on the front lines of this fight. Local SOAR chapters across the country are organizing letter-writing campaigns, meeting with legislators, and standing shoulder to shoulder with active union members to defend affordable healthcare. Every member's voice matters.

The USW Rapid Response team has launched a petition drive called “**Balancing the Scales for Workers,**” and your local SOAR chapter is participating. The petition focuses on six core priorities that reflect the daily concerns of working families and the long-standing values of fairness, dignity, and economic justice. These priorities include making health care and prescription drugs more affordable and defending retirement security. (See next page.)

Go to <https://usw.org/get-involved/rapid-response/> to learn more.

I encourage you to get involved with your local SOAR chapter, attend meetings, and help spread the word to friends and family – because when retirees stand united, our voices become powerful and together we can make real change.

As we wrap up this year, I wish you all the best this holiday season!

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.

UNITED STEELWORKERS **USW CORE VALUES** **UNDER ATTACK**

**Please note these examples are subject to change. For the most recent information, please visit: usw.org/balancing-the-scales



COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

- **Unlawful firing of a Board Member at the NLRB;** leaving the agency unable to hear cases involving corporations violating labor law¹
- **An executive order eliminated collective bargaining for nearly a million federal workers;** setting a dangerous precedent for all workers²
- **Closure of the FMCS field offices;** leaving workers without mediators for contract disputes³

RETIREMENT SECURITY

- **Drastic staff layoffs and field office closures at the Social Security Administration;** leaving beneficiaries with longer wait time and delays^{6,7}

JOB SECURITY & TRADE

- **DOGE directive to eliminate the Department of Labor's International Labor Affairs Bureau;** weakening the nation's ability to stop trafficking, child labor, and unsafe working conditions across the globe¹⁰
- **Undermining our allies and joint enforcement efforts** against countries abusing global trade rules by failing to implement tariffs strategically¹¹

HEALTH CARE

- **Enacted policy that rips health care from over 8 million Americans** through \$793 billion in Medicaid cuts; devastates low-income families, strains hospitals, and pushes millions deeper into medical debt⁴
- **Recently approved cuts would force up to 338 rural hospitals into closure,** stripping vital services from vulnerable communities and triggering economic fallout in areas dependent on health jobs⁵

SAFETY & HEALTH

- **Staffing cuts, travel restrictions, and office closures** at OSHA, MSHA, and NIOSH; reducing their ability to enforce regulations and conduct crucial research^{8,9}

DOMESTIC ECONOMY

- **Cuts to investment in various clean energy technologies** would cost jobs nationwide and increase energy prices in all 50 states¹²
- **Passed legislation that would reduce income** for the poorest 10 percent of U.S. households while boosting income for the top 10 percent^{13,14}

ACRONYMS

NLRB: National Labor Relations Board

FMCS: Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service

NIH: National Institutes of Health

OSHA: Occupational Safety and Health Administration

MSHA: Mine Safety and Health Administration

NIOSH: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

DOGE: Department of Government Efficiency

IRS: Internal Revenue Service

SOURCES

- 1 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-nlr-national-labor-relations-board-gwynne-wilcox/>
- 2 <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/28/union-rights-federal-workers-donald-trump-00257010>
- 3 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/mar/26/doge-labor-agency-fmcs-trump-order>
- 4 <https://www.aha.org/news/headline/2025-07-01-senate-passes-one-big-beautiful-bill-act>
- 5 https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_on_rural_hospitals.pdf
- 6 <https://www.cbpp.org/research/social-security/social-security-service-restrictions-burden-seniors-with-long-unnecessary>
- 7 <https://apnews.com/article/social-security-offices-closures-doge-trump-b2b1a5b2ba4fb968abc3379bf90715ff>
- 8 <https://www.epi.org/blog/too-many-workers-die-on-the-job-every-year-trumps-attacks-on-osha-will-kill-more/>
- 9 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/worker-safety-agency-niosh-lays-off-most-remaining-staff/>
- 10 <https://prospect.org/labor/2025-03-30-global-working-conditions-matter-american-workers-su-tai-ilab/>
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- 13 <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61422>
- 14 <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-house-republicans-set-pre-dawn-votes-get-trump-tax-bill-over-finish-line-2025-05-22/>

The SOAR Store

Ball Caps!



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

\$20

T-shirts!



T-Shirts - Medium Ash
\$15 each + the cost of shipping.
Available in Size S - 3X
Contact the SOAR Office: 866-208-4420

\$15

New Item!



AKWA
Black Plaid Polo Shirts
\$55 each + the cost of shipping.
Available in Size S - 4X

\$55

New Item!



AKWA
1/4 Zip Micro Fleece Pullover—Charcoal Gray
\$65 each + the cost of shipping.
Available in Size S - 4X

\$65

SOAR Chapter Connection

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Julie Stein, Content Editor
Copy Editors:
Cheryl Omlor and Eric Russell

Phone:
866-208-4420

Email:
jstein@usw.org

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



Articles and Photos Requested

The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be January 20, 2026, 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 Chapter Connection newsletter is January 25, 2026. Email your article to soar3@icloud.com.



See page 9.

Old Charlie and Elaine Say:

What would you
like for supper tonight:
Italian pasta, Scottish
haggis, German bratwurst,
Polish sauerkraut, Pad Thai,
Spanish paella, Canadian
poutine, Chinese fried rice,
French fries, English scones,
Mexican mole poblano, or
Ukrainian Borscht?



Geez..!
What's
wrong
with some
of your
good old-
fashioned
meat loaf?



Photo taken on December 11, 1965.

The Medicare & You Handbook

The "Medicare & You" handbook is your official guide to Medicare. An updated printed handbook was mailed to all Medicare households in late September, just in time for Medicare's annual enrollment period, which runs from **October 15 – December 7**. You can also download a copy anytime, or access it electronically for the most updated information available at Medicare.gov



Keep your handbook as a reference. It has important information about:

- Medicare benefits, costs, rights and protections
- Health and drug plans
- Answers to common questions

Check out what's new and important in Medicare to help you manage your overall health and wellness. Some changes to Medicare starting January 1, 2026 include:

- The maximum out-of-pocket cost for prescription medications will be capped at \$2,100 for the calendar year.
- Zero cost-sharing for adult vaccines. The list of free vaccines is updated every year, so just because a vaccine is on the list this year doesn't mean it will be on the list next year.
- Prior authorizations for traditional Medicare are coming to six states - New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Washington.

Link to Medicare & You Handbook: <https://www.medicare.gov/publications/10050-medicare-and-you.pdf>



Navigating Medicare

Additionally, beneficiaries can contact their State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to get free, unbiased information about Medicare options in their state.

Find your local SHIP office at <https://www.shiphelp.org/>



Don't Miss These Important Deadlines



People with Medicare can make changes to their coverage from **October 15 - December 7** each year, with coverage starting January 1.

If you enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan for January 1, 2026, and don't like your plan choice, you can switch to another Medicare Health plan (with or without Medicare drug coverage) or switch to Original Medicare (with or without separate Medicare drug coverage) between **January 1 - March 31, 2026**.

Source: <https://medicare.gov>

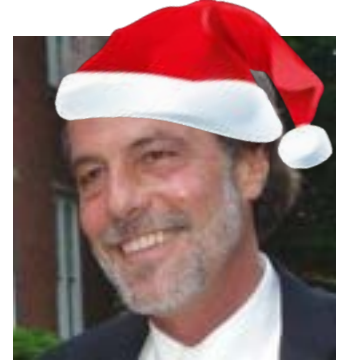


‘Tis the Season to Make Your List and Check it Twice!

That list is our 12th annual Made in America Holiday Gift Guide, a compilation of retailers offering products made in America for gifts to put under the Christmas tree or to stuff in holiday stockings.

As we do each year, we’re shining a spotlight on several American manufacturers and makers for each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. We’ve compiled this popular annual holiday shopping list for more than a decade so shoppers can find authentic American made products without leaving the comfort of their homes.

Shopping online surged during the Covid pandemic years, and more Americans are comfortable eschewing the hustle and bustle of shopping malls or downtown areas to instead stay warm at home and purchase top quality made in America gifts.



If you prefer the sights, sounds and scents of the holiday shopping season, many of our gift suggestions are available at retail stores as well as through e-commerce sites. New to the Gift Guide this year is a list of online and brick-and-mortar stores in each state that specializes in locally made products. These stores are an integral part of the Made in America movement and deserve to be recognized. Polling continues to show that the Made in USA label signifies quality and patriotism for consumers, but those qualities tend to fade to the background in today’s retail space where ads for \$1 t-shirts and \$10 blenders dominate. Buying American-made gifts takes just a little bit of extra effort, and that’s where our Gift Guide comes in.

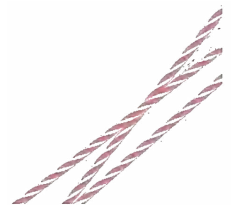
“Americans have the right to know where their products are made, regardless of whether they’re shopping online or in stores,” said Alliance for American Manufacturing President Scott Paul. “Shoppers can take back control of the supply chain and support valuable community-sustaining jobs in the United States by buying American-made. “Using our Made in America Holiday Gift Guide you can find the perfect American-made gift for everyone on your holiday shopping list while investing your dollars into our nation’s economy and manufacturing base.”

The Gift Guide is intended to highlight companies that support American jobs and the great products workers make in the United States. If you can’t find anything to your liking in this year’s guide, you will find links to AAM Gift Guides dating back to 2013. We try as much as possible not to duplicate our selections year after year. You can also find an extensive list of qualifying companies in our Made in America Directory.

You can access the 2025 Made in America Holiday Gift Guide by visiting our website www.americanmanufacturing.org We’ve done the research, now you do the shopping.

Yes, indeed, it’s the most wonderful time of the year!

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



Looking Ahead to 2026: Older Americans Are Ready to Have Their Say in Midterm Elections

by Robert Roach, Jr.



There's a particularly important takeaway from the November 2025 local and state election results: older Americans [turned out](#) in droves.

Voters over the age of 65 accounted for 37 percent, 35 percent and 32 percent of the statewide electorate in California, New Jersey and Virginia respectively. In California, 58 percent of older voters voted in favor of Proposition 50, a ballot initiative that will require the state to adopt new, legislatively-drawn congressional district maps starting next year until the next U.S. Census in 2030.

51 percent of older voters in Virginia cast their ballots for Democratic Governor-Elect Abigail Spanberger and 49 percent voted for Republican candidate Winsome Earle-Sears. 51 percent of older voters in New Jersey voted for Democratic Governor-Elect Mikie Sherrill, while 48 percent favored Jack Ciattarelli in New Jersey.

Looking ahead to the critical 2026 midterms, the cost of health care is expected to be a major issue. According to a Hart Research [poll](#) released by Families USA in late October, 49 percent of seniors say they consider it a top priority issue.

It's clear that any candidates who want to win next year need to take older Americans' views into consideration. The Alliance is ready to educate and mobilize older voters so they can cast their ballots knowing which candidates are on their side and which ones aren't.

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.



Social Security COLA to Rise in 2026

The Social Security Administration announced that the Social Security cost of living adjustment, or COLA, will be 2.8% for 2026. This will result in an average increase of about \$56 per month for retirees. This increase takes effect in January 2026, with notices being sent out starting early December. Recipients can also view their notice online through their my Social Security account if they created one by November 19, 2025, and opted out of paper notifications. The COLA for 2025 was 2.5%.

The cost of living adjustment is calculated based on an average of the inflation readings for the third quarter of each year. (July, August and September.) Specifically, it's based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Source: ssa.gov



When It Comes to Medicare, Be Cautious of AARP

by Diane Archer



There was once a time when AARP fought for the interests of older and disabled Americans with Medicare. Then, AARP made a deal with UnitedHealth to market UnitedHealth products to its members. Now, AARP is largely silent when it comes to the often deadly nature of Medicare Advantage and the inappropriate delays and denials of care in [UnitedHealth's Medicare Advantage plans](#). Don't trust AARP.

Adriel Bettelheim reports for [Axios](#) that UnitedHealth paid AARP \$9 billion in royalties last year. AARP's silence regarding grave concerns with Medicare Advantage is chilling at a time when UnitedHealth and many other insurers are engaged in widespread and persistent inappropriate delays and denials of care for their Medicare Advantage enrollees. Choosing a Medicare Advantage plan, including one's with AARP branding, can mean gambling with your life.

Unfortunately, some people don't have a choice but to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan. Upfront costs of traditional Medicare, which guarantees your choice of doctors and hospitals and easy access to the care your treatment physicians say you need, can be high.

AARP's deal with UnitedHealth has enormous bearing on its policies and advocacy. Its silence whenever a new serious issue with UnitedHealth comes to light tells you everything you need to know. If AARP were speaking out for the interests of its members, it would be explaining that traditional Medicare (TM) guarantees people get the care they need from the best doctors and hospitals and that, with Medicare Advantage, people are gambling with their lives.

The insurers offering Medicare Advantage plans often keep you from seeing the best doctors and don't cover the care you need. They wrongly deny care that Medicare covers. The insurers profit more the more care they deny. They profit most when they deny complex and costly care or keep you from using a cancer center of excellence or other high quality hospital or specialist. That's why they never compete for members with serious health conditions.

Older Americans need the easy access to reliable care they get in Traditional Medicare, not the delays and denials of care they get in Medicare Advantage. AARP should be leading the charge for easy access to needed care for everyone with Medicare, but they remain silent.

Source: justcareusa.org



"To have what we want is riches. To be able to do without is power."
George Mac Donald

2026



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