



# MiARA Newsletter

Volume 1 : Issue 6

January, 2024

## Let's Keep the Momentum Going in '24

### In This Issue.....

- Page 1: *Keep It Going*
- Page 2: *President's Report*
- Page 3: *Shovel Snow Safely*
- Page 4: *Union Super Bowl Parties*

**"I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant."**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Nobel Peace Prize  
Acceptance Speech  
12/10/1964



2023 was a huge year for Organized Labor in America. It kicked off in March when Michigan legislators acted to repeal the state's Right to Work law. In doing that, the state became the first in 60 years to repeal RTW.

Next, a series of high profile strikes was called with workers hitting the picket lines demanding increased pay, improved benefits, better working conditions and an end to job-killing outsourcing. Writers, actors, car makers, and casino workers were holding out for fair pay and treatment.

Remarkably, all of the strikers maintained solidarity and helped their Unions win historic labor agreements.

At the same time, workers were winning big Organizing drives in places like Starbucks, Amazon and Blue Bird Bus in Fort Valley, GA.

Finally, Labor got a huge shot in the arm when Gallup released the results of a poll showing that Unions had reached their highest approval rating (71%) in over five decades.

That is one hell of a track record and it is up to us keep the momentum going. The best way we can do that in 2024 is to get involved in your Union's political action program. Let's face it, we could not have had such a successful year if we didn't have laws giving us the right to join a Union and requiring our employer to bargain in good faith.

This month, as Iowa holds its first in the na-



*The dream lives on through all of us*

tion caucuses, the 2024 election cycle officially begins. For the next ten months it is up to each of us to stay up to date on the issues and where each candidate stands related to them. Our goal must be to elect candidates who support us and will work with us to grow a secure future. So, what are the issues?

**JOBS!** A secure future begins with a good paying job. Today outsourcing, artificial intelligence and unfair trade threaten the livelihoods of thousands of American workers. We need politicians who understand those issues and will work with us to ensure U.S. workers benefit from good policies.

A secure future also includes earning a fair wage for our labor. We accomplish that with a livable minimum wage and strong labor laws that give us the right to join a Union and to engage in collective bargaining. Even in Union shops, workers benefit when states have a strong minimum wage. Our employers are forced to offer better pay to attract skilled

workers. And without the right to bargain, each of us are reduced to "at will employees", forced to accept whatever compensation our boss decides to throw at us. Unions raise the boats of all workers. Even those in non-Union settings.

Real safety and health protections on the job. What good is a great paying job if you are not alive or healthy enough to enjoy it? Our safety standards and the agencies that enforce them are under constant threat. We must elect representatives who will develop and implement real workplace safety standards. And we need them to fully fund those programs.

Social Security and Medicare were once known as the third rail of American politics. Politicians who had the nerve to talk about cutting those programs often saw their careers ended abruptly. Today, right wing plots to cut those earned benefits have become so common place that some folks don't even pay attention to them. Make no mistake about it. Social Security and Medicare are under the gun. The right is on record saying that it is.

Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) said, "One thing you probably haven't ever heard from a politician: it will be my objective to phase out Social Security. To pull it up by the roots, and get rid of it."

Sen. John Thune (R-SD) is on record declaring that "Social Security and Medicare benefits must be slashed."

# The President's Report

by Jim Pedersen

I have been an active Union member for nearly fifty years. By active, I mean not just paying dues and voting for my Local Union officers. I mean I attended Union meetings, volunteered at Union sponsored events, running for and getting elected to Union offices and paying attention to CAP, my Union's political action program. A logical, rational self-interest says that workers that rely on government approval for Union and collective bargaining rights-OSHA and meaningful safety and health standards, and fair trade agreements—must pay attention to who is in political office and how they vote in that position.

Many important policies and regulations are set by our representatives at the state level of government, in Lansing. Unemployment benefits, Workers' Compensation, and bargaining rights for public sector workers are all issues that are as important to us as the wages and benefits we enjoy thanks to our Union negotiated contract. That means that a Union officer that believes his/her job is to simply administer the contract really isn't doing the job properly. The work requires us to be active in our Union's political program, which works to insure those contracts and benefits.

There are good reasons we should pay extra attention to politics when we retire. The day we punch the clock for the last time, we begin to transition

away from contractual benefits to relying more on government sponsored programs. Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and the V.A. are samples of services we have come to count to maintain the quality of our retired lives. Bluntly, we go from a mandatory subject of bargaining to a "permissive subject." This means that our former employers, as we have severed employment, cannot be forced to address the demands of the retired membership. Pension and retiree health care plans can diminish over time. Or may even go bust. While Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are more permanent programs, they are subject to the whims of politicians. This is why retirees like us must pay attention and use our collective power at the ballot box ad in our state and federal capitals to agitate and advocate for programs and policies that meet our needs and wants.

As I said, I go way back. I remember my first Presidential election, 1980. My Union, the UAW, was unsatisfied with incumbent Democratic President, Jimmy Carter. Despite having a record number of members (1.6 million active), cornering 85% of the domestic vehicle market and maintaining a 90% Union density in domestic auto manufacturing workforce under President Carter, some of our top leader-



Jimmy Pedersen, President MI-ARA

ship favored the candidacy of our good friend Sen. Ted Kennedy. Labor endorsed both Kennedy and poor mouthed Jimmy Carter in the caucuses and primaries leading up to the Democratic Convention. Unfortunately, incumbent Presidents have vast resources at their disposal and Carter prevailed. Come the General Election in November, we reversed and endorsed Carter over Republican nominee Ronald Reagan. But the die had been cast. We could not change the minds of many Union members, particularly here in Michigan, and Reagan went on to become President. We all know what happened next! Reagan crushed Unions, cut taxes for corporations and the wealthy, taxed our unemployment and TRA benefits and slashed funding for programs that benefited the unemployment. I was laid off for nearly three years as UAW membership rolls were halved.

*Continued on page 4*

# Shoveling Snow Safely for Seniors

It's January in Michigan and that means snow shoveling season is upon us. While it is probably safer to hire someone to shovel your snow. Some of us our stubborn and insist on handling that chore our selves. If you are one of those people, remember—you are not as young as you used to be. Shoveling snow is not race. So take your time and work smartly. After all, we want to be around for the next snowfall. Here are some tips for clearing your side walks safely!

**Be Heart Conscious:** If you have a history of heart problems or have recently been inactive talk to your health care provider before you begin shoveling.

**Never Smoke While Shoveling:** Cold air is difficult to breath.

Smoking makes our heart and lungs work even harder.

**Dress Warmly:** Layer up with clothing to stay warm. You can always remove a layer if you become too warm. That includes waterproof foot wear

**Stay Hydrated:** Proper hydration is just as important during cold weather is just as important as it is in warmer months

**Warm Up and Stretch:** Stretch your arms and legs before shoveling. Warm muscles are less likely to become injured.

**Protect Your Back!** Speaking of injuries. The most common mishaps related to shoveling is back injuries. Bend you knees, not your back as you are lifting snow. Keep the shovel close to your body. Finally, avoid trying to lift too much

snow at once.

**Shovel Fresh Snow:** freshly fallen snow is much lighter than snow that has already begun to melt.

**Listen to Your Body:** Pay attention to any abnormal feelings. If something doesn't feel right — **STOP IMMEDIATELY!**



## Meet Your MI-ARA Officers

To help you get better acquainted with the people elected to serve you on the board of the Michigan Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans, we will feature articles to profile an officer or board member each. We begin with our President, Jim Pedersen.

Pedersen became a member of the United Auto Workers Local 892 in 1977 when he hired into Ford Motor Company's Saline Plant. At that time, over 3,400 Union members worked at the plant. Pedersen served them as Committeeman, Vice President and, for nine years as President. In that position, he helped to bargain 3 local bargaining agreements.

His excellent work at the Local caught the eye of then UAW Region 1A, Director Gerald Bantom. Based on Bantom's recommendation, Jim was appointed to UAW Staff in 1998 by the late International UAW President Stephen Yokich. He served the Region as its Education Representative. That position was later expanded to include the responsibilities of

CAP Coordinator. CAP is the UAW's program to involve its members in political action. In 2008 he went to work for the Union's International CAP Staff. He remained in that position until his retirement in 2012.

Following retirement Pedersen was appointed Program Director for the U of M's Labor Studies Center. There he helped develop courses that benefited hundreds of Union activists in there quest o become more informed and educated future Union leaders.

In addition to his work at UAW and the U of M, Pedersen was very active in politics. He served as Chairman of the 15th District Democrats under Congressman John Dingell. Upon John's retirement Jim went on to become Chair of the 12th District with newly elected Congresswoman Debbie Dingell. He also ran for State Representative and currently serving in his second term as a member of the Cassopolis, Michigan City Council.

Finally, Pedersen was elected President of the MI-ARA in 2022. Asked what his mission is in that position Jim responded, "I want to see the MI-ARA become an activist network dedicated to maintaining dignity for Union members in retired life. That means fighting to maintain and expand Social Security and Medicare for today's seniors and those of the future."



Jim Pedersen, President MI-ARA



**MICHIGAN ALLIANCE FOR RETIRED AMERICANS**

8000 E. Jefferson Ave.  
 Detroit, MI 48214  
 Phone: (313)926-5131  
 Email: Jim Pedersen at [aworker4mi@gmail.com](mailto:aworker4mi@gmail.com)

MIARA Newsletter  
 Jay McMurrin Editor: (734) 334-8582  
 E-Mail: [mcmurrin@comcast.net](mailto:mcmurrin@comcast.net)  
 Text: Jay McMurrin at (734) 334-8582


**Keep It Going** *from page 1*

Sen. Rick (R-FL) is pushing legislation that would require that all spending programs must be reauthorized every five years. If passed that means that in five years Social Security and Medicare would end and could not be reinstated unless Congress acted to do so. Think about that. We see the way Congress works on the budget and debt ceiling. Do we really want our benefits subjected to that circus?

Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) has a proposal that will sunset those programs every year.

Finally, the Republican Study Committee, which is made up of a majority of GOP House members., released a formal budget that included a plan to raise the age of eligibility for those programs. It also called for withholding benefits for those who retired early or had reached a certain income.

The issues are many and they are important. Don't let others decide your future get involved and help elect candidates that will go to work and fight for you!

**President's Report** *from page 1*

I have listened to Union members who are not satisfied with some of our endorsed candidates. For now some of the endorsements have been put off. The answer to that criticism: **WE SHOULD ALL BE INVOLVED** in choosing whom we endorse. Let's pay attention to which candidates have been our friends and who hasn't. We need to know which politicians have said and done things to benefit working families. Finally, let's reward those who have helped us grow as individuals and as a Union.

In conclusion I would like to encourage you to pay attention to our Unions' endorsement, weigh in where you can, and let's work together to make 2024 a success for workers and retirees!

## Let's Make It a Real Union Super Bowl Party This Year

As you gather with family and friends to watch this year's installment of the Super Bowl, remember you are watching members of the NFL Players Association AFL-CIO. So as you watch your Union brothers play, support other Union members by purchasing the following Union made goods:

**Meats:**

- Ball Park
- Banquet
- Butterball
- Dearborn Sausage
- Hormel
- Oscar Mayer
- Tyson
- Prairie Farms

**Retail Bake Shops:**

- Kroger Bakery
- Meijer Bakery

**Chips:**

- Lays
- Better Made
- Cheez-its
- Fritos
- Act II popcorn
- Sun Chips

**Booze:**

- Jim Beam
- Jack Daniels
- Captain Morgan
- Southern Comfort
- Gilbeys Gin
- Maker's Mark
- Bicardi's Rum
- Seagram Seven

**Mixers:**

- Schwepps
- Minute Maid Juices
- Welch's Juices
- V-8 Juices
- Clamata
- Coke & Pepsi Products

**Beers:**

- Becks
- Budweiser
- Coors
- Michelob
- Pabst

Samuel Adams

Note: this is a partial list of the Union made products available to you. Go "Labor 411" for a complete list.