



NEWS & VIEWS

LEHIGH VALLEY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

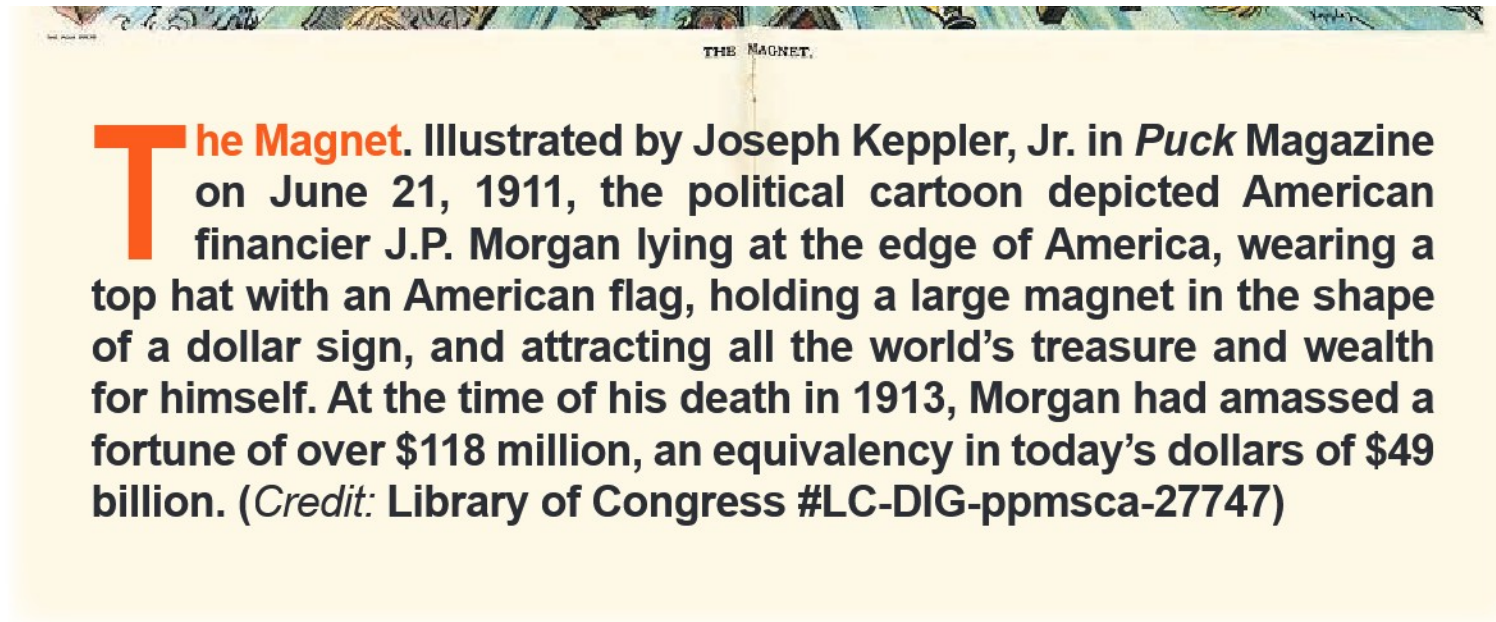
"UNIONS JOINING TOGETHER AS ONE"

www.lehighvalleyclc.org



July 2025





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Union energy

Creating a sustainable, innovative energy economy

*by Angela Ferritto, President
Pennsylvania AFL-CIO*

As union leaders, we understand that there is an energy that unites all of us in the Pennsylvania labor movement, and it has never been stronger. Our shared responsibility to support the creation of new union jobs with an eye toward our future, coupled with our relentless commitment to protecting existing union jobs keeps



Angela Ferritto

PENNSYLVANIA ranks as the second largest producer of total energy, natural gas, and nuclear power among the fifty states.

PENNSYLVANIA ranks as the third largest producer of coal, among the fifty states.

PENNSYLVANIA ranks as the sixth largest industrial and manufacturing economy among the fifty states.

PENNSYLVANIA has 27,000 known uncapped oil and gas wells.

(Credit: Cornell University's Climate Jobs Institute, 2024.
Visit: www.unionenergypa.org)



**Lehigh Valley Labor Council
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us motivated and energized—that's Union Energy.

To advance our goals, we launched Union Energy, a nonpartisan coalition dedicated to creating a sustainable energy economy—today—that allows all Pennsylvania families to have an opportunity to work in union jobs with union benefits. We are working together to advance nonpartisan policies that create increase union job opportunities, anticipate the challenges of tomorrow, and create an innovative, sustainable energy economy.

From rising temperatures to increasing numbers of severe storms, the global climate challenges we are facing are accelerating. Collective action is an urgent necessity. Union Energy is ready to engage proactively to help policy makers and industry leaders guide the transition to sustainable energy solutions across the Commonwealth. We want to transform Pennsylvania's energy economy, make buildings safer and more energy efficient, and support transportation, agriculture and infrastructure initiatives as part of the clean energy transition.

We can ensure the transition to a clean energy economy creates high-quality, unionized jobs that provide fair wages, comprehensive benefits, and safe working conditions. Union



FROM 010 000 1000

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United Way Labor Liaison

Trump slashes manufacturing, energy and construction jobs

AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler issued the following statement in response to Trump cutting \$3.7 billion in funding for energy projects

by the AFL-CIO

The labor movement condemns the Department of Energy's decision to cut \$3.7 billion in funding for new energy projects and take away tens of thousands of good union jobs from America's workers.

President Trump promised a new era of American dominance in energy and manufacturing, but his administration is now taking away the jobs that are critical to making that happen. In states like Alabama, Ohio and Texas, workers have lost their jobs, their families have had their lives uprooted and their



Liz Shuler
AFL-CIO President

Trump's Pennsylvania senator Dave McCormick voted 100% on Trump's cabinet picks: endorsed all of president's nominees

Dave McCormick endorsed all of Donald Trump's twenty-two cabinet picks. His vote for the president's cabinet officials, included:



Pam Bondi, Attorney General. Bondi is an election denier, who eagerly promoted falsehoods surrounding Pennsylvania's 2020 Election results. According to the January 15, 2025 *Keystone*, she appeared on the *Fox Channel* and "participated in the infamous Four Seasons press conference with Rudy Giuliani, claiming that Trump won Pennsylvania when he didn't."

She said on *Fox & Friends* following the election that she had "evidence of cheating" in Pennsylvania. Five years later, she had yet to produce "evidence" that Trump won the state, and at her confirmation hearing she "continued to evade responsibility

their jobs; their families have had the rug ripped out from under them; and we will all lose out on the environmental, economic and national security benefits of the cutting-edge technology they were going to build. Their work would have boosted the economies in those states, provided consumers with affordable energy, developed our fast-growing clean energy economy, and advanced America's technological competitiveness on the world stage.

The Trump administration must reverse course and bring back these energy projects, for the good of America's working families, our communities, and our global competitiveness.



“
■ ■ ■

“President Trump dropped 15-ton bombs on uranium enrichment sites in Iran with Tulsi Gabbard as his director of national intelligence and Pete Hegseth as his defense secretary. I, for one, am not comforted.

By some reports, Hegseth wasn't consulted all that much

her confirmation hearing she continued to evade responsibility about her role in spreading falsehoods regarding Pennsylvania's 2020 election results.” (Credit: Politico.com)



Pete Hegseth, Secretary of Defense. A Fox Channel pundit, Hegseth faced multiple controversies, including allegations of sexual misconduct and excessive drinking, when he came before McCormick and the Senate. He continued stoking controversy when “he was accused of illegally sending classified information in an unauthorized chat system to a journalist” in March, wrote *The Washington Examiner*. While using the chat system, he described his “loathing of European free-loading,” which demonstrated to Peggy Noonan, in a columnist for *The Wall Street Journal* on March 29, “a government in the hands of immature bros.” (Credit: wikipedia.com)



Russell Vought, Office of Management & Budget Director. A chief architect of Project 2025, Vought has initiated many of its goals in the federal workforce. He recently said to CNN host Dana Bash, that he wanted to put Uncle

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When Pennsylvania got its river back

The Commonwealth seized the Lehigh River from the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company in 1965. River given to the LC&N in 1818.

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

Next month marks the sixtieth anniversary of a striking event in our region's industrial history. On July 19, 1965, Pennsylvania seized the Lehigh River from the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company (LC&N). The Commonwealth's decisive action ended the unprecedented private ownership of a river in the



precedented private ownership of a river in the United States, a legacy that began in 1818 when Harrisburg lawmakers gifted the river to the fledgling firm. (Fig. #1)

The Lehigh River's history highlights harmful consequences of a nineteenth century collusion between ambitious business and political interests. The episode serves as a cautionary lesson as we watch an alliance of current corporate and political leaders fuel the advance of artificial intelligence (AI) in our economy. Are today's promoters of AI embracing an exaggerated future for the new technology, while ignoring lessons from past collaborations?

Proponents of AI paint a rosy picture of its transformative potential. Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, in a *60 Minutes CBS* interview, characterized AI as heralding "a new Industrial Revolution." *The Wall Street Journal* published advertisements claiming the introduction of the new technology in the workplace will lead to "Happier Mondays" and an "AI Utopia." Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan Chase, wrote in early April 2024 that AI's impact could rival monumental technological breakthroughs, like "the printing press, the steam engine, electricity, computing and the internet." And in January 2025,

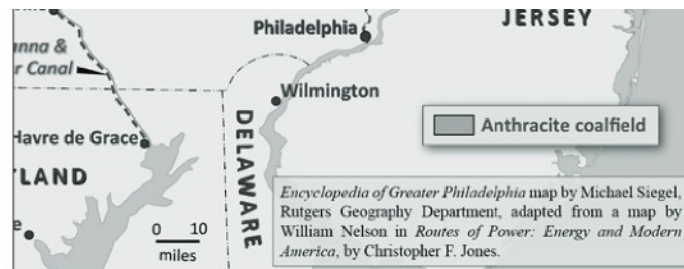


Fig. 1: The Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company completed construction of the Lower Branch of the Lehigh Canal in 1829. The Lower Branch ran 46.5 miles from Jim Thorpe, then known as Mauch Chunk, to Easton. Canal boats exited the canal at the confluence of the Delaware River and either traveled south to Philadelphia on Pennsylvania's Delaware Division Canal or traveled east across the Delaware River to Phillipsburg, New Jersey and entered the Morris Canal to New York City.

White and Hazard approached the owners of a 10,000 acre anthracite coalfield in the vicinity of Summit Hill, Carbon County, who looked to divest from their property. The owners had made several previous attempts to transport their coal to Philadelphia using the Lehigh River, but its rapids and shallows left it unnavigable during low water periods of summer. Three

Harrisburg approved the partner's plans to improve navigation on the Lehigh River, although they viewed the proposal as "chimerical," recalling previous failures to improve navigation on the river. Eager to encourage "internal improvements" that would bring large revenues into the state's coffers, legislators permitted the two men to shape the bill, which Harrisburg eventually enacted on March 20, 1818. The law gave White and Hazard sweeping rights to the Lehigh River without charge, initiating consequences that proved unprecedented.

Harrisburg legislators repealed a 1771 colonial law designating the Lehigh River as a public highway. Although the river belonged to the state's citizens, legislators gave it to White and Hazard, granting the partners ownership of all but the riverbed from White Haven to Easton. This included rights to the water and all land necessary for the construction of locks, canals and towpaths. State lawmakers also granted them the power to collect tolls and duties on the navigation system, and to utilize, sell, or rent the river's water or water power to individuals or businesses. On February 13, 1822, Harrisburg further facilitated this process by transferring the ownership rights of the river from the partners to the newly incorporated LC&N.

The sweeping legislation granted the LC&N an unsurpassed advantage: ownership rights to the Lehigh River, contingent upon the development and maintenance of a canal fed by the river. The effect of the legislation guaranteed that if Harrisburg wanted to reclaim the river, the 1818 law stipulated an exorbitant penalty paid to the LC&N based on the toll receipts over the previous six years from the soon-to-be-built canal. The prohibitive cost of this buyback option effectively cemented the company's ownership of the Lehigh River as long as the canal remained operational.

Harrisburg's largess helped secure the LC&N's monopoly over the Philadelphia market starting in 1820, a position it maintained until the Schuylkill Canal opened in 1825. To remain competitive with rivals, White and Hazard sought additional funding to expand their transportation network. Inland waterway navigation and maintenance ranked among the most expensive projects of the era, fostering powerful ties between business and finance in America's emerging economy. As demand for anthracite grew, the LC&N's financial health flourished, enabling the construction of a two-way canal system between Mauch Chunk, later known as Jim Thorpe, and Easton

paving the way for investors to begin receiving a three percent dividend. A correspondent to *The United States Gazette* excoriated this arrangement, describing the company as “a complete and exclusive monopoly.”

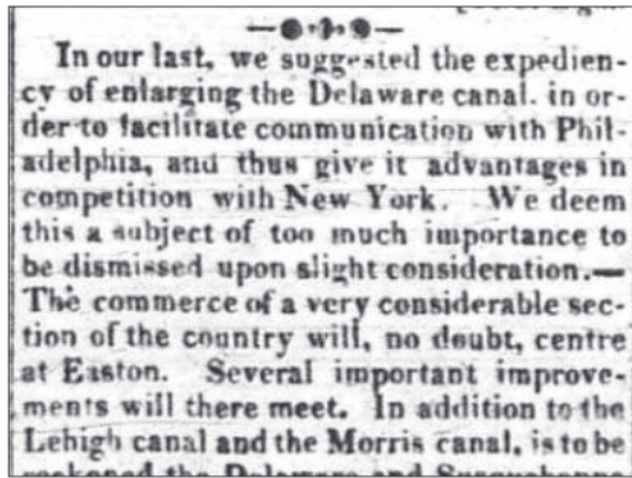


Fig. 2: A race between Pennsylvania and New York, 1828.
Before the advent of railroads, state legislators envisioned

in 1827. Upon its completion in 1829, the Lehigh Canal stood as the largest capacity towpath canal in America, capable of accommodating mule-drawn boats carrying over two hundred tons of anthracite. Pennsylvania State Senator Samuel Packer remarked upon learning of its specifications, “The Lehigh Navigation is admitted to be superior in all respects to any other work of a similar nature in the United States.”

White and Hazard turned the LC&N’s attention to new markets and applications. Most notably, they persuaded David Thomas, a leading Welsh ironmaster in blast furnace technology, to immigrate to the United States. Thomas selected Catawauqua as the site of a new venture, the Lehigh Crane Iron Co., and received financial backing from the LC&N. On July 4, 1840, two furnace men struck a cast of iron, marking the company as America’s first commercially successful anthracite-fired blast furnace.

The Lehigh Canal’s banks soon became a hub for other iron companies, and by decade’s end, fourteen hard-coal furnaces belched black smoke across the Lehigh Valley, transforming the agricultural region for the next thirty-five years into the epicenter of American iron production. The sheer number and scale of the limestone and firebrick stacks awed the business press, which



Federal employment includes the Postal Service. • Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics • By The New York Times

Percentage of nonfarm workers employed by the federal government has continued shrinking since the Second World War. Despite claims made by Donald Trump and right-wing media, the federal workforce as a percentage of the nation's total employment has continued shrinking since 1945. The figures include the US Postal Service, but not the armed forces. (*Credit:* Bureau of Labor Statistics, by the New York Times, January 22, 2025)

The Nippon-US Steel deal. Controlling the narrative

by Ron Emnis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



Donald Trump touted it as a “blockbuster agreement.” Mike Pompeo, Trump’s former secretary of state, said the “deal puts American workers and their families first.” And *The Wall Street Journal* called it “a win for U.S. workers.”

What is this special deal that has Trump, Pompeo and

In an August 5, 2024 *Wall Street Journal* column, Pompeo criticized then-President Joe Biden and then-Senator Bob Casey for blocking the deal, conveniently omitting that Trump himself opposed the agreement as a candidate. Pompeo’s assertion that the deal was essential to “reinvigorate our economy after years of high inflation and economic stagnation, lacks any substantial evidence except for the fact that he once ran “two machine shops in Kansas.”

The Wall Street Journal ran a series of articles cheering Nippon’s takeover. In congratulating the scheme on January 4, 2025, the



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would be entitled to this information to determine how these changes—if, in fact, anything has changed or will change—affects other obligations under the (union contract),” a steel-worker official said to *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on June 9.

Proponents of the Nippon deal seem largely unfazed by facts. They operate under the assumption that if they believe something to be true, it must be so. They have concluded that controlling the narrative surrounding labor and economic questions will eventually win over the public. In their mind, he who writes history determines the future, and they intend on promoting a narrative based on wishful thinking, while disregarding the voices of workers in shaping our economy.

As president of a union with roots stretching back to the nineteenth century, McCall acutely knows the history of broken pledges and giddy promises made to workers. Promoters of the Nippon takeover have invested “vast amounts of resources into down-playing both the long-term future of USW members’ jobs and our national security while ensuring their sale remained in the public view,” McCall said after Nippon Steel announced it had finalized the transaction.

Expect the promotional campaign to fade. News stories

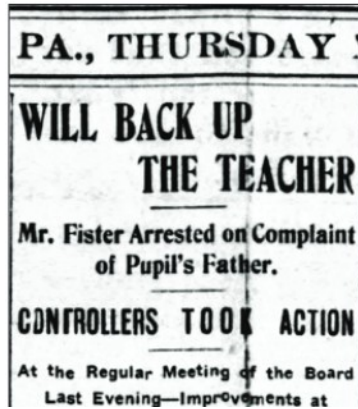
When Pennsylvania got its river back

(continued from page five)

The company’s dams inflicted a more grievous loss, blocking the river’s shad from reaching their spawning grounds and killing off a vital food source that had sustained the region’s inhabitants for centuries. “Before coal culm came down to blacken its bed and banks, the Indians knew it as one of the best rivers in the east for shad,” *The Allentown Morning Call* noted on March 15, 1964.

Moreover, the LC&N erected formidable legal barriers to stifle rivals eager to capitalize on the coal market the owners had cultivated from the outset. Public scorn arose in 1832 accusing the company’s officers of imposing excessive tolls that “depress enterprise, retard the general prosperity, and diminish the revenues of the Commonwealth.” The company’s reputation plummeted further when the Governor appointed Josiah White as a canal commissioner. A correspondent to *The Philadelphia Public Ledger* warned the state Legislature in 1841 to prevent the LC&N from growing larger, branding it as the “Six

covering the steel deal to vanish, and elected officials and the business press to shift their attention to another Trump crisis. “However,” McCall conclude, “our union will remain, (and) we are ready to respond with the full strength and solidarity of our membership” should the deal threaten our jobs, pensions and hard-earned benefits.



When work hurts: Attacks on teachers remain high. Allentown authorities arrested Mr. T.D. Fister, a teacher in the city's Fourth Ward, on March 4, 1903 for assaulting a student. In testimony to Alderman Scholl, Fister admitted he “pushed the boy against the blackboard after the boy threatened to strike him.” Board members “were very emphatic in declaring for protection of the teachers”

million (Dollar) monster.”

Harrisburg finally recognized the “monster” it had created, but waited until after the Civil War to act. In the post-war period, individuals had amassed great fortunes and businesses had grown in size, leading to a corrosive influence in government. The public, incensed over sweetheart deals between political and corporate leaders, demanded changes to the state's constitution. Harrisburg responded with sweeping reforms in 1873, including limits on legislators to grant special favors to corporations engaged in municipal improvements. By 1960, the company no longer collected tolls on its canal as traffic had ceased on the waterway decades earlier. The company's abandonment of its canal allowed Harrisburg to reclaim the Lehigh River in 1965 without cost, returning it to the state's citizens after nearly a century and a half.

The history of the Lehigh River's ownership serves as a warning to unchecked corporate power and little regulatory oversight amid AI's introduction into the workplace. Alarming signs have already emerged regarding AI. In 2024, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler warned that the new technology had the potential to eliminate jobs, deskill workers, invade privacy, and weaken our democracy and civil rights. A Pew Research Cen-

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THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 2025
Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM
Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052

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