



NEWS & VIEWS

LEHIGH VALLEY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO
"UNIONS JOINING TOGETHER AS ONE"

www.lehighvalleyclc.org



May 2026



The struggle continues for United Auto Workers #677 members at Westport Axle. Ever since the workers at the wheel, tire and axle assembly plant near Alburdis joined the union two years ago, the company has delayed contract negotiations and bargained in bad faith. Union members staged a rally on March 26, signaling to the company their determination to win a first contract. See page six for more.

Night of solidarity

Lehigh Valley Labor Council Awards Dinner

Wendell Young's keynote speech at the Annual Lehigh Valley Labor Council Awards Dinner capped another successful banquet ceremony where union members and leaders congratulate the organizers and activists in their shops, on the picket lines and in the legislative halls of Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. (Fig. #1)

"Labor history in the Lehigh Valley was written on the picket lines," said Young, president of the 35,000-member United Food & Commercial Workers #1776 Keystone State, to the large gathering that filled the Northampton Community Memorial Center, in Northampton on April 18. His remarks resonated with his audience as he described the 1897 Lattimer Mines massacre, the 1933 Lehigh Valley "baby strikers," and the 1941 Bethlehem Steel Strike. He explained how local labor protests shaped our region and informed its working class as it faces a challenging future. "Labor must defeat (Lehigh Valley) congressman Ryan Mackenzie this November," Young declared to a cheering crowd that understood his clarion call to replace the anti-labor incumbent with a working-families candidate in this year's mid-term elections.



Fig. 1: Nancy and Wendell Young (left to right), Marci Lesko, Nancy and John Werkheiser. Wendell Young, president of the UFCW #1776 Keystone State, presented the keynote speech at the April 18 labor council dinner.

For twenty-six years, the Lehigh Valley Labor Council has held its annual award ceremony at the Memorial Community Center. The building's history, a former bag house where employees of the Universal Atlas Portland Cement Company sewed and printed cloth cement bags, is a fitting venue for a ceremony dedicated to the cause of working people. Northampton renovated the bag house into a community center, after the cement company donated it and a surrounding nineteen-acre parcel to the borough in 1944.

After music and hors d'oeuvres, Council President Jim Irwin welcomed the crowd at 7 p.m. and thanked all the council members who helped with the event's preparations. He also thanked the committee that made the tables' centerpieces in memory of Suzanjoy Checksfield. Checksfield, a council delegate whose creative designs and decorations graced many awards ceremonies, passed away in September 2025. The centerpieces included a dark crimson rose, English ivy and Rosemary, signifying mourning, friendship, and remembrance respectively.

The Bethlehem Firefighters #735 Honor Guard presented the flag during the Pledge of Allegiance, and John Weiss gave the Invocation. Twelve members of the Northampton Banquet and Event Center immediately began serving a family-style dinner to guests seated at over thirty tables. After dinner, the award ceremony followed.

The award announcements began with recognizing Laborers International Union of North America #158 with the Local Union of the Year honor. Chartered in 1953, the union has grown to serve twenty-nine counties in Pennsylvania and is a leading voice in the building trades. Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk received the Labor/Business Partner of the Year Award on behalf of the city, and the Legislator of the Year Award went to Pennsylvania state Sen. Nick Miller. After narrowly winning an open seat in the 2022 Democratic primary as a result of redistricting, Miller defeated his Republican opponent later that year in the 14th state senatorial race. At the age of twenty-eight, he became the youngest person elected to the state Senate in 135 years. Seasoned political observers see a bright future for Sen. Miller. (Fig. #2)

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Fig. 2: Pennsylvania state Sen. Nick Miller received the Legislator of the Year Award. He became the youngest person elected to the state Senate in 2022 and is running for re-election this November.

Quintes Taglioli received the Lifetime Achievement Award. The honor recognized his career representing labor unions and workers. The President's Award went to Andy Kubat of the American Postal Workers Union, Lehigh Valley #268. He has spent most of his career serving clerk, maintenance and motor vehicle members in the area. Although he stepped down as president of the local last year, he still remains active on its executive board as an officer. (Fig. #3)

Fig. 3: Andy Kubat received the President's Award for his thirty-plus years representing the members of the American Postal Workers Union, Lehigh Valley #268.



Marci Lesko, president and CEO of the United Way of the Lehigh Valley, presented Jim Irwin with the United Way Achievement Award. Finally, Lt. John Leonard, of the Allentown Police Dept., received the Gregg J. Potter Community Service Award, formerly known as the William Werkheiser Community Service Award. John Werkheiser gave a brief history of the award beginning in 1988 and how it was named after his father. "My father was proud that the community service award was named after him," he said. "But he was more proud of all the people he helped over the years until his passing in 2001." Werkheiser had earlier urged the labor council to rename the award.

President Young's keynote address concluded the awards ceremony with an important labor history lesson. "Every time workers gain power there is a backlash," he warned. Indeed, the struggle continues.

“ ”



"The American people are deeply apprehensive about the impact that artificial intelligence will have on their lives. . . .

"The American people understand that AI and robotics will transform our world. They want to make certain that this technological revolution makes life better, not worse, for them and their families. They know that fundamental questions must be answered before we rush forward. They don't trust the AI oligarchs.

"At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, people recognize the AI revolution is being led by some of the wealthiest people in this country. Billionaires like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg and Larry Ellison are investing enormous sums in AI and robotics not to improve life for working families but to expand their own wealth and power."

US Sen. Bernie Sanders, in an April 3, 2026 *Wall Street Journal* commentary entitled "AI is a threat to everything the American People hold dear."



AFL-CIO: Dangerous new OSHA directive

Trump abandons workers facing extreme heat

by Liz Shuler, President
AFL-CIO

Press Release April 14, 2026

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler issued the following statement in response to a new directive from the Trump administration's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), through its National Emphasis Program that leaves workers vulnerable to heat.



This new policy limits OSHA's ability to hold bosses accountable when they fail to protect workers from heat on the job. It puts workers' lives in danger, plain and simple.

As climate change accelerates and heat-related illnesses rise alongside temperatures, the Trump administration is willfully putting workers' lives at risk to pad the pockets of corporations. The new directive turns a once proactive enforcement approach into a reactive one, removing specific targets that inspectors rely on to conduct independent investigations, speak directly with workers, and enforce health and safety laws—especially critical at a time when the Trump administration is already issuing fewer warnings and citations to employers. By shifting to "self-audit" and voluntary participation, corporations get a free pass from following the law, while workers pay the price.

This month, the labor movement will commemorate Workers Memorial Day and honor those who suffered injury, illness, or lost their lives on the job—including the more than 2,600 workers who died from heat exposure in the past five years alone. We call on the Trump administration to renew the previous directive and actually make good on its promises to working people.



Mark your calendar

Lehigh Valley Labor Council's 2026 events

- May 4: Last day to Register to vote in the Municipal primary election
- May 9: National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive. Visit for more information: <https://www.nalc.org/community-service/food-drive>
- May 12: Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot.
- May 19: Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots (must be received by 8 p.m.)
- May 19: Municipal Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- May 20: Labor Council monthly meeting
- June 16: Pennsylvania Building Trades Convention
- June 17: Labor Council monthly meeting
- July 15: Labor Council monthly meeting
- August 19: Labor Council monthly meeting
- September 6: Labor Council Labor Day Pete DePietro Picnic, American Club, Coplay
- September 7: Labor Day
- September 16: Labor Council monthly meeting
- September 19: Labor Council Annual Golf Tournament, Shepherds Hills, Wescosville



Evaluating labor voting records: Our lawmakers votes' and the AFL-CIO scorecard

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

The AFL-CIO's annual legislative scorecard on federal lawmakers' voting records recently revealed unsurprising results. With one exception, Pennsylvania's GOP congressional delegation has consistently voted against working families.

For over twenty-five years, the AFL-CIO has published online how our senators and representatives voted on labor issues. The federation released its most recent scorecard in early April, reviewing the first session of the 119th Congress which began on January 2, 2025. This scorecard tallied thirteen critical labor votes in the US House and nine labor votes in the US Senate. Congressional voting records dating back to 2009 are available on the AFL-CIO's website, www.aflcio.org.

This article presents a critical analysis of the voting records of our area's congressional delegation, particularly focusing on their stances regarding labor issues. It also highlights a perceived shift in representation detrimental to working families over the past twenty years.

In November 2024, newly-elected Republican lawmakers rode Donald Trump's coattails to defeat Democratic incumbents. They subsequently reversed gains made by working families under their labor-friendly predecessors. In addition, re-elected incumbent GOP lawmakers grew more hardline against labor. The following examples from the AFL-CIO scorecard show that the promises Trump and his Republican allies made to working-class voters during the 2024 Election proved empty.

The election of Dave McCormick over incumbent Bob Casey provides a breathtaking reversal on working-class support. Casey had amassed a stellar labor voting record of ninety-nine percent after eighteen years in the US Senate. He consistently voted to strengthen workers' voices on the job, supported measures in the Senate that protected healthcare and retirement benefits, and fought against Sen. Mitch McConnell's machinations behind Supreme Court nominees. Pennsylvania's working families could always count on Bob Casey.

Lifetime Labor Record of Pennsylvania's US Senators

| <i>Senator/Party</i> | <i>Years served</i> | <i>Legislative scorecard on labor issues as a percentage</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Arlen Specter (R) | (1981-2011) | 61% |
| Rick Santorum (R) | (1995-2007) | 13 |
| Bob Casey (D) | (2007-2025) | 99 |
| Pat Toomey (R) | (2011-2023) | 10 |
| John Fetterman (D) | (2023-2025) | 100 |
| Dave McCormick (R) | (2025-) | 0 |

McCormick's voting record suggests he will be Pennsylvania's most anti-labor senator in decades.

(Credit: AFL-CIO, www.afl-cio.org)

Lifetime Labor Record of Lehigh Valley's House members

| <i>House member/Party</i> | <i>Years served</i> | <i>Legislative scorecard on labor issues as a percentage</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Charlie Dent (R) | (2005-2018) | 23% |
| Susan Wild (D) | (2018-2025) | 97 |
| Ryan Mackenzie (R) | (2025-) | 8 |

Mackenzie's voting record suggests that he will consistently vote against labor while in Congress.

(Credit: AFL-CIO, www.afl-cio.org)

Yet, Casey's near-blemished support for workers ended in a single night in November 2024, when voters replaced him with McCormick, a Republican who has opposed labor on every key issue. During his first year in the senate, McCormick cast his support for Trump's firing of National Labor Relations Board member Gwynn Wilcox and voted for the president's "One Big, Beautiful Bill. As former CEO of Bridgewater Associates, one of the world's largest hedge funds, he voted for the Genius Act (S. 1582), a legislative gift to the crypto industry that could threaten the nation's financial stability. He also confirmed all Trump's cabinet nominees, including controversial Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer. Remarkably, Pennsylvania, a state rich in labor history and working-class struggle, now has a senator whose voting record directly opposes working-family issues.

Indeed, McCormick's zero rating on labor issues ranks him below all other Pennsylvania senators on labor legislation since at least 1968. Even previous senators like Hugh Scott, Dick Schweiker, John Heinz, Arlen Specter, Harris Wofford, and Bob Casey all had far better labor voting records. Rich Santorum and Pat Toomey, who routinely voted against working families, also had higher labor scorecards than McCormick. Santorum had a lifetime labor score of thirteen percent and Toomey had a score of ten percent. McCormick's zero-rating scorecard puts him at the very bottom, and history suggests that as long as McCormick is in the senate, he will consistently oppose workers.

In stark contrast to McCormick, John Fetterman presents a completely different picture as our other senator. He has cast controversial votes that have not pleased members of his party, but he maintains an exceptional labor voting score of one hundred percent. Since he arrived in the senate in January 2023, he voted on twenty-two key labor measures and supported workers on each issue.

Turning to the Lehigh Valley's 7th congressional district, we had another flip in working-class support after the 2024 Election. Susan Wild had represented our region since 2018 and, like Casey, amassed a stellar labor voting record of ninety-seven percent. She strengthened retirement benefits for public sector workers, passed measures to bring down the cost of prescription medicines and voted to improve national security by investing in domestic semiconductor funding. Her labor voting scorecard ranked higher than any of her predecessors in at least fifty years.

Ryan Mackenzie's defeat of Wild on Election Night 2024 silenced the voice for Lehigh Valley workers in the US House. He supported labor only eight percent of the time in 2025, vot-ing correctly only once among thirteen key labor issues. He eliminated tax credits that would have cut healthcare premium costs in half for twenty million Americans. He voted for crypto industry legislation that weakened oversight and endangered hard-earned retirement benefits. And he cast his ballot for Trump's One Big, Beautiful Bill that slashed Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and other important social safety benefits, while providing tax breaks to the wealthy. It is ironic that a region home to generations of quarrymen, garment weavers, ore miners, autoworkers, steelworkers, and building tradesmen would be represented by a politician who has spent his career in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C. opposed to their interests.

Even U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent, who served as Mackenzie's Republican predecessor, had a better score than him. Dent left the House in 2018 with a twenty-three percent legislative rating from the AFL-CIO, although he turned increasingly anti-labor towards the end of his fourteen-year tenure in Congress. But he

refused to vote for Donald Trump in 2016, a stark contrast to Mackenzie's obsequious support to the current president.

Mackenzie has plenty of company, however, as an anti-labor politician in Pennsylvania's congressional delegation. Seven of the state's Republican House members refused to support a single labor-backed measure in 2025. Freshman Robert Bresnahan, representing the state's northeastern Eighth District, voted only once with labor like Mackenzie, and four-term congressman Brian Fitzpatrick, who represents the suburban areas north of Philadelphia, is the delegation's only GOP member who has a lifetime legislative scorecard rating of fifty percent. With the except of Fitzpatrick, the state's nine other Republican congressmen will almost always side against working people.

Trump and McCormick may not be on the ballot on November 3, but Ryan Mackenzie will face a Democratic opponent. Union voters have an opportunity at the May 19 Primary Election to cast their ballots for a strong working-families candidate who can defeat Mackenzie in the November mid-term elections.



Trees lay flatten by a bulldozer as more farmland falls prey to industrial development. News reports announced on January 30 that pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly plans to build 925,000 square feet of manufacturing space across multiple sites on land owned by David Jandl, located in Upper Macungie Township between Old 22 (*in the foreground*) and I-78 (*behind the fallen trees*). The facility is expected to become operational in 2031.

The \$3.5 billion venture represents "the largest single economic development project in Lehigh Valley history," local media station *WFMZ-TV* wrote on its January 30 website. Don Cunningham, president and CEO of the Lehigh Valley Economic Corporation compared the size of the potential economic impact to that of the former Bethlehem Steel in an interview with *WFMZ-TV*. However, the steel giant built their South Bethlehem mill without massive tax perks, and employed thousands of workers even during the nineteenth century. In contrast, Lilly will receive over \$100 million in tax breaks from Harrisburg to build a manufacturing facility staffed by 850 permanent workers over the next five years. According to *The Wall Street Journal* on January 31, the state's "tax perks for corporate investors" helped lure the trillion dollar company to the area.

The Journal also noted that our region's "proximity to ports in New York and New Jersey" also persuaded Lilly to build in the Lehigh Valley. Two hundred years ago, our area enticed investors when the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company prospered by shipping anthracite coal on the region's extensive canal network to Philadelphia and New York City.

Defunding the tax police

How Trump's cuts to the IRS will benefit the rich, swell federal budget deficits

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



Donald Trump is shrinking the Internal Revenue Service, a move stemming from his frequent clashes with the agency before his presidency. These reductions will weaken the agency, benefitting wealthy individuals like himself, and leading to increases in the federal budget deficit.

When President Joe Biden left office in January 2025, roughly 103,000 employees worked at the IRS. Changes at the tax agency arrived immediately upon Trump's return to the White House. The incoming president had earlier announced plans to replace IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel, even though the commissioner had three years remaining in his term. Werfel resigned confessing that Trump viewed tax enforcement with scorn. "I had to recognize that the incoming team wanted to go in a new direction," he said.

Following Werfel's departure, Trump proceeded with job cuts at the IRS. He fired probationary employees and slashed the number of career workers. The agency currently operates with no acting IRS commissioner and has 25 percent fewer employees.

Werfel's departure and the drastic cuts in agents have led to predictable outcomes. Trump's administration cut audits of corporate jet use, reduced investigations into complex business

partnerships, shelved inquiries of companies claiming employee retention tax credits during the pandemic-era, and shut down the Biden-era free tax preparation service that debuted in 2024.

Richard Rubin, writing in an April 13 *Wall Street Journal* article highlighted drawbacks to Trump's IRS cuts. He noted that the president has ignored a basic understanding of strong tax enforcement: "chasing (tax) scofflaws generates more money than it costs." He explained that Trump's job reductions at the agency are expected to "cut an estimated \$46 billion in federal spending over the next decade," but it will also "reduce revenue collections by \$643 billion."

In a February 24, 2026 post, the Tax Law Center predicted Trump's cuts would "worsen IRS performance (and) undermine modernization efforts," making tax collection more challenging. Trump and his congressional allies had already rescinded funding for technological improvements to tax collecting that Biden had signed into law. The Tax Law Center projects that Trump's successor "will likely inherit a depleted IRS," forced to rely on outdated technology to perform its most basic functions.

In a June 16, 2025 letter, US Sens. Tim Kaine, Elizabeth Warren, Angus King and Sheldon Whitehouse wrote to Trump's Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent that the administration's IRS cuts would benefit the wealthy. They explained that "a small subset of high-income taxpayers . . . find complicated workarounds to shield income from the taxes that they owe." This has created a huge gap, known as the "tax gap," between taxes owed and taxes collected. The estimated tax gap now approaches \$700 billion. They added that the agency's division that audited the ultrawealthy had lost 38 percent of its agents due to Trump's reductions.

Trump's damaging cuts to the Internal Revenue Service will extend long after he has left office.



The United Auto Workers #677 at Westport Axle staged a rally on March 26. Held at nearby Lock Ridge Park, in Alburis, organizers explained at the rally the company's negotiating delays and bad-faith bargaining since workers joined the union in March 2024. The roughly 170 employees at the plant, however, remain united and determined to win their first contract. Many of them wore their red UAW T-shirts inside the plant on the day of the rally. The union's recent Unfair Labor Practice charge filed with the National Labor Relations Board prodded the company to schedule a new round of bargaining. (*Credit: Jody Weinreich*)





Lehigh Valley union members joined the March 22 Allentown St. Patrick's Day parade. Union members prepared their vehicles at the Allentown Fairgrounds before the march. United Auto Workers #677 (top left clockwise), International Union of Operating Engineers #542, United Brotherhood of Carpenters #167, International Brotherhood of Teamsters #773, and Service Employees International Union-Workers United. Other unions joining in the parade included: Steamfitters #420, Easton Education Association, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #375, National Association of Letter Carriers #274, Allentown Firefighters #302, Amalgamated Transit Union #956 and Lehigh Valley Postal Workers #268. The floats of Workers United and Teamsters #773 received awards from the St. Patrick's Day Committee.



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026

Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM

Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052

(One block east of the Whitehall Township Police Department)

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