

SOAR *in* **ACTION**

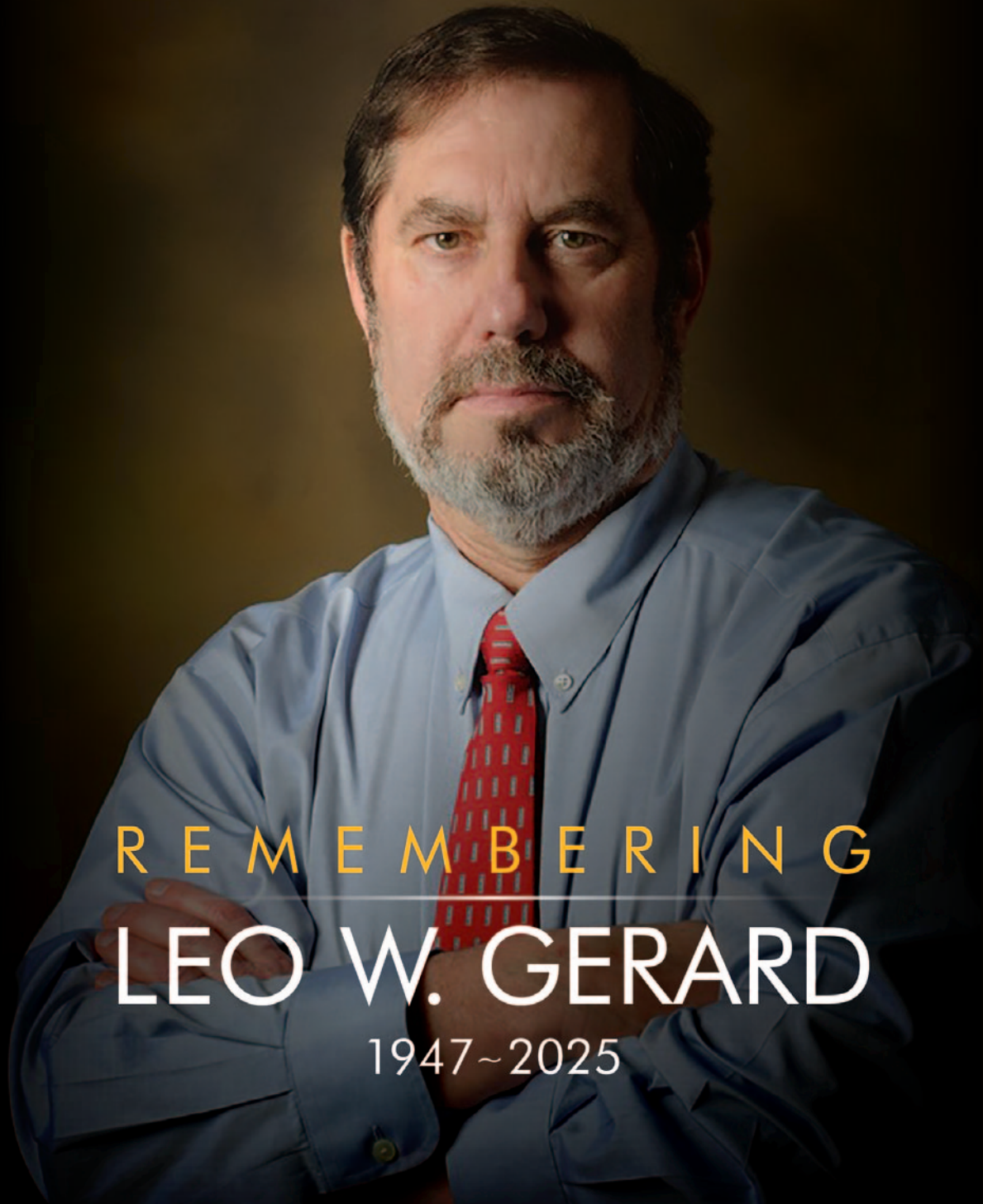
Fall 2025

USW@Work

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Volume 20/4

A Powerful Voice for Workers



R E M E M B E R I N G

LEO W. GERARD

1947 ~ 2025



BILL PIENTA
SOAR President

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

When Retirees Stand United, We Can Make Real Change

Across the country, retirees are feeling the squeeze of rising health care 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 health care 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 health care. 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.



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.





JULIE STEIN
SOAR Director

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

SOAR Remembrance of USW President Leo W. Gerard

It is with great sadness, but also great honor, to reflect upon the recent passing of my good friend and our union's longest serving International President, Leo W. Gerard.

Leo's passing is an immeasurable loss for SOAR, our union, and our global labor movement.

At the age of 18, Gerard joined our ranks at a nickel smelter in his hometown of Sudbury, Ontario. Throughout his 50-plus years of union activism, he served in many roles, including USW staff representative, district director, national director of Canada, and secretary-treasurer, before being elected international president in 2001.

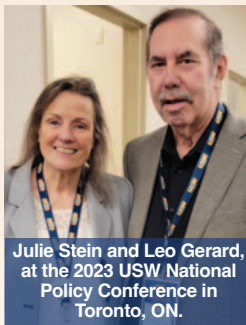
As a rank-and-file papermaker, I first met Leo in 2006, following the PACE merger, when he hired me as the then-District 2 Director Jon Geenen's administrative assistant. I feel humbled by the leadership he embodied throughout my years of involvement in our union's political operation, and into my current role with SOAR.

Leo's ability to connect with rank-and-file members, while also skillfully navigating the halls of Congress and never shying away from a press interview, was unmatched.

Within our union, his impact is evident in numerous programs he either helped create or grow, including, but not limited to, NextGen, Women of Steel, and SOAR, particularly where he led the charge, in 2012, to amend our bylaws so that the organization could open its membership to include "like-minded" retirees.

After his retirement in 2019, he promptly joined SOAR and became a member of the chapter located in Sudbury. Additionally, he was a strong supporter of the soon-to-be-enacted bylaw change, which would extend membership to individuals aged 45 and older.

Leo's accomplishments are so vast that it is impossible to list them all. As I reflected on his legacy and read the fond memories of many union activists about him on social media, I came across a blog that Leo had written in 2013. Included in it was a quote that I thought must be shared as we find ourselves in the fight to preserve so much of what Leo helped protect throughout his lifetime.



Julie Stein and Leo Gerard,
at the 2023 USW National
Policy Conference in
Toronto, ON.

"America can afford to feed its citizens and provide them with health insurance. It can provide decent public education, good roads, Social Security and Medicare. Americans can help each other succeed. Americans want to help each other so the whole country can move forward together. That is the American way.

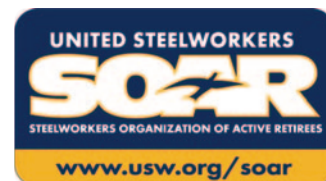
Americans can't let the cult of the selfish prevail. As they did in the 1930s when Americans created Social Security, facilitated unionization and strictly regulated banks, Americans must demand that the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share and that social welfare retain primacy over self-interest."



2025

HAPPY FALL!

STAY ACTIVE. STAY INVOLVED. STAY CONNECTED.
STRONGER TOGETHER.



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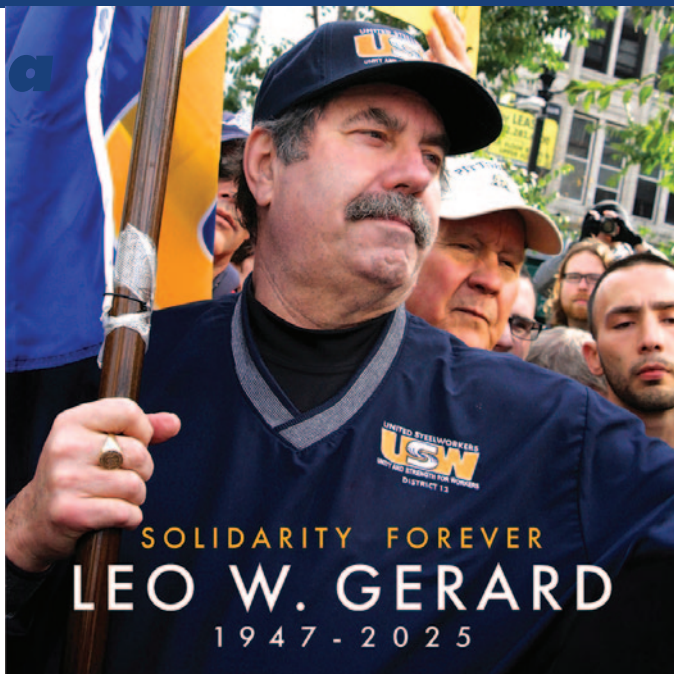
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United Steelworkers Mourns the

Giant of the Labour a



Pittsburgh, PA and Toronto, ON—
The United Steelworkers union (USW) is mourning the loss of former USW International President Leo W. Gerard, C.C., who over a 50-year career became one of the world's most influential labour and social justice champions.

Gerard served as the longest-tenured president in USW's history from 2001 to 2019, retiring in July 2019. He passed away on Sunday, September 21, in his hometown of Sudbury, Ontario, at the age of 78.

"Leo Gerard dedicated his entire life fighting for workers across the world, and his impact on the USW and the global labor movement has been immeasurable," said USW International President David McCall. "He inspired countless other workers to carry on the

"Leo Gerard knew that real strength for workers came through unity."

Scott Lunny, the USW Director for Western Canada

fight for justice and fairness. He will be missed, but we intend to honor his legacy by continuing that work."

"Leo was a visionary leader, determined and fearless in taking on corporations and lawmakers alike," said Marty Warren, USW National Director for Canada. "He spent his career building power for workers so that

everyone could have safer jobs, better pay, respect, retirement security and fairness. As a proud Canadian, he never wavered from his values, and his life's work will live on for generations."

The son of a hardrock miner and union organizer in Sudbury, Gerard was just 18 when he followed in his father's footsteps and went to work for the nickel mining giant Inco Ltd.

He soon made his mark within his union at Inco—Steelworkers Local 6500—beginning a meteoric rise up the USW leadership ladder.

"Leo was a visionary leader, determined and fearless in taking on corporations and lawmakers alike."

Marty Warren, USW National Director for Canada.

After reaching the position of chief steward of his 7,000-member local union, Gerard was hired as a USW staff representative in 1977. He went on to become the union's Ontario Director, Canadian National Director and then International Secretary-Treasurer, leading to his installation as International President in 2001.

Leading North America's largest industrial union, with 1.2 million members continent-wide at its height, Gerard had a profound impact on workplace health and safety, gender equality, labour rights, decent pay, pensions, global solidarity, fair trade and social justice.

Throughout his tenure, Gerard sought to grow the union through organizing new workers, orchestrating mergers with other labor organizations, and building strategic alliances with allies across North America and around the world.

Gerard oversaw the USW's 2005 merger with the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE)—which made the USW the largest industrial union in North America—and was instrumental in the formation of the Blue-Green Alliance, a powerful labor-



Loss of LEO GERARD

and Social Justice Movements



environmental partnership, in 2006.

He championed international cooperation among labor organizations, building relationships with unions in Mexico, Europe, South America and elsewhere. His leadership helped to establish the IndustriALL Global Union, which represents 50 million

workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy, and manufacturing sectors.

In 2023, Gerard received his country's highest civilian honour—Companion of the Order of Canada. The highest of the three levels of the Order of Canada, it is awarded for "outstanding achievement and merit of the highest degree, especially in service to Canada or to humanity at large."

Gerard was the second Canadian to reach the Steelworkers union's top job, following his mentor Lynn Williams, who served as USW International President from 1983 to 1994 and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2005.

Scott Lunny, the USW Director for Western Canada, said, "Leo Gerard knew that real strength for workers came through unity," and he credited Gerard's leadership in the USW's mergers with the Canadian chapter of the International Woodworkers of America and later the Telecommunications Workers Union.

"These decisions transformed our union's presence and power in Western Canada. Leo's vision built lasting

"Leo Gerard's life was dedicated to advancing the cause of labour. He believed deeply in the power of unions to transform lives."

Kevon Stewart, Director of
USW District 6

strength for generations of workers, and he will be deeply missed, but his legacy will always live on in the work that we do as Steelworkers," Lunny said.

"Leo Gerard's life was dedicated to advancing the cause of labour. He believed deeply in the power of unions to transform lives," said Kevon Stewart, Director of USW District 6, representing Ontario and Atlantic Canada.

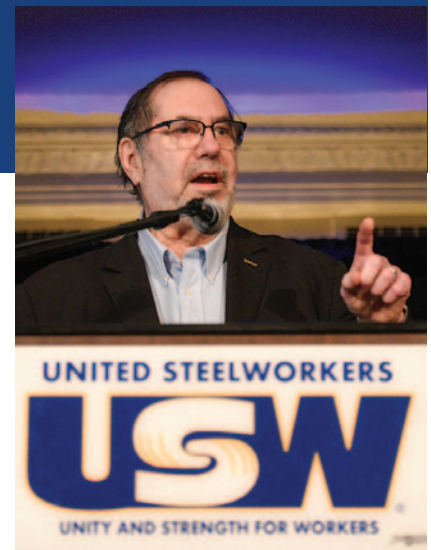
"For decades, Leo reminded us that the labour movement must always rise to meet the moment—and our

"Leo Gerard dedicated his entire life fighting for workers across the world, and his impact on the USW and the global labor movement has been immeasurable."

USW International President David McCall

"We bid farewell to a giant. Leo Gerard understood the francophone identity and reality of the Steelworkers union in Quebec, which he integrated into his leadership of our great North American union. He always made it a point of honour to practice his French whenever he was in Quebec," said Nicolas Lapierre, the USW's Quebec Director.

"He was a powerful speaker who could galvanize activists with his passionate and inspiring oratory. Thank you for everything, Leo! We will continue to lead the fight, following the example you set," Lapierre said.



union is stronger today because of his vision and courage. Rest in power, Brother Leo. Your fight lives on in all of us," Stewart said.



May he rest as he served; in power, in solidarity and in peace.

My Personal Memories of Leo W. Gerard

By Doug Macpherson
SOAR Vice President

I first became aware of Leo W. Gerard at the USW International Convention held in Cleveland in the mid-1970s.

Leo was a whirlwind around the convention floor, which prompted me to ask some local union officers from Elliott Lake, Ontario, who he was. They told me he was their staff representative and that he was outstanding in that role. I was impressed by his energy and enthusiasm.

Subsequently, Leo was transferred to Toronto, then to Hamilton, and I got to see him in action up close; still, he continued to impress me. When the next election for District Director came along, I was one of the first to throw my support behind him. I was appointed to staff in 1985 and worked hard in Peel-Halton to have him elected as District 6 Director in 1986. The rest, as they say, is history.

It was my privilege to work with and for him over the years. He will be sadly missed but always remembered.



I Remember Leo Gerard

By Brando Paris
SOAR District 6 Co-ordinator

I first met Leo in 1972. I was a truck driver at Indalex in Toronto, and Leo was working in rail transport at Inco in Sudbury. We were both new union stewards with the Steelworkers and went to training in Elliot Lake.

We became friends, and once he came to Toronto as District Director in 1985, he became my mentor.

He always called me Brandoski—I don't know why—I'm Italian, not Russian—but that's what he called me. Even when I visited him in the seniors' home in Sudbury, he would greet me that way: "Brandoski!"

I was a member of USW Local 2729. I had been out on what we call "casual service," working for the union doing organizing—recruiting new members into the union.

My casual service was ending and I was due back at work. We were at Toronto City Hall for something with then-USW International President Lynn Williams, and Leo was there and I told him I had to go back to the plant on Monday.

He said, "Give me the phone number." So, he called my manager and said, "Listen. We need six more months for Brando." And they said no. So, then he said, "Brando needs a one-year leave of absence." And my boss said OK.

Before that year was finished, I'd been hired full-time by the Steelworkers, doing organizing, helping workers join the USW. From that time, I worked for the union for 25 years.

Every time Leo was in Toronto, I had to make him spaghetti. I always kept sauce on hand in the Steelworkers Hall kitchen. I'd go down to the kitchen and prepare spaghetti for him. He'd even eat it while standing up.

Leo was a legend. He was my friend and mentor, and I miss him.



Memories of One of My Heroes, Leo Gerard

By Lena Sutton

National SOAR Co-ordinator

I first met USW International President Leo Gerard when I was a young Steelworker at the ERCO phosphorus plant in Long Harbour, N.L., and he was USW District 6 Director for Ontario.

At the time Atlantic Canada was part of USW District 5, and I attended a USW conference and heard Leo speak to the delegates. Outside of the conference I had the opportunity to meet Leo.

I congratulated him on his speech and how powerful it was to the delegates. He asked, “Well kid, what did you take away from the conference to take back to your local?”

I guess I was at a loss for words, for once, to give him an answer.

In time, I did realize the gifts that Leo gave, and not just to me as a young woman in a small local within the Steelworkers.

Some of those gifts were given to me growing up, but further entrenched with Leo’s speech. Those gifts included safer workplaces for workers, gender equality, labour rights, decent pay, good benefits, pensions and social justice.

Each time I saw Leo, our greetings to each other were— from Leo to me: “How’s it going, kid?”

My reply was always, “Not too bad, ‘God’.”

If Bob, my husband, wasn’t by my side, Leo would ask me, “Where’s the old guy?”

Many memories are outstanding of Leo, whether it was on a picket line, a demonstration fighting for social justice or listening to a retiree or worker with a problem that will always stay with me.

Leo always made time to speak to our SOAR conferences, whether it was a Canadian National

or an International gathering. He would remind retirees that even though you have retired from your job in your workplace, you have not retired from the fight for workers, retirees and social justice.

He pointed out how important it was to be involved politically in both countries, to lobby politicians and help work to elect politicians who would work for us.

Leo was a proud supporter of the New Democratic Party in Canada and never forgot his love for where he came from, even when he took leadership roles in our International Union in Pittsburgh.

One of my proudest moments is when I visited Pittsburgh to receive the Jefferson SOAR District 6 Retiree Award. When Leo placed the medal around my neck, I said to him that I felt as if I had received an Olympic gold medal that I didn’t deserve.

He answered to me very quietly, “You deserve it kid; keep up your good work.”

The last time I saw him in person was at the USW National Policy Conference in 2019 in Toronto. One could see the toll that Leo’s lifetime of giving to the labour movement and social justice had taken on his health.

When I said hello to him, he said, “How’s it going, kid? Where’s the old guy?”

I answered him that I was good and that Bob was volunteering at the Ontario Health Coalition table. He said he could have guessed that and that he still wanted to see him.

In closing, Leo was a giant of the labour and social justice movements. He had the roar of a lion in his voice, but he had a heart of gold in his love for the union, family and humankind. Rest in power Brother. You will be missed by many.



Lena Sutton, middle, with Marty Warren, then USW District 6 Director, and Leo Gerard, at the 2019 USW National Policy Conference in Vancouver. After the photo was done, Leo said, “Now, let’s get some lunch.”



Memories of Leo Gerard

By Pat Van Horne, SOAR Chapter 1, Toronto

To some, he was President Gerard, to the rest of us he was “Leo.”

There are lots of stories of Leo from anyone who knew him. Bold, strategic and dedicated to the union, Leo’s love for the union and his strong sense of social justice were developed at a very early age. His dad, Wilfred Gerard, was a hard rock miner at INCO’s Creighton Mine and a key organizer with the International Mine Mill & Smelter Workers’ Union, which merged with the Steelworkers in 1967. Leo’s pride in his father Wilf was displayed by a photo of Wilf that he kept in every office he ever occupied, and by his insistence that his title contain his name as Leo “W.” Gerard.

Leo’s roles in the union are well-known—as a staff representative, District 6 Director, National Director for Canada, International Secretary-Treasurer and International President.

My two most prominent memories of Leo were the 1990s Algoma restructuring and the explosion at the Westray Mine in Pictou County, Nova Scotia, where 26 miners lost their lives in 1992.

A recent edition of *The Walrus* magazine describes the Algoma restructuring in great detail. One of Leo’s greatest talents was knowing who should make up a strong team to deal with companies, the courts and government. I was proud to be part of it in a small way.

“After considerable preparation, the union’s restructuring plan for Algoma was ready by August 1991. Leo Gerard... made the public announcement. It included capital investments of \$500 million over the first five years. In return, the new Algoma would be employee owned and controlled.”

<https://thewalrus.ca/how-canada-once-saved-thousands-of-steel-jobs/>

It was a revolutionary and bold strategy and Leo led the charge. Much has changed in the last 30-plus years, but the Algoma experiment is still historically relevant. Leo had me, in my communications role, to commission a video of the story called Means of Production.

The Westray saga didn’t start as a response to disaster. It began as an organizing campaign launched by Leo, who by then was National Director for Canada, for the Nova Scotia coal miners. The miners were looking toward the future with hope for stable employment and good pay. The campaign was well underway when a methane gas explosion ripped through the mine in the early morning of May 9, 1992.

Leo’s decision was not to abandon the workers or the campaign, even though the mine would never reopen. The surviving miners signed union cards and were made their own local union (“Local 1992”). That action, led by Leo, resulted in the eventual passing of federal criminal code legislation to hold employers and their directors criminally accountable for killing and injuring workers.

The story is still writing itself as the union continues the fight for better enforcement of the “Westray Law.”

Leo Gerard’s personality and his larger-than-life impact will never be forgotten I’m sure of it. Working with him was a joy and a challenge. I miss all of it.



Leo’s Inspiring Oratory

I was always pro-union. My dad was a Teamster, and I had participated in protests and strike support actions growing up.

The very first conference I attended was the 1992 Canadian National Policy Conference in Hamilton. Leo was the National Director for Canada at the time.

Westray had recently happened and Leo was up to speak with his opening address.

Leo was on fire. I remember him working the room up into a frenzy, railing against the reckless bosses who caused those 26 men’s deaths.

I remember sitting in the audience at the back listening to him go. At the end he hollered, “Those dirty bastards ought to go to jail!”

I remember jumping to my feet spontaneously and yelling, “Yes, that’s right!”

From that day forward, I was hooked. Everything I’ve ever done or accomplished was made possible by my involvement, activism and experience gained from our union.

It’s been and still is one of the best things that’s ever happened to me in my life. A million thank-yous is still not enough to express my gratitude to that man I idolized as a true Canadian hero.

*Mike Williams, retired,
SOAR Chapter 10, Hamilton*

Revitalizing SOAR District 6 Chapter 5

By Lena Sutton
National SOAR Co-ordinator

This is a very difficult time in the labour movement for workers and retirees on both sides of the border in Canada and the United States. In both countries, laws are passed by governments or ignored, which have major effects on the lives of workers and retirees.

Workers and retirees are concerned about job security, workplace closings, health care costs, pensions and the cost of living. Those issues have major concerns, especially for retirees, and have gotten them more involved in wanting to be active in SOAR.

Those retirees have now started to take an active part in working and supporting not only their local union, but other community causes as well. Those retirees are supporting local unions outside of the USW on picket lines.

Taking part in demonstrations against health care cuts, increased cost of living, rent control for those renting, increasing pensions, long-term care and fighting for justice for those who are homeless in our communities.

They are lobbying all levels on all of those issues. As National



Revitalizing SOAR Chapter 5: (l to r): Lena Sutton, SOAR Canadian National Co-ordinator; Mike Phibbs, Trustee; Bill Ferguson, President; Rob Clarke, Vice-President; Ruth Pepper, Trustee; and Rick Beale, Secretary.

Coordinator, I was invited to attend a retiree meeting on May 14, 2025, in Nanticoke, Ont., by USW Local 8782 to endeavor to restart the SOAR Chapter there.

I am happy to report with the support of Local 8782, SOAR District 6 Chapter 5 is back up and running with approximately 100 retirees attending this meeting.

The COVID pandemic had a big effect on this chapter, as well as a number of other chapters, in getting together and holding meetings. Some retirees who attended the meeting were past members, and a number of the attendees became new members.

At the meeting a new executive was elected and sworn into office

by me. Elected at the meeting were: Bill Ferguson, President; Rob Clarke, Vice-President; Rick Beale, Secretary-Treasurer; Mike Phibbs, Ruth Pepper and Dave Burges as Trustees.

USW Local 8782 passed a motion at the previous local union meeting to donate \$500 per year to the chapter and provide coffee, pop, water and pizza for the meetings.

The local also will permit the chapter to hold meetings and activities at the union hall.

Thank you to Local 8782 for your commitment to SOAR.

I hope that all USW locals will give the same commitment to help forming and supporting SOAR chapters.



Teach Every Child How to **SWIM to SURVIVE**

By Mike Williams
SOAR Chapter 10, Hamilton

My wife and I used to be grandparents.

On July 31, both our grandchildren drowned in the Wabigoon River in northwestern Ontario.

Joyclyn and Kayden had recently moved with their family to Dryden, Ont., and were exploring with friends by the river. Joyclyn, 12, lost her footing and slipped into the water. She didn't know how to swim. Her brother Kayden, 15, went in after her. He wasn't strong enough as a swimmer, and they both drowned.

We're heartbroken. Our family has lost two bright lights and they can never come back. I didn't know that they didn't know how to swim.

We've resolved to look forward. So, we're campaigning to get every child the swimming skills they need to survive by making it mandatory in school.

Since I recently retired from John Crane, USW Local 16506 in Hamilton, this is now my mission.

Drowning is the second-leading cause of accidental death in children in Canada.

My wife, Evelyn Paige, and I, travelled to Ottawa in August to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) conference where we met with Jack Harrison, the Mayor of Dryden, and worked out an action plan.

The City of Dryden unanimously passed a resolution on water safety training on Sept. 22.

It reads in part, "Be it resolved that the Council of The Corporation of The City of Dryden respectfully urges the Government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Education, to incorporate mandatory water safety and Swim-to-Survive training into the elementary school curriculum for all Ontario students."

I made a deputation at St. Catharines City Council on Oct. 6, and the resolution was passed unanimously there as well.

We're making presentations everywhere we can—I've been to the Hamilton Steelworkers Area Council, the Steelworkers Toronto Area Council and the Niagara Regional Council on Oct. 23.

The support has been encouraging. Every municipality and school board needs to do this. It's not that this hasn't been tried before, it's just not organized universally—it's voluntary, and that's insufficient.

Join me and get the word out about teaching every child how to swim to survive. Talk to your municipality, school trustee, city councillor, provincial politician and your union. Let's make it Joyclyn's and Kayden's legacy that every child knows how to survive in water.



Mike Williams, surrounded by Steelworkers at the Ontario NDP Convention in Niagara Falls, Ont., in September, speaks about the urgency of water safety training in schools to prevent drowning deaths.



lifesaving.ca



On July 25, the Western Maine SOAR Chapter held a meeting at the Local 14 Solidarity Center in Jay, Maine, to officially accept its charter. This proud milestone was commemorated with a group photo in front of the Center, which is undergoing a restoration project. In the front row: Mike Shink, John Ladd, Bob Boyle, Linda Deane (Financial Secretary), and Bob Roy. In the back row: Paul Litalien (Treasurer, holding the SOAR flag), Randy Berry, Bruce Bryant (President, holding the charter), Gary McGrane (Recording Secretary, holding the SOAR flag), and Jimmy McHugh (Trustee). Not pictured are Matt Bean (Vice President) and Trustees Joel Hooper and Francis Gagnon.

A HISTORIC FIRST FOR MAINE SOAR Chapter Chartered in Jay



History was made on July 25, when the first-ever SOAR (Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees) chapter in Maine officially accepted its charter at the Local 14 Solidarity Center in Jay. The new Western Maine SOAR Chapter proudly brings together a diverse group of members, including those from Local 900 (Rumford), former members of Locals 14 and 11 (Jay—both now closed mills), other retirees from paper mill locals, active members still working at USW mills across the state, and retirees who worked for union contractors in the mills. This diversity is a testament to the inclusive nature of our union and the strength that comes from our unity.

The first officers of SOAR Chapter 4-24

President: Bruce Bryant (Local 900)
Vice President: Matt Bean (Local 900)
Recording Secretary: Gary McGrane (Local 14)
Financial Secretary: Linda Deane (Locals 900 & 14)
Treasurer: Paul Litalien (Local 900)
Trustees: Jimmy McHugh (Ironworkers Local 7)
 Joel Hooper (Local 900)
 Francis Gagnon (Local 14)

Building Power, Honoring History

The Western Maine SOAR Chapter is committed to holding regular meetings, supporting USW locals across Maine, and, most importantly, engaging in community

projects. This commitment to community involvement is a source of pride for our members and a testament to our dedication to making a positive impact beyond our union. We are also dedicated to defending vital programs like Medicare and Social Security, ensuring the well-being of our members and the wider community.

At the chartering event, featured speaker Christine Lizotte, Secretary of AFGE Local 1164, shared a powerful update on the impact of severe cutbacks at the Social Security Administration—and how those cuts are harming workers and retirees both locally and nationally.

Members have already hit the ground running by participating in several key events. They joined the 90th Anniversary Social Security Rally at the Auburn Social Security Administration office, took part in the AFL-CIO “It’s Better in a Union” Bus Tour stop at the Jay Solidarity Center, and are helping restore the former Local 14 Union Hall, now known as the Local 14 Solidarity Center. This restoration project includes preserving the iconic labor mural that has adorned the hall’s exterior since 1988. After nearly four decades of exposure to the elements, the mural urgently needs preservation to ensure that Maine’s proud papermaking history remains alive for generations to come.

SOAR welcomes our new members from Chapter 4-24, and together, we will continue the “good” fight for retired and working families. In solidarity!



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.

NEW USW LEADERS *Prepare to Take Office*

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.

"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."

Former SOAR Director **Re-Elected to Democratic Seniors Position**

Retired Director Jim Centner has been re-elected to his fourth four-year term to the Executive Board of the National Democratic Committee Seniors Coordinating Council.

The council, an official body of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), was created in 1997. It was designed to give older Democrats a voice within the DNC, utilizing their expertise on issues such as Social Security and Medicare. It also acknowledges their lifelong dedication to Democratic Party ideals and their efforts to mobilize older voters in election campaigns.

Centner is "excited to continue his advocacy on behalf of the USW and older Americans." He looks

forward to serving another term and will work hard to maintain a strong voice for seniors in the Democratic Party, ensuring that our issues are being addressed.

"SOAR and the United Steelworkers are proud to have Jim continuing his role within the DNC. His continued involvement provides USW with a seat at the table and provides a sound and passionate voice for working families and retirees," said SOAR International President Bill Pienta. "We appreciate all his hard work and effort."



Steelworker Retirees Award Scholarships

Marking 16th Year of Scholarships

By Dennis Barker, SOAR Activist, Chapter 7-34-2

Granite City, IL—On Monday, August 4, 2025, the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) Chapter 7-34-2 hosted its annual Jane Becker Scholarship Award Presentation at the Granite City Cinema. This event marked the 16th annual presentation of the chapter's Scholarship and Awards program.

During the event, four scholarships of \$2,500 each were awarded, following the showing of a lively 20-minute video, created by SOAR member Doug May. The video effectively showcased the chapter's outreach efforts over the years.

Dr. Bob Daiber graciously served as the judge and presenter of awards for the best essays on this year's topic: "The Woman Behind the 'New Deal', the Impact of Frances Perkins' Achievements in Building the Modern Middle Class."

The 2025 Scholarship Recipients

Trinity Heppard —SOAR Sponsor - Bill Rains

Ryan Rash —SOAR Sponsor - Gene Briggs

Lily Rose Cockrum —SOAR Sponsor - Jim Schiber

Julian Obucina —SOAR Sponsor - John Obucina

The "Jane Becker" scholarship awards program is named after the wife of George Becker, who served as the USW international president from 1993 to 2001. Jane Becker was a key organizer after SOAR was established in 1985, when leadership recognized valuable energy was going untapped. Retirees had a lot to give back, and our chapter proudly serves as an example.

In addition to the scholarship awards, we also recognize our Friends of SOAR and our SOAR Members who contribute to the functioning of our chapter.

The "Edward Sadlowski Labor Leader of the Year Award" was presented to UAW Local 2250 Officer **Darin Gilley**. Darin has been a long-time friend and ally for over 20 years. The Award was presented to Darin by Ed Sadlowski, Jr., who traveled from Minnesota for the presentation.



Group photo, left to right: Darin Gilley, UAW Local 2250; Larry Evans, UCM Board Member; Scholarship Winners: Lily Rose Cockrum, Julian Obucina, Trinity Heppard, Ryan Rash; and Barb Merz, SOAR member.

The "Friend of SOAR Award" was presented to the **Ironworkers Local #392** in East St. Louis. The Ironworkers took our burned-out, beyond-repair large BBQ grill and built a new double BBQ grill from scratch for our chapter. The Ironworkers Training Coordinator, Robert Lee, took on this project with the four-year apprenticeship class, giving our chapter a new grill for years to come. The Ironworkers provided all the materials and labor, and gave the apprentices who worked on the grill extra hours toward their journeymen cards.

The "SOAR Activist Award" was presented to **Larry Evans**, Board Member of the United Congregations of Metro East (UCM). If you want to build power and be a positive force in your community, you need strong allies. SOAR couldn't have a better ally than the United Congregations of the Metro East.

The "Volunteer of the Year" was presented to **Barb Merz**, a long-time member of our SOAR Chapter. Barb is one of the first to arrive at our luncheons; she always brings a side dish and volunteers for whatever is needed. Barb is another example of what makes our chapter successful.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all the sponsors of the ad book, whose contributions made these awards possible. A special thank you goes to Granite City Cinema for generously allowing us to use their venue to showcase the video and present the awards. Additionally, we are grateful to Dr. Bob Daiber for once again volunteering as the essay judge and presenter.

"Congratulations and best wishes to the scholarship winners as they embark on their higher education journey," said Jeff Rains, president of the SOAR chapter. "We also want to express our appreciation to all the SOAR activists who consistently volunteer for our ongoing efforts to make this world a better place."



SOAR Grieves the Loss of Former District 1 SOAR Executive Board Member Brent “Bruce” Bostick

Longtime union and SOAR activist Bruce Bostick, who served as the SOAR executive board member for USW District 1 from 2014 to 2019, died on October 9, 2025, at the age of 76.

Bruce joined the United Steelworkers in 1972 as a member of Local 1104, when he began working for U.S. Steel Lorain Works in Lorain, Ohio. At that time, Local 1104 had over 8,500 members.

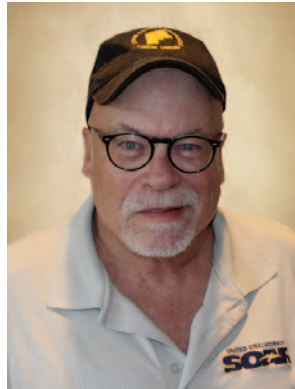
Bostick was elected to the grievance committee in 1978 and served as its chairman for several years. Bruce served on various committees throughout his 30-year career. Among them were the trade and craft committee, the contracting-out committee, the education committee, and the newspaper committee. Bruce helped set up a very active Volunteer Organizing Committee (VOC) at USW Local 1104, successfully helping bring our union into a dozen Ohio workplaces.

Bruce, a lifelong union activist, has been committed to fighting for workers' rights. Bostick served as a twenty-five-year delegate to the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council, where he helped build numerous coalitions. Among them was the Unemployed Crisis Center, which brought together labor, churches, and community groups to help the unemployed during the 1980s economic downturn.

When USW was locked out by U.S. Steel in 1986, he was very active in that year-long struggle.

In the 1990s, he went on the road, working as a casual staff member for the USWA Strategic Campaigns Dept., assigned to help our members involved in tough strikes and lockouts. These included USW LU 8888 at Newport News Shipyard, our nation's largest majority-African American local union. His grandfather had worked there during WWII, and this struggle was something Bruce was most proud to have been involved in. He was also immersed in other USW fights, including the AK Steel strike in Mansfield, Ohio; the Titan strike; the recognition strike at Magnetic Specialty, Inc. in Marietta, Ohio; and the Warren Consolidated Industries steel mill strike in Warren, Ohio.

After retiring in 2002, Bostick became involved again when Republic Technology declared bankruptcy. With



encouragement from the anti-labor Bush administration, the company drastically cut/stole pensions for our members. Bruce was tasked with garnering political support for the United Steelworkers fight, during which he helped to regain partial pensions for our retirees, with assistance from U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown. Although this effort resulted in only a partial victory, he joined the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) and remained active ever since.

In 2004, Bruce was appointed as a SOAR coordinator for USW District 1. He held this position for 11 years before being elected to the SOAR Executive Board in 2014, where he represented the retirees of his district. He was re-elected in 2017 and served until his resignation due to health reasons in August 2019. Bostick resided in Columbus, Ohio, and remained actively involved with the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans.

As Bruce stepped down from the SOAR Executive Board, he left behind words of hope, encouragement, and lasting memories: “The years seem to have flown by, but the people I’ve met and walked picket lines with are those I hold in the highest respect—truly, the best friends I’ll ever have. We’ve faced tough struggles together, and I am immensely proud to have played a small role in those efforts.” In closing, Bostick expressed, “As my health allows, I hope to continue standing alongside the wonderful people of this union. Our strength, unity, and fighting spirit have given hope to all working folks during these challenging times. I believe that this amazing union is a family, as singer-songwriter Billy Bragg so aptly sang: ‘What a comfort to the widow, a light to the child!’”

He will be greatly missed by all who were privileged to know him.



May he rest in solidarity and in peace.



RALLIES HELD ACROSS THE U.S. **SOAR WAS THERE!**

Millions of protesters turned out in cities across the U.S. on Saturday, October 18, to demonstrate against what they described as the Trump administration's authoritarian overreach. Organizers of the

"No Kings" rallies estimated that cumulative turnout exceeded 7 million people.

More than 2,700 events were held in all 50 states. Crowds ranged from more than 250,000 in Chicago and 100,000 across New York City's

five boroughs, to around 10,000 to 15,000 in places like Salt Lake City. Many attendees leaned into the current trend of wearing inflatable costumes, and no major incidents were reported.

The peaceful marches came as the ongoing government shutdown entered its 20th day, and was on pace to tie the second-longest in U.S. history (21 days). The impasse centers on the renewal of health care subsidies, which face a soft deadline of November 1, when the 2026 insurance exchanges open. [Source: Nokings.org](https://www.nokings.org)



Davenport, IA — SOAR activists from Chapter 11-4, the USW Local 105 retirees, attended the rally in Davenport on October 18.



Pueblo, CO — SOAR activists from Chapter 38-3, the Albert Becco SOAR chapter, attended the "No Kings" rally in Pueblo on October 18. Retirees aren't going to take it, never have, never will!



Edwardsville, IL — On Friday, October 24, Members of SOAR Chapter 34-2 joined over 200 citizens in Edwardsville's weekly "No Kings" protest. Pictured left, activist Dennis Barker humorously impersonated George Soros, handing out play money and thanking participants for their commitment to activism.



Granite City, IL — SOAR activists from Chapter 34-2, the Steelworker retirees of the Tri-Cities area, attended the rally in Granite City before the heavy rains and thunderstorms rolled in.



Anoka, MN — SOAR activists Gerry Parzino and Gary Evenson from Chapter 33-7, the Twin Cities SOAR retirees, attended the rally in Anoka. NO KINGS!



SOAR in ACTION



Collinsville, IL—On July 30, activists from SOAR Chapter 7-34-2 marked the 60th anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid—two programs that have saved lives and delivered care to millions. But this year, the celebration comes with outrage.

While millions across the country depend on these programs, Representatives Mary Miller, IL 15th District and Mike Bost, IL 12th District, both voted to cut these programs with the passing of the “Big Ugly Bill”—ripping health care away from seniors, people with disabilities, working families, and children.

That morning SOAR members presented and shared a “Happy 60th Birthday to Medicare Cake” with the staff at Nikki Budzinski’s office in Collinsville.

After sharing the cake, the SOAR members thanked Nikki for her vote in protecting Medicaid and Medicare, critical programs that have saved millions of lives over the past 60 years and must be protected for generations to come.

Group photo of SOAR members left-to-right Jeff Rains, Stanley Gorka, Brian Zilm (Legislative Director for Nikki Budzinski), Kitty Loepker, Jim Hellrung, Mike Fultz and Dennis Barker.



St. Paul, MN—Activists from SOAR Chapter 33-7 were present at the AFL-CIO House of Labor pavilion during the 2025 Minnesota State Fair. On Senior Citizens Day, August 21, activists Gary Evenson (left) and Kevin Afram (right) helped staff the Steelworker kiosk at this year’s fair. Way to go, SOAR!



Plymouth, IN—During the August chapter meeting, SOAR activists John Clark and Lynn Downhour, both officers of SOAR Chapter 30-18, the Main Branch SOAR Retirees, expressed their concerns about the apparent indifference some members of Congress show toward retirees.



Bethlehem, PA—Members of SOAR Chapter 7-9 participated in the Steel Weekend and Steelworkers Reunion, held at the National Museum of Industrial History and on the SteelStacks campus. The event, which took place on October 11 and 12, featured various activities exploring all things related to steel. Pictured from left to right are activists Tom Sedor, Gerald Green, and Michael Dzwonczyk.



St. Louis, MO—Members of the Granite City, IL SOAR Chapter attended the AFL-CIO’s “It’s Better In A Union” bus tour that came through St. Louis on July 25, stopping for a rally at UFCW Local 655.

In the lead-up to Labor Day, the bus tour crisscrossed the nation to amplify workers’ voices on our fights to organize, the issues that matter to working families and how the Trump administration is making our lives harder.

The union leaders and members traveling on the bus stopped in 26 states to join picket lines, support organizing campaigns, visit Veterans Affairs and Medicaid-funded facilities and hospitals gutted by DOGE, and spoke directly with workers whose jobs have been ripped away by the Trump administration. SOAR was there!



White Bear Lake, MN—SOAR Chapter 33-7 Minneapolis, MN members with their SOAR For The Cure team on Friday, July 25, at the White Bear Lake Relay For Life fundraiser for the American Cancer Society.



Johnstown, PA—Members and officers of SOAR Chapter 15-4, the Greater Johnstown Steelworker Retirees, proudly display their new SOAR flag. In the past two years, several SOAR chapters in the Johnstown area have merged to form a unified chapter.

From left to right: Bob “Mac” McAuliffe, SOAR Coordinator; Craig Cernic, Vice President; John Kern, member; James Blasko, Trustee; Andrew “Dave” Podolak, Trustee; Raymond Koenig, Financial Secretary; David Gage, President; and Julie Stein, SOAR Director. James Benny Balog, Trustee, is not pictured.

Canton, OH—SOAR Chapter 27-27 held its annual picnic at the Golden Lodge in Canton, OH, on Tuesday, August 5. It was wonderful to catch up with old friends and fellow retirees, share some laughs, and enjoy a delicious meal. Everyone’s presence made the event memorable. Keeping the SOAR solidarity strong!



Pueblo, CO—Betty Spinuzzi, the Recording Secretary of SOAR Chapter 38-3, was honored with the Southern Colorado Labor Council, AFL-CIO Mother Jones Labor Lifetime Achievement Award at the annual Bob Scarlett Labor Dinner held on Saturday, September 27. Betty has devoted her life to labor activism with SOAR, the United Steelworkers and AFSCME unions. Congratulations, Betty!

Cleveland, OH—On August 6, members of SOAR Chapter 1-979 proudly showed off their new T-shirts and banner they had made during their monthly meeting, at the Dave McCall Hall of USW LU 979. Their new T-shirts and banner will help the chapter stand out at future events, keeping the SOAR spirit of activism strong!





New York City, NY—A huge shout-out to all the SOAR members and supporters of USW District 4, SOAR Chapters 4-17, 4-19 and 4-23 who marched during the Labor Day weekend in the New York City Labor Day Parade! We were honored to join fellow workers and organizations in a vibrant display of Labor Solidarity and service.

On this Labor Day, we give thanks for the work of all our members who continue to protect vital programs like Social Security and Medicare. Together, we are building a better future for generations to come.

SOAR shows up, stands together, and makes our voices heard!



Continuing to SOAR with the Labor Day spirit!

Quad Cities of Illinois/Iowa—Activists Bonnie Carey and Brad Greve from SOAR Chapter 11-4, the USW 105 Retirees, of Bettendorf, IA, proudly display their SOAR banner on John Lane's (not pictured) Trans Am and participated in the Quad Cities Federation of Labor's Labor Day Parade held in East Moline, IL.

LABOR DAY 2025



Pueblo, CO—Members of SOAR Chapter 38-3 marched in the Pueblo Labor Day—Fiesta Parade.



SOARING with the Labor Day spirit!

Granite City, IL—Activists from SOAR Chapter 7-34-2, representing the Steelworker Retirees of the Tri Cities Area, proudly displayed their SOAR banner on their trailer while participating in the two-mile route of the Madison County Federation of Labor's Labor Day Parade in Granite City, IL.



Pittsburgh, PA—Home of SOAR Chapter 20-15, continuing to SOAR with the Labor Day spirit, Pittsburgh style!



Mt. Horeb, WI—SOAR member Jeanne Wright is showing her SOAR solidarity by flying the SOAR flag alongside the American flag and the state of Wisconsin flag on Labor Day!

Way to go Jeanne, let SOAR fly as strong as the wind!



St. Paul, MN—Activists Lee and Laurie Popovich from SOAR Chapter 11-5, also known as the Head of the Lakes SOAR, are pictured with Bob Ryan, the Rapid Response Coordinator for USW District 11, at the AFL-CIO House of Labor pavilion during the 2025 Minnesota State Fair. Members of Chapter 11-5 assisted in staffing the Steelworker kiosk at the House of Labor on Tuesday, August 26, during this year's fair.

What began in 1854 as a territorial fair to highlight agriculture and encourage farming in the region became the Minnesota State Fair in 1859, a year after Minnesota was granted statehood.

Today, often referred to as the "Great Minnesota Get-Together," the annual Minnesota State Fair is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region. This end-of-summer tradition is held the 12 days leading up to and through Labor Day. Great work, SOAR!



Latham, NY—SOAR Chapter 4-17 had a wonderful time celebrating the spirit of working people at the annual Labor Day Picnic at Lanthiers Grove in Latham, NY. In the first photo, it was great to see members Rick Sauer, Gary Cunningham (back row), Russell Tucker, and Paul Kahian enjoying the festivities and camaraderie.

In the second photo, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand is ALL IN on Retirement Security with the members of SOAR Chapter 4-17!



Tis the Season to Shop Made in the USA!

The holiday season is upon us and for the 11th straight year the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM) is here to help you with your search for American-made gifts.

The 2024 Made in America Holiday Gift Guide will be released on Wednesday, November 20, with suggestions for giftable products from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The annual AAM Gift Guide is a great resource for those looking to support local companies and workers this holiday season.

Many Americans, especially workers and retirees of manufacturing industries, are increasingly taking notice of products that are made in the United States. Not only is the excellent quality of these goods and potential holiday gifts catching the eyes of those who have spent careers manufacturing products here in the U.S., but the impact of American-made on the lives and careers of manufacturing workers have factored into the thinking of American consumers.

“Choosing American-made gifts this holiday season not only shows our friends and families that we care, but also provides an important opportunity to invest in our workers and communities,” said United Steelworkers International President David McCall. “Our members take great pride in their contributions to domestic manufacturing, and we’re delighted to see their hard work reflected in the AAM’s annual gift guide.”



The eclectic list of holiday gift suggestions includes everything from inexpensive stocking stuffers to apparel, cookware and even bicycles.

An AAM commissioned survey indicates that 81 percent of American adults prefer to purchase holiday gifts made in the U.S. Poorly made Chinese products attract many holiday shoppers but the quality of American-made often offsets the extra cost of domestic products. A toy or sweater made in the U.S. will surely outlast a product of fast fashion from China.

Beginning on November 20, you can access the AAM Made in America Holiday Gift Guide by visiting the AAM homepage at www.american-manufacturing.org

And if you are looking for a more extensive list of American manufacturers, please access our Made in America Directory at <https://www.americanmanufacturing.org/made-in-america/>

Happy shopping and happy holidays, everyone!

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





Big Pharma Giveaway Included in GOP Tax Law is Even Bigger than Expected

By Robert Roach, Jr.

Last summer, Congress and President Trump handed a huge windfall to the pharmaceutical industry by including the so-called Orphan Cures Act in the Republican tax and budget plan.

This week, we learned just how big the payday was: nearly \$9 billion, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The giveaway exempts prescription drugs approved to treat two or more rare diseases from the law requiring Medicare to negotiate lower prices with the drug industry.

Adding insult to injury, even if these so-called “orphan” drugs are also designated non-orphans and therefore still subject to negotiation, drugmakers

can escape the rules by tying negotiation timelines to the date of their newest approval.

Medicines that have been on the market for years will be treated as if they were brand new, allowing pharmaceutical corporations to rake in billions while taxpayers lose negotiating power.

It’s time for Congress to put people over pharmaceutical profits and close this gaping loophole. Lawmakers should act to repeal the Orphan Cures Act and strengthen Medicare’s ability to secure a fair deal for older Americans. We’ve earned it.

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.



2026 Social Security COLA Will Be 2.8 Percent Not Enough to Keep Up With Escalating Costs of the Basics—Like Food, Housing, Utilities and Rx

On October 24, the following statement was issued by Richard Fiesta, Executive Director of the Alliance for Retired Americans, regarding the announcement that there will be a 2.8 percent cost-of-living (COLA) benefit increase for millions of Social Security beneficiaries, disabled veterans and federal retirees next year:

“The 74.5 million Americans who rely on Social Security welcome any increase in their monthly benefits. But let’s be clear, millions of older Americans will still struggle to afford housing, food, utilities, and prescription drugs.

“The average retired worker will see about \$52 more per month next year. Yet nearly half of that increase will be wiped out by the higher Medicare Part B premium, which is projected to rise to \$206 a month in January. That’s \$31 more than in 2025, and would be the first time the premium has exceeded \$200.

“Strengthening and expanding Social Security must be a national priority. If billionaires and the wealthiest one percent pay their fair share, we can boost benefits for everyone and

guarantee the program’s solvency for future generations.

“Instead of working to protect Social Security, too many members of Congress and Trump Administration officials are pushing to raise the retirement age, cut benefits, and even privatize the program. Older Americans

have earned these benefits through a lifetime of work; they should not have to fight to keep them.”





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