

UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
STEELWORKERS ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVE RETIREES

CONNECTION

WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER

HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Saying Goodbye



At the December International Executive Board meeting (IEB), USW President David McCall announced my pending resignation as President of SOAR, effective March 1. He also announced that, under the SOAR constitution, he has the responsibility to fill this vacancy by presidential appointment. President McCall informed the IEB that he has selected Ken Neumann, the former Canadian National Director, as my successor. Following our earlier discussions about my stepping down, Dave asked me to stay until the International Executive Officers are sworn in on March 1.

I have held many positions in this Union over my career, and serving as President of SOAR has been one of the most satisfying and enjoyable of them all. Watching SOAR members continue to assist their locals and districts whenever called upon, and participate in actions that benefit all seniors, is something we can all be proud of.

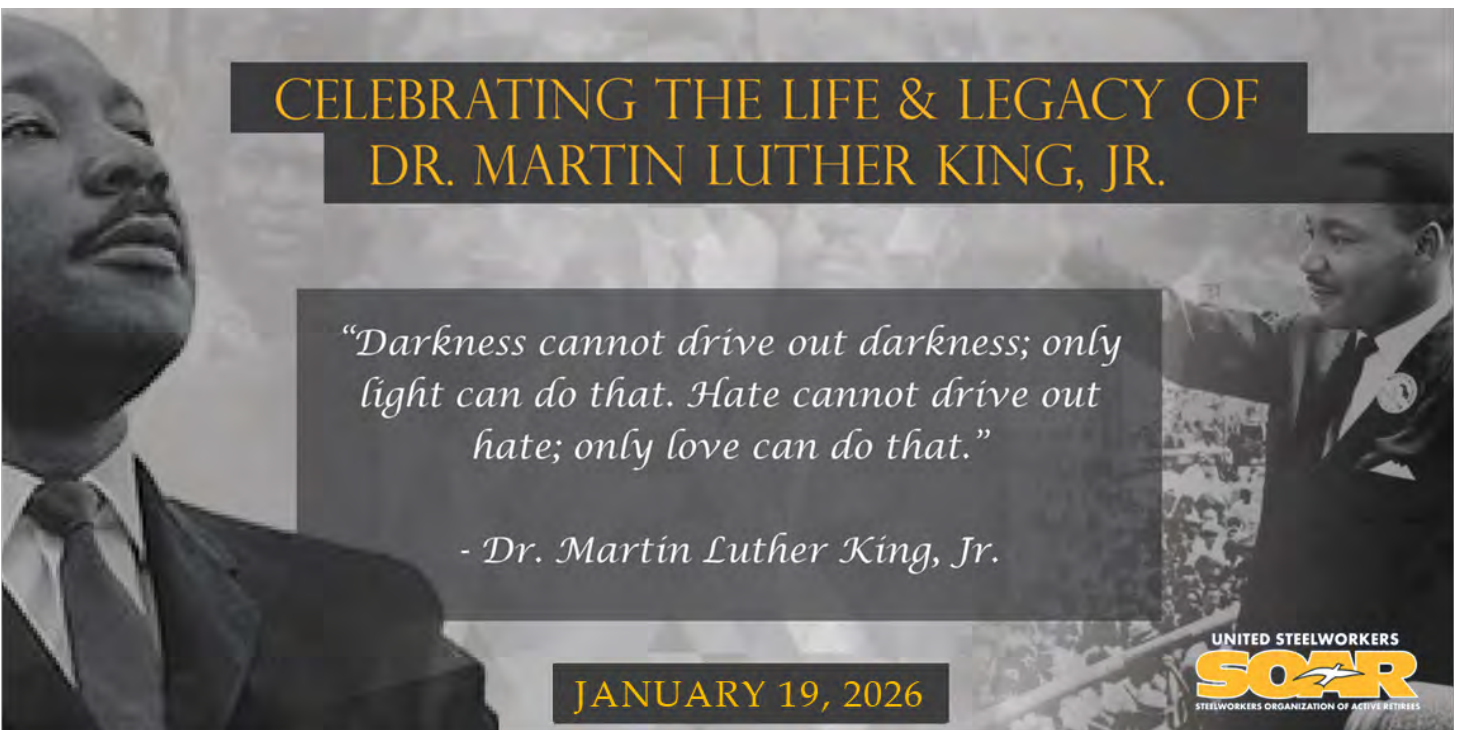
I have given this decision considerable thought and believe stepping down now is in the best interest of SOAR and the USW. I have always believed that stepping down early is a far better alternative for our Union and the membership than staying on a little too long.

I will remain active in my SOAR chapter and available to assist SOAR and our Union whenever needed.

I ask that you extend to Ken the same unwavering support and dedication you have shown me throughout the years.

Thank you for your steadfast dedication to our Union and to all working people. It has been an honor to serve alongside you.

Bill Pienta, SOAR President



**CELEBRATING THE LIFE & LEGACY OF
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only
light can do that. Hate cannot drive out
hate; only love can do that.”*

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

JANUARY 19, 2026

**UNITED STEELWORKERS
SOAR
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Electronic Deposit Available for SOAR Chapter Dues Refunds

Please be advised that SOAR dues refunds can be electronically deposited into your SOAR chapter's bank account rather than by receiving a paper check.

To set up your chapter to receive electronic deposits, please mail the following items to the SOAR office:

- 1) A voided check from your SOAR chapter's checking account.
- 2) The most recent copy of a bank statement to confirm the complete title/name of the chapter's bank account and the current mailing address listed on the account.
- 3) A note requesting that you want your chapter to be set up for automatic deposit of SOAR dues refunds.



Send the above items to:

SOAR
Attn. Julie Stein, SOAR Director
60 Blvd of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Or, you can scan the items to jstein@usw.org

As a reminder, SOAR dues refunds are sent three times per year, in April, August and November. Once on direct deposit, a confirmation receipt for the sum transferred into the SOAR chapter's bank account is mailed to the officer designated to receive financial mailings. Also included in the mailing is a "SOAR Chapter Refund Summary" report listing the members who paid their SOAR dues during the cycle.

Feel free to contact the SOAR office if you have questions. Toll-free: 866-208-4420

It's That Time of Year When...

Each new year begins the process of compiling annual financial reports for all SOAR chapters, covering the previous year's financial activities. The SOAR office requires this information so our USW auditor can prepare a Federal Form 990, which SOAR International must file with the IRS. This form includes all SOAR funds, including the treasury funds of individual SOAR chapters.

In early January, the SOAR office sent the annual mailing to all SOAR chapter officers designated to receive financial mailings and to SOAR chapter presidents. We appreciate your chapter's prompt attention to this matter and your swift reply. **Please note that these reports are due by March 15. Any chapter that does not meet this deadline will have its dues refunds put on hold until this obligation is fulfilled.**



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

United Steelworkers



The Hell With Everyone Else

By David McCall

USW International President

Al Polk landed a job at a cutting-tool plant in his early 20s and then promptly started paying Social Security taxes—every week, 12 months a year, without a break, for decades.

Polk realized that collective responsibility for Social Security ensured a dignified retirement for all, and he took pride in holding up his end of a sacred compact with millions of fellow Americans.

Now 82, Polk continues to enjoy his golden years because of Social Security and his union-negotiated pension. But he knows that future generations of workers will be forced to scrape by in retirement or toil until they die—unless the wealthy finally begin paying their fair share to Social Security, a lifeline at [ever greater risk](#) of insolvency. “Remove the cap, and you don’t have to worry about it,” observed Polk, a longtime activist with the United Steelworkers (USW) from Mansfield, Mass., noting that more equitable contributions from the uber-rich [would end the funding crisis](#) in short order.

“It’s an easy fix,” he added. “It’s not going to hurt anybody.”

The federal government imposes Social Security taxes only on the first \$184,500 in wages, no matter how much money a person makes this year. Because of this [arbitrary and nonsensical cap](#), hundreds of the nation’s richest people paid their Social Security taxes within the first few minutes or hours of 2026.

Now, despite the pressing need to shore up the Social Security trust funds, they’re sitting out the rest of the year. Nothing illustrates this rigged system better than the case of Elon Musk, the [richest person in the world](#), who rakes in so much money at so great a speed that he effectively paid all of his required Social Security taxes by 12:15 a.m. on Jan. 1.

On the other hand, more than 160 million ordinary working people—Americans who perform essential jobs but never come close to pocketing \$184,500 a year—will keep contributing to Social Security through Dec. 31.

Working people like Polk, who spent much of his life negotiating contracts for union colleagues and holding employers accountable, understand the power of shared prosperity and a strong middle class.

But the rich have a selfish view. They’re bent on [hoarding their wealth](#), widening the [economic inequality](#) that’s already tearing at the nation’s social fabric, and turning America into a land of haves and have-nots.

“The hell with everybody else,” Polk said, summing up the mindset of Musk and others of his ilk, who would rather squander their money on [failed rocket launches](#) and other vanity projects than support the common good. “It’s just greed.”

Musk’s companies [helped themselves to billions in federal funds](#) over the years, meaning he owes much of his wealth to the ordinary Americans he looks down on.

Musk had the audacity to call Social Security a “[Ponzi scheme](#)” and [reposted a meme](#) characterizing Americans who rely on federal programs as the “parasite class.” When Donald Trump invited Musk to begin decimating the federal government, he [quickly set his sights on the Social Security Administration](#) and moved to cut jobs, disrupt operations and hamstringing the agency.



Albert Polk

The [Democrats in Congress](#) and [Sen. Bernie Sanders](#), an independent from Vermont, tirelessly push legislation that would force the wealthy to do their civic duty and contribute an equitable amount for the common good.

Sadly, Republicans refuse to support these long-overdue changes, even though Social Security enjoys overwhelming, bipartisan support among Americans of all ages and from all parts of the country.

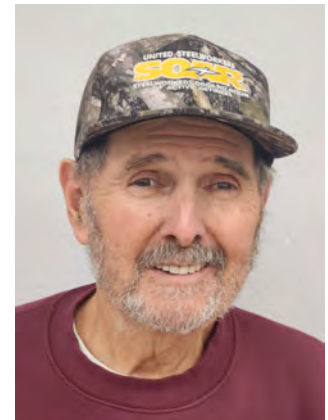
The Bipartisan Policy Center, a nonpartisan think tank in Washington, D.C., released poll results in August showing that [Americans want lawmakers from both parties to work together](#) to sustain and strengthen the program. It’s the kind of comment Polk often hears while knocking on doors to promote pro-worker candidates. They tell him they plan to rely on Social Security but at the same time fear its demise.

“It’s the people in the red states that are going to suffer the most,” observed Polk, noting that Social Security’s failure would have a devastating impact on Republican-dominated Southern states with [high poverty](#) rates.

And the clock is ticking. Right now, Social Security faces a so-called “[go-broke date](#)” in 2034.

That’s when the program will slash benefits to tens of millions of recipients, many of whom [barely get by](#) right now. Americans receiving Social Security got only a 2.8 percent cost-of-living adjustment this year, far from enough to cover the [spiraling cost of groceries, health care and other essentials](#) in Trump’s inflationary economy.

“It was established with the thought that we would retire in dignity. We’ve been able to do that, but it’s getting harder and harder now,” said Jeff Rains, a longtime USW member who’s now the president of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) chapter in Granite City, Ill.



Jeff Rains

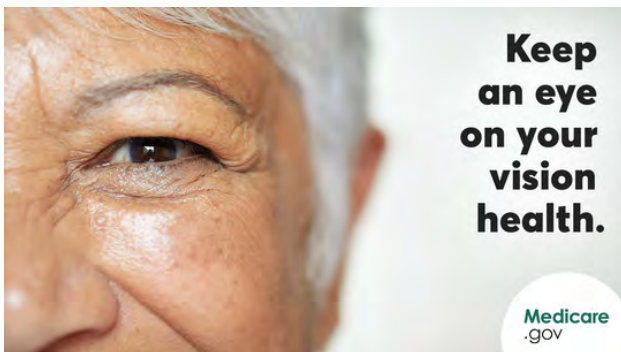
Instead of working to shore up Social Security to meet retirees’ growing needs, Republicans prefer to talk about raising the retirement age yet again or even “[privatizing](#)” the program and putting taxpayer contributions in the hands of Wall Street profiteers.

But all of that represents a betrayal of working people, who willingly do their part for Social Security and demand all that was pledged to them in return. “It’s not an entitlement program,” emphasized Rains, whose SOAR chapter has [circulated petitions](#), [advocated with lawmakers](#) and otherwise fought for Social Security for more than a decade. “We pay into it with every paycheck.”

On Social Security’s 80th anniversary in 2015, Rains and other SOAR members celebrated with a symbolic birthday cake. They also visited the office of U.S. Rep. Mike Bost, a Republican from Illinois, with a demand that he and other lawmakers reinvigorate the program. They’re still waiting, along with the rest of America.

“The very wealthy people are not paying their share,” Rains said of the obvious path forward. “Scrap the cap.”

From the Medicare Team



The only way to find out if you have glaucoma is to get a painless glaucoma screening, which checks your optic nerve health and vision. [Medicare covers a glaucoma screening once every 12 months if you're at high risk.](#)

Talk to your doctor to check if a glaucoma screening is right for you. Early treatment can often stop further damage and protect your eyes from serious vision loss. Learn more about glaucoma from the [National Eye Institute.](#)



January 15, 2026

USW Members Lead the Charge in Honoring Our Veterans

Last week, dozens of Veterans of Steel and USW leadership joined Senator Angus King (ME) and Representative Chris Deluzio (PA-17) for the introduction of [S. 3591](#) (usw.to/5ju) and [H.R. 6960](#) (usw.to/5jt), the Thomas M. Conway Veterans Access to Resources in the Workplace Act.

This bipartisan legislation – named in honor of the USW international president and Air Force veteran who passed away in September 2023 – would require standardized workplace postings outlining key veteran benefits and how to access them. These postings would help provide veterans with information including but not limited to:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- VA’s crisis line
- Resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Opportunities for education, employment, and job training
- Tax assistance and financial support programs

The bill mirrors workplace poster laws that USW members already helped to [enact for veterans in 15 states](#) (usw.to/5jv) in recent years.



For more pictures of the event, please click [HERE](#) (usw.to/5jw).

Stay tuned for ways in which you can use your voice to advance this critical piece of legislation!

Honoring these courageous individuals should happen not only while they are actively serving, but also when they return home. Within our union, the “Veterans of Steel” program honors military service and identifies ways to assist veterans and their families in Steelworker-represented workplaces.

If you are a veteran, and would like to join Veterans of Steel, please click [HERE](#) (usw.to/vetsofsteel).



USW Rapid Response • (412) 562-2291 • [www.uswrr.org](#) • [www.facebook.com/USWRapidResponse](#)

SOAR Chapter Connection

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Articles and Photos Requested

The next deadline for the SOAR in Action magazine will be April 28, 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 March 20, 2026. Email your article to soar3@icloud.com



Old Charlie Sez

Whether you're still working or now retired, I'd say that as a Steelworker or SOAR member, our health and safety is our most important product. I recall working in a coal-fired generating station that had a positive pressure boiler that allowed any leak in the furnace to throw out noxious flu gas into the plant, making our workers sick and having to use bottles of oxygen to perform even the simplest of tasks.

Everyone complained about it until one day a big yellow poster appeared on the bulletin board, assuring all of us that we wouldn't be disciplined for complaining to management about the problem or refusing to work in such an environment.

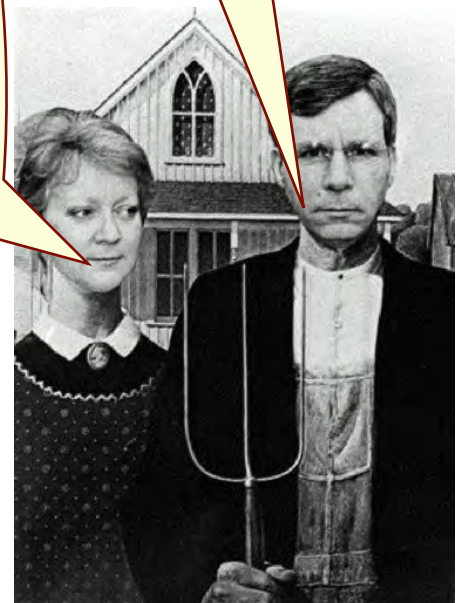
The poster was telling us about the Williams Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970. Similar to the requirement in the proposed legislation found on page 7 for management to be required to place on bulletin boards, making workers aware of the information about items to help veterans to know what benefits are available for returning vets and how they could obtain them.

Many thanks to the Veterans of Steel!

Charlie,
did you make
any New Year's
resolutions?

Well, I made some for you: I resolve to put dirty dishes in the dishwasher and not on the counter. I will not leave stuff on the floor to trip over. I will compliment Elaine on every supper. I will be on time and dress appropriately. I will do whatever Elaine wants the **first** time she asks. I will keep the gas tank full. I resolve to let Elaine buy whatever she wants.

No need to,
I'm pretty perfect.



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

Preserve the Buy America Laws



Funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which authorized revenue to promote policies that shape America’s federal surface transportation programs, is set to expire in September.

The Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM) along with America’s iron and steel industry is calling on lawmakers to preserve the Buy America laws that govern federal infrastructure spending by way of a new multiyear reauthorization bill.

“A robust reauthorization that upgrades the nation’s transportation network and drives demand for domestically produced iron and steel, construction materials and manufactured products will deliver lasting benefits to our economy, national security and communities across the country,” reads a letter signed by AAM and a consortium of labor and manufacturing groups. “For decades, America’s workers have melted, rolled and fabricated the steel inputs that form the foundations for our nation’s public works, providing the essential products and materials for bridges, road safety apparatus, transit vehicles, airports, rail and other critical infrastructure.”

Buy America in federal infrastructure spending is already the law of the land, thanks to a bipartisan provision that passed as part of the 2021 IIJA called the Build America, Buy America Act (BABA). Before it was enacted, Buy America only applied to a handful of federal programs mostly within the Department of Transportation.

Furthermore, those rules were limited in their coverage and eroded by loopholes. BABA expanded those domestic content preferences to all federally assisted infrastructure projects and AAM argues that we should enforce these preferences, fully implement them and reject proposals to weaken them.

This commonsense policy fosters investments in our industrial base, enhances supply chain resilience and creates good-paying jobs. We

need to keep our nation’s Buy America laws strong and reject any efforts to weaken or erode them.

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



Photo credit by Getty Images

Modest Relief, Mounting Costs for America’s Seniors

By Robert Roach, Jr.



This year will be a mixed bag for older Americans in terms of affordability.

At the pharmacy counter, many seniors will finally see real relief. Prices will drop this year for 10 widely used, high-cost prescription drugs because of the Inflation Reduction Act, signed into law by President Joe Biden in 2022. Also the annual out-of-pocket cap for prescription drugs increased to \$2,100 for Medicare Part D beneficiaries. Once a beneficiary reaches that limit, they will pay zero dollars out of pocket for their prescriptions.

Social Security’s 2.8 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will put a modest amount of additional money in retirees’ checks—but for many, it will barely keep pace with rising costs. For most seniors, any gains will be quickly erased. Medicare Part B premiums rose to \$202.90 a month, consuming much—or all—of the Social Security COLA.

And Americans aged 65 and older will be able to deduct an additional \$6,000 on their income taxes. This deduction will primarily help seniors whose total income is between \$50,000 and \$200,000 and expires in 2028. The Inflation Reduction Act proved that lowering costs for seniors is possible. We urge our leaders to build on that success by expanding drug price negotiations and keeping health insurance affordable.

Robert Roach, Jr. is president of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Negotiated Prices Take Effect for Ten Drugs in 2026

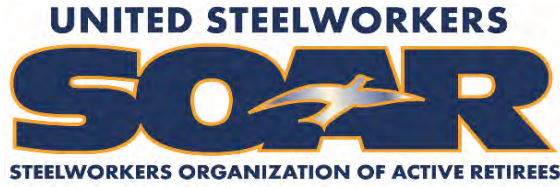
The first set of negotiated drug prices will go into effect in 2026 and are estimated to save \$1.5 billion in annual out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries while saving the Medicare program \$6 billion per year. The negotiated prices are a minimum of 38% off the 2023 list price.

Ten Important and Costly Drugs

Drugs selected for negotiation must be brand-name drugs that don’t have competition and must be among those that drive the most Medicare spending. These are the ten drugs selected for price negotiation for 2026:

10 Drugs Selected for Medicare Price Negotiation for 2026:		
Eliquis	Jardiance	Xarelto
Januvia	Farxiga	Entresto
Enbrel	Inbruvica	Stelara
	NovoLog	

2026



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