



NEWS & VIEWS

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

www.lehighvalleyclc.org



June 2025



Westport Axle workers rallied for a first contract on April 23 after they had voted to join the United Auto Workers #677 in March 2024. The company's negotiating delays forced the employees at the wheel, tire and axle assembly plant in Alburtis to stage a rally in support of reaching an agreement. "These workers need a contract," said lead organizer Buddy Maxwell.

Public sector workers at risk Employer-sponsored workplace safety study no excuse for continued lack of OSHA plan for Penna. public-sector workers

by the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, Council #13

A recent study on Pennsylvania's workplace safety requirements completed by the Office of Administration (OA) found that six select Commonwealth agencies "had relatively lower injury rates compared to employees of OSHA-covered private sector employers during the 2022 calendar year." The study also found that policies from the six agencies "pointed to the Commonwealth's written guidelines and standards appearing to be above and beyond the current OSHA regulations."

The study focused on six of the Commonwealth's 72 agencies, which were chosen by the OA because they accounted for 94.3 percent of the work-related injury claims. The document does not explicitly list the names of these six agencies. Instead, it provides data grouped by industry sectors using North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, such as Residential Intellectual and Developmental Disability Facilities, Other Residential Care Facilities, Correctional Institutions, Highway, Street and Bridge Construction, and Nursing Care Facilities.

AFSCME Council 13 commends the extensive work that went into this study and is grateful for any reduction in workplace injuries, as well as employer-sponsored guidelines and standards that may contribute to improved worker safety.

However, this study is no excuse for the continued lack of a state Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) plan for Pennsylvania's public sector employees – a disparity that continues to degrade and threaten the well-being of hundreds of thousands of workers.

According to the AFL-CIO's report "Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect," in 2023, state and local public sector employers reported a combined injury rate of 4.3 per 100 workers, 89.2 percent higher than the reported rate of 2.4 per 100 workers in the private sector.

Furthermore, the findings of the OA's study pale in comparison to the reality on the ground – and in work zones – in Pennsylvania. As we recently recognized National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week (April 21-25), and today we recognize Workers' Memorial Day (April 28), we remember our sisters and brothers who have been injured and killed on the job, including those in the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

Consider this: on the same highway using the same equipment, if a private contractor and a PennDOT worker are injured on the job, the private contractor is covered by OSHA and the PennDOT worker is not.



Just last August, PennDOT Diesel and Construction Equipment Mechanic and AFSCME Local 2128 member Rodney "Craig" Walker passed away due to complications from an injury sustained on the job. He became the 91st name on the PennDOT Worker Memorial list.

No one wants to see anymore names added to that list, and while accidents happen, AFSCME Council 13 believes more can be done to make public sector workplaces safer. The biggest step toward that goal that we can make right now is passing and enacting a state OSHA plan for Pennsylvania. State House Bill #308, which would bring OSHA protections to public sector employees across Pennsylvania, was recently passed in the House of Representatives. We now call on State Senators to get it passed and on Governor Shapiro's desk for signature.

(continued page seven)

Lehigh Valley Labor Council AFL-CIO

www.lehighvalleyclc.org
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Annual golf outing set for June 21

Proceeds support labor community projects

by Gregg Potter, International Union of Operating Engineers #542
Executive Vice-President, Lehigh Valley Labor Council

The twenty-second Annual Lehigh Valley Labor Council Golf Tournament will be held Saturday, June 21 at the Shepherd Hills Golf Club, 1160 South Krocks Road, Wescosville. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and shot gun start at 10 a.m.



All proceeds of this event will support community service efforts put forth by delegates and officers of the Lehigh Valley Labor Council. Examples include but are not limited to: Teen-Works™, Roosevelt Elementary School after school care and Holiday Program, Big Brothers-Big Sisters of the Lehigh Valley, Lehigh Valley Cops-N-Kids, Leukemia - Lymphoma Society, and American Cancer Society via Real Men Wear Pink.

Deadline to register is June 11. Event is limited to the first 132 paid players. In case of rain, all registrants will receive a rain check for a future round of golf.

Presenting Sponsorship - \$3,000.00

Two Foursomes
Name/Logo on ALL FOUR Hole in One Competitions
Union/Corporate signage on carts and at facility
Verbal Recognition before event and dinner
Union/Corporate signage as prime sponsor for Picnic Buffet
Opportunity for Representative to speak at Dinner
Eight Hole sponsor signs

Platinum Club Sponsor --\$2,000.00

Two Foursomes
Union/Corporate signage on carts and at facility
Union/Corporate signage on Sponsor Boards
Union/Corporate signage as prime sponsor for prizes
Verbal/Visual Recognition before event and Dinner
Six Hole sponsor signs

Diamond Club Sponsor--\$1,500.00

Two Foursomes
Union/Corporate signage at facility
Union/Corporate signage as prize sponsor
Verbal Recognition before event and Dinner
Four Hole sponsor signs

Gold Club Sponsor--\$700.00

One foursome
Union/Corporate signage at facility
Union/Corporate acknowledgement on sponsor boards
Verbal Recognition before event and Dinner
Three Hole sponsor signs

Silver Club Sponsor--\$550.00

One Foursome
Union/Corporate signage at facility
Verbal Recognition before event and Dinner
One Hole sponsor sign

Foursome--\$500.00

Four Golfers
Hot Dog before golf
Beverage Package
Dinner

22nd Annual LVLC Golf Tournament



Hosted by
Shepherd Hills Golf Club



When: Saturday June 21, 2025

Where: Shepherd Hills Golf Club
1160 S. Krocks Rd.
Wescosville Pa
610 826-2504

Time: 9 am - Registration
10 am - Shotgun Start
(Rain or Shine)
followed by Dinner

SPONSOR / GOLFER DEADLINE

June 11th, 2025 (limited to the first 132 paid players)

Please send checks payable to:

Lehigh Valley Labor Council
Attn: Gregg Potter
510 W. Franklin Street, Topton, PA 19562
610 360-9491 or potterfb@msn.com

* In case of rain all registrants will receive a rain check for a future round of golf.

Single Golfer-- \$125.00

Greens Fees & Cart (single golfers may be paired up)
Beverage Package
Prize Opportunities
Picnic Buffet

Friend of Labor Hole Sponsor--\$75.00

Your Union/Corporate Name on Signage
Placed Strategically on Course

Please send checks payable to:

Lehigh Valley Labor Council
Attn: Gregg Potter
510 W. Franklin Street
Topton Pa. 19562
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The toll of neglect

Death on the job, 2025

by the AFL-CIO

The 2025 edition of “Death on the Job: The Toll of Neglect” marks the thirty-fourth year the AFL-CIO has produced the only comprehensive report on the state of safety and health protections for America’s workers. This report features national and state information on workplace fatalities, injuries and illnesses, as well as workplace safety inspections, penalties, funding, staffing and public employee coverage under the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act). It also includes information on the state of mine safety and health, key topics such as workplace violence, musculoskeletal disorders and heat illness prevention, and transitions in policies on government occupational data reporting, transparency and equity.

This report focuses on the most recent data available from several different sources: job fatality, injury and illness data from 2023, and enforcement data from FY 2024.

Fifty-four years ago on April 28, the OSH Act went into effect, promising every worker the right to a safe job. More than 712,000 workers now can say their lives have been saved since the passage of the OSH Act. The federal Mine Safety and Health Act was enacted forty-eight years ago. Since that era, workplace safety and health conditions have improved. But too many workers remain at serious risk of injury, illness or death as chemical plant explosions, major fires, construction collapses, infectious disease outbreaks, workplace assaults, toxic chemical exposures and other preventable tragedies continue to permeate the workplace. Workplace hazards kill approximately 140,000 workers each year—including 5,283 from traumatic injuries and an estimated 135,000 from occupational diseases in 2023. That is 385 workers each day—and many worker protections are under threat. Job injury and illness numbers continue to be severe undercounts of the real problem.

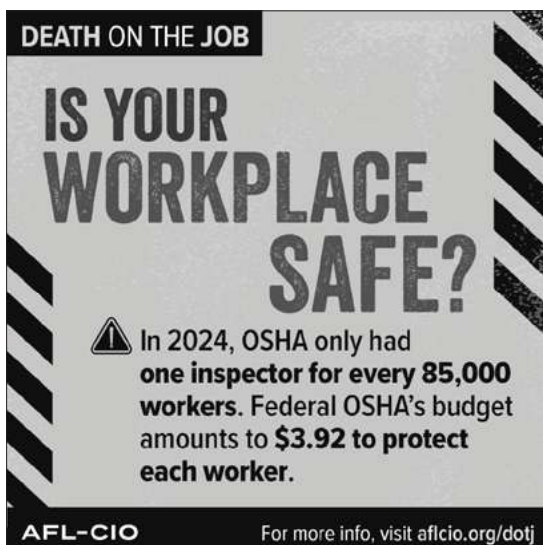


Fig. 1: Visit www.aflcio.org/dotj for complete report.



Fig. 2: Trump's second inauguration saw over \$1 trillion in wealth stand by his side. They included tech billionaires such as Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and Jeff Bezos. Even more remarkable, this list included only the eleven richest attendees. When the wealthiest men in America have the best seats at the president's inaugural, everyone understands that the billionaire class now controls our government.

(Credit: visualcapitalist.com)

Over the years, our progress has become more challenging, as employers' opposition to workers' rights and protections has grown, and attacks on unions have intensified. Big corporations, many conservatives and billionaires have launched an aggressive assault on workers' lives and their livelihoods by repealing job safety and health regulations, promoting deregulatory initiatives, blocking funding and pulling back resources for job safety agencies, firing federal staff doing critical work to protect worker health and safety, and requiring additional burdens in order to issue protections at all. They aim to dissolve the protection structures and shift the responsibility for providing safe jobs from employers to individual workers, and to undermine the core duties and capacity of workplace safety agencies, and more recently disregard and discard the government's responsibility to protect workers altogether. (Fig. #1)

President Trump's first one hundred days of his second administration have not only attacked Biden administration progress, but confirmed his anti-worker, pro-business philosophy. Since taking office at the end of January 2025, he has issued dozens of executive orders to roll back or review existing regulations, including an order that requires that for any new regulatory protection issued, an agency must remove ten safeguards from the books. He has empowered Elon Musk and his so-called “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE) to launch a full-scale attack on workers by eliminating entire government agencies, removing the independence of other agencies, and firing tens of thousands of federal workers under the guise of eliminating waste, fraud and abuse. Although no significant waste, fraud or abuse has been identified in federal agencies, Trump and Musk have used DOGE to launch attacks on workers' rights, workers' protections, federal agencies, and private and public sector unions. (Fig. #2)

The Trump administration and DOGE have focused on totally decimating the fabric of what makes government protections work for people through attacks on job safety, public health, union rights and the independence of federal agencies.

Attacks on federal workers aim to decimate the fairest employer in the country; it is not a coincidence and it is not efficient. There is no misunderstanding among workers and unions that state and local governments and the private sector will be next on the chopping block. In the most poignant and direct attack on worker safety, DOGE functionally eliminated the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the only worker safety and health research agency. Worker safety is not a priority for this administration.

National progress over the decades has undoubtedly made workplaces safer and saved lives. But that progress is under attack, now more than ever. The nation's workers now must fight fearlessly to hold onto worker protection and public health systems, as they did a century ago to create these agencies, laws and standards that keep us safe at work. We must prioritize protecting workers from job injury, disease and death, restore dignity and justice to working people, improve livelihoods, and reduce burdens on families and communities, over the whims and greed of billionaires. Employers must meet their responsibilities under the law to protect workers and be held accountable when they put workers in danger.

There is much more work to be done to ensure the fundamental right to a safe and healthy job is a reality for all of America's workers.



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“Beneath the roofs of iron mills and furnaces ... the slaughter of employees is a ... daily occurrence. In some of the largest of these mills, the temporary morgue seems to be as necessary ... as the stock house or the business office, and human life ... is the cheapest of all raw materials.”

John C. Delaney, Pennsylvania Chief Factory Inspector, 1905 Factory Inspector's Annual Report.



**PA AFL-CIO
ADVOCACY DAY
FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE**

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

Fighting for the Future

Tuesday, June 10, 2025

10:30 a.m.—1 p.m.

**600 North Second Street
Harrisburg, Pa.**

Meet at the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO headquarters and march to the Capitol steps. For more information, visit: www.paaflcio.org



Workplace safety threatened

Tell Congress: Protect worker safety, reverse gutting of NIOSH

Due to Elon Musk and his unaccountable DOGE, we are facing one of the largest mass firings of federal workers in history, including highly technical federal workers who keep us safe on the job.

More than a thousand workers in six states and Washington, D.C., have lost their jobs at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the federal job safety research agency. By gutting this key organization, America's workers will lose critical safety protections and more workers will get hurt. Every single NIOSH research center is being closed and the few staff remaining no longer have the resources to do their jobs.

Please call your member of Congress and demand they stand up for this critical health and safety agency and its workers against DOGE and the Trump administration.

Our message is simple: Stop the cuts to NIOSH and reinstate their workers. Here are details that may help your call:

Congress created NIOSH (pronounced nigh-osh) on a broad bipartisan basis.

NIOSH is the only federal government agency that conducts research on worker safety and health, and gathers and analyzes the information to keep workers safe.

NIOSH's research and recommendations are relied on by workers and employers throughout the world.

NIOSH conducted the key research for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Mine Safety and Health Administration regulations on asbestos, cotton dust, lead, bloodborne pathogens, silica and black lung, which have saved hundreds of thousands of workers' lives.

NIOSH also researches worker exposures to heat and wildfire smoke, workplace violence, back injuries and other chronic diseases, and state-of-the-art technologies that keep workers safe in mines.

NIOSH is responsible for approving all respirators, and combats fraud from imported counterfeit products, that keep America's workers safe and protect U.S. manufacturing.

NIOSH also oversees the World Trade Center Health Program to provide 9/11 responders and survivors medical monitoring and treatment, and a program to compensate energy workers exposed to deadly hazards from manufacturing, testing, and cleaning up nuclear weapons.

Right now each year, more than 5,000 workers die from job injuries and 135,000 workers die from chronic occupational diseases. Millions more workers are injured.

Ten percent of the recently announced Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) staff cuts come from NIOSH, even though that makes up a tiny part of the overall HHS budget.

NIOSH centers being closed are in Pittsburgh; Morgantown, W.Va.; Cincinnati; Spokane, Wash.; Denver; Atlanta; and Washington, D.C.



**TELL CONGRESS: PROTECT WORKER SAFETY,
REVERSE GUTTING OF NIOSH**

AFL-CIO | **CALL YOUR REPRESENTATIVE:
844-292-9097**



Will OSHA die on the job?

Workers' Memorial Day speech describes bill introduced in Congress to abolish agency

John Werkheiser

Workers' Memorial Day chair



The Occupational Safety and Health Act was signed into law by President Richard Nixon in 1970. However, House Republican Andy Biggs from Arizona has a different idea about worker safety.

Biggs said on February 2, 2025: "OSHA's existence is yet another example of the federal government creating agencies to address issues that are more appropriately handled by state governments and private employers."

I repeat . . . "more appropriately handled by state governments and private employers."

Where do I begin? First, there is **NO** Pennsylvania OSHA department. There is also still no coverage of state, county and municipal workers in Pennsylvania, although state House Bill #308 passed on April 9 and now goes to the state Senate.

Second, where is the money to start a state program? How many workers will suffer during the transformation?

And finally, Congressman Biggs believes that private employers can more appropriately handle worker safety. What world is he living in? There are some very good, concerned employers out there. I have worked with quite a few. However, we continue to read a lot of names who were employed by the not so good and not so concerned employers. (*see below*)

177

Number of known Lehigh Valley workers that have died on the job since the first local Workers' Memorial Day ceremony at the Bethlehem Rose Gardens in 1991.

Credit: Lehigh Valley Labor Council website:
www.lehighvalleyclc.org/wm17.htm

The proverbial fox has no place guarding the worker safety hen house!

Let's be clear. Even with a federal OSHA in 2023, we had 5,283 fatalities from injuries on the job and 135,304 from occupational disease. That is over 380 deaths each day in the United States.

Biggs's bill, entitled the Nullify the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (NOSHA) Act, would be a catastrophic step backward for worker safety in this country. Repealing OSHA would put workers at great risk by dismantling the very protections that have helped reduce workplace injuries and deaths for over 50 years. Without OSHA, many workers will be left vulnerable to unsafe conditions, and it will be the most vulnerable, the low-income and minority workers, who will bear the brunt of dangerous rollbacks.

We can have a civilized conversation about excess government spending. We can have an open discussion about whether American taxpayer dollars should fund various overseas conflicts or if we should spend more money on feeding the hungry and housing the homeless and less money on national parks.



Dedication of the Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial monument on April 28, 1991. About 350 people attended the unveiling of the 2500-pound statue at the Bethlehem Rose Gardens, Bethlehem. Pennsylvania AFL-CIO President William George (*in the white coat*) led the ceremonies along with Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial co-chairs Frances Polgar and Pete DePietro (*both standing alongside George*). Standing directly behind DePietro is John Werkheiser, current chair of the Workers' Memorial committee.

However, pushing the concept of abolishing OSHA and letting the states handle workplace safety is going to lead to more injuries and deaths of workers. Elon Musk and his DOGE cuts are also looking at OSHA, in some cases closing offices and reducing manpower. The current administration has certainly shown no concern or sympathy with workers in the United States.

We thought the fight was tough the past 34 years since Workers' Memorial Day was designated as a day to remember workers that were killed or severely injured on the job. I believe we are now in for the Fight of our lives.....or should I say, the fight **FOR** our lives!



Weakening child labor protections GOP governors want more work out of teenagers

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has a labor shortage problem. His solution: get more work out of teenagers.

Under current Florida law, 16- and 17-year olds are prohibited from working beyond thirty hours a week during the school year unless a parent or school official waives that limitation. They are also limited to working after 6:30 a.m. or before 11 p.m. on a school day.

Florida Senate Bill #918 would have scrapped the number of hours that 16- and 17-year-olds can work per week during the school term, and it would have eliminated the prohibition against overnight work. The bill also opened the door for some 14- and 15-year-old students to work these expanded hours. Last year, DeSantis signed into law a bill that rolled back restrictions on construction work for teenagers.

Florida is the latest in a string of states, nearly all Republican-controlled, that have scrapped child-labor law protections in



Newly-elected officers of the Labor Temple Association of the Lehigh Valley. (front row, left to right) Paula Small, Anne Radakovits, Jim Irwin, John Weiss (*at podium*), Ellen Marx, and Jody Weinrich. (back row, left to right) Mike Wallery, Dennis Hower, Susanjoy Checksfield, Ron Labor and John Werkheiser. The history of the association dates back to the early twentieth century sparked most probably by the 1910 Bethlehem Steel Strike. Steel magnate Charles M. Schwab had grown irritated by South Bethlehem officials allowing strikers to meet in the borough's Municipal Hall and local taverns. He threatened to relocate his plant, which persuaded borough officials and local businessmen to revoke the use of their property to the strikers. When strikers attempted to hold meetings in back alleys and yards, police harassed them. The episode may have influenced local labor activists, seeking to find a home for workers to hold meetings, listen to lectures, and organize campaigns, to purchase a brick building on 124-126 North Sixth St., Allentown in 1917. *The Allentown Morning Call* demolished the structure in July 2004 after purchasing it from the Labor Temple Association. Although no longer property owners, Labor Temple President Weiss reiterated the association's historic mission by quoting from its by-laws: "The object of the Association is to provide and maintain a home for Labor, irrespective of its political or industrial affiliation, and to encourage and promote the study of social, industrial and economic problems by means of courses and instructions. . . ."

recent years. Some, like Florida, have extended work hours for teens after midnight. Others, like Ohio, have allowed underage workers to serve alcohol, and others, like Iowa, have removed restrictions for teen workers from performing dangerous jobs. Alabama eliminated work permits for minors below age sixteen.

These bills are usually advanced by business lobbying groups and chambers of commerce to address a shortage of workers. Donald Trump's immigration crackdown has made matters worse. "Why do we say we need to import foreigners?" DeSantis asked in March, touting teen labor as a replacement for migrant labor. Moms for Liberty, another right-wing advocacy group, argued that parents, not the government, should decide what work their sons or daughters should do.

We tend to think of child labor in American sweatshops as a thing of the past. However, child labor abuse has been on the upswing. In 2023, the US Dept. of Labor reported almost 5,800 child labor law violations. The Pennsylvania Dept. of Labor & Industry opened 403 child labor investigations during the same year, an increase of 276 percent from 2022.

Even when it is dressed up as something virtuous, the measures often address the needs of employers rather than the needs of school-age children. If we really care about children, said Angela Ferritto, president of the AFL-CIO, in 2023, lawmakers should "adequately" fund labor law enforcement and adopted harsher penalties for violations. We need to change the incentives for bosses who take advantage of teen workers, rather than weaken child labor laws.



Public sector workers at risk

(continued from page two)

State Plans are OSHA-approved workplace safety and health programs operated by individual states or U.S. territories. There are currently 22 State Plans covering both private sector and state and local government workers, and seven State Plans covering only state and local government workers. State Plans are monitored by OSHA and must be at least as effective as OSHA in protecting workers and in preventing work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

This issue goes beyond transportation workers. Council 13 also represents workers in healthcare and corrections, among other hazardous jobs, who deserve equal protection on the job. The OA's study was conducted in partnership with Millersville University where in 2017, longtime groundskeeper and AFSCME Local 2421 member at Millersville University Michael Keefer passed away after the riding lawnmower he was operating caught fire. Anything can happen in any line of work, and that's why AFSCME Council 13 continues its decades-long push for public sector OSHA.

Workplace safety is a right and should not be exclusive to one group of workers over another. Every Pennsylvanian should have the right to safe and healthy working conditions, including our public service workers, and the OA's report does not change that. Council 13 will continue its efforts to enact public sector OSHA in Pennsylvania.





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THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2025
Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM
Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052

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