



NEWS & VIEWS

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

www.lehighvalleyclc.org



August 2025

The 2025 Labor Ticket

for the Tuesday, November 4 Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

How you vote is a personal choice, but the Lehigh Valley Labor Council has endorsed the following candidates after extensive interviews and research. More endorsements on page three.



Matt Tuerk
Allentown Mayor



Tara Zrinski
Northampton County Executive



Josh Siegel
Lehigh County Executive



Zach Cole-Borgbi
Lehigh County Council #3



Geoff Brace
Lehigh County Council #4



Sarah Fevig
Lehigh County Council #5



Theresa Fadem
Northampton County Council



Jason Boulette
Northampton County Council



David Holland
Northampton County Council



Evette D'Amore
Allentown School Board



Silagh White
Bethlehem School Board



Shandeka Greenfield
Easton School Board



Ed Keegan
Easton School Board



Meg Sayago
Easton School Board

V(ouch!)ers hurt public schools, raid taxpayer coffers

Trump's "big beautiful" bill has new federal voucher program: Sen. McCormack, US Rep. Mackenzie voted for measure

*Carl Davis, Research Director
Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy*

The tax and spending legislation signed on July 4 by President Trump will create an unprecedented, dollar-for-dollar federal tax credit designed to support private and religious K-12 schools. The credit will fully reimburse donors for the first \$1,700 they give to groups that hand out tuition vouchers to attend private schools. There is no other cause—not children's hospitals, veterans' groups, or disaster relief—that taxpayers can contribute to and see the entire cost of their contribution bankrolled by the federal government.

The tax policy design of the new law's voucher program is dramatically different from the one passed earlier by the House. For one thing, using the credit as a means of avoiding capital gains tax is not possible under the final version of the plan. But from the perspective of the federal budget, the most significant difference is that the final bill discards the budgetary safeguard included in the House version that limited total tax credit payouts to around \$5 billion per year.

The lack of an aggregate cap on the tax credit creates the possibility that this policy could carry an immense price tag. The most significant restrictions on the tax credit are that the taxpayer must have tax liability against which to claim the credit, and that the credit cannot exceed \$1,700 per taxpayer. For married couples, the maximum credit is likely to be \$3,400, though this is not specifically stated in the bill.

89 %

Percentage of voucher schools in Pennsylvania that are religious

(Credit: Education Voters of Pennsylvania: edvoterspa.org)

The universe of taxpayers meeting these criteria is large.

Our analysis of IRS data suggests that more than 138 million people could make full use of this credit in 2027 if they wished. In practice, most of those people will not contribute both because of the paperwork involved and, more fundamentally, because private school vouchers are unpopular with the public.

Last year voters in Colorado, Kentucky, and Nebraska all rejected private school vouchers at the ballot box by margins of 49-51, 43-57, and 35-65 percent, respectively. As a very rough exercise, if we assume that forty-three percent of taxpayers might be interested in the idea of private school vouchers (in line with Nebraska's result from last year, which was the median state among this group), then that suggests that 59 million eligible taxpayers might be interested in claiming the Senate's voucher tax credit.

If all 59 million taxpayers chose to claim the credit, the cost to the federal government would be \$101 billion per year—making it one of the largest tax cuts in the entire bill. In

practice, of course, some of those 59 million people will not contribute either because they are unaware of the program or because they do not care enough about vouchers to bother filling out the paperwork involved in contributing to a private school group and claiming a 100 percent reimbursement for that contribution.

Ultimately, the true cost of the program will be determined in large part by how effective the private schools and their proponents are in encouraging voucher supporters to contribute. It is likely that the DeVos family, for instance, will invest considerable resources into raising awareness of this tax credit. It is also possible that a cottage industry focused on securing additional donations in return for a finder's fee could crop up.

If private schools and their backers convince half of voucher supporters to contribute, the cost to the federal govern-

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AFL-CIO

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The opinions expressed herein are those of the writers only and do not necessarily express the policy of the Council or any of its affiliates. All articles submitted for publication must be signed and received by the second last Thursday of the month.

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Share of Trump-McCormack-Mackenzie tax cuts for 2026

(enacted in the "big, beautiful bill")

Going to the richest one percent
(Income range: \$916,900 and above)

22%

Going to the next four percent
(Income range: \$361,600—\$916,900)

24%

Going to the poorest forty percent
(Income range: \$0—\$53,300)

4%

(Credit: Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy: itep.org)

ment would be nearly \$51 billion per year. If they are less successful and only manage to convince a quarter of voucher supporters that the paperwork involved in claiming the credit is worth the hassle, then the cost would be more than \$25 billion per year. Even if just 5 million supporters donate—a total that seems very attainable given that 4.7 million are already enrolled in private K-12 schools—the total cost would be more than \$8 billion per year.

Official estimates released by Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation place the revenue cost at around \$3 to \$4 billion per year, with costs rising over time as more families get into the habit of using this tax credit. Those revenue estimates imply that there will be around 1.8 to 2.6 million donors per year. But there is considerable uncertainty in these estimates and, as the calculations above make clear, there is a real risk of a major cost overrun in this program.

The House version of this credit, by contrast, can be confidently predicted to cost about \$5 to \$6 billion per year because of the cap on its overall size. And despite all its flaws, the House version also has the virtue of being a temporary experiment, whereas the final version creates a permanent drain on federal coffers.

Ultimately, the Senate and the President chose a far riskier path than the House when it comes to the overall cost of this program. It is clear that this tax credit has the potential to come with an enormous cost if private school groups are successful in convincing their supporters to participate. In these times of very high debt and deficits, this is reason for all of us to be uneasy.



Annual Pete DePietro Labor Day Picnic Sunday, August 31, 12 noon—5 p.m. American Club, 300 Cherry Street, Coplay, PA

(Rain or shine: Weatherproof venue)

\$20 per person & must be registered by August 22

\$25 at the door with no registration

Free—children age ten and under

Please send checks to:
Lehigh Valley Labor Council
c/o Dennis Andrews
1705 Northampton St. Easton PA 18042



The 2025 Labor Ticket Tuesday, November 4 Election: Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

How you vote is a personal choice, but the Lehigh Valley Labor Council has endorsed the following candidates after extensive interviews and research. More endorsements on the front cover.

Allentown City Council



Cynthia Mota



Jeremy Binder



Cristian Pungo

Bethlehem City Council



Jo Daniels



Justin Amann

Easton City Council



Susan
Hartranft-Bittinger



Frank Graziano

Election calendar—2025

Monday, October 20: Last day to Register before November election.

Tuesday, October 28: Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot

Tuesday, November 4: Municipal Election. Last day for county election office to receive completed mail-in and civilian absentee ballots (must be received by 8 p.m.)

For more information, visit:

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-registration.html>



From Tragedy to Transformation

The Yablonski Murders and the Miners for Democracy Movement: Theme at this year's Penna. Labor History Society conference

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

On New Year's Eve 1969, Joseph "Chip" Yablonski, Jr. tried to call his parents in Clarksville, Pennsylvania, only to be met with a chilling silence. He and his older brother, Ken, had feared for their father's safety in recent months. Joseph "Jock" Yablonski had endured a bitter defeat three weeks earlier in his courageous bid to unseat W.A. "Tony" Boyle, the incumbent president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Unable to reach their parents and twenty-five-year old sister by phone, Ken made the fateful drive to their home on January 5, 1970 where he uncovered a grisly scene. All three had been fatally shot after they had gone to bed. (Figure #1)

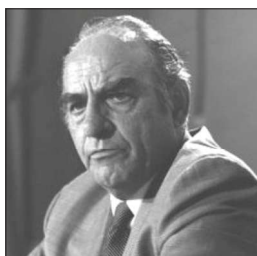


Fig. 1
Joseph "Jock"
Yablonski

Jock Yablonski, once a part of Boyle's administration, had watched corruption grow under his leadership. After his defeat, he learned that the incumbent had misappropriated members' dues to fund his re-election campaign and all but guaranteed his victory by printing thousands of excess ballots. Yablonski called the election results "unlawful," requested the Department of Labor to investigate, and filed several lawsuits against Boyle and the UMWA. His calls for justice met indifference. "The Department of Labor had no interest in investigating," Chip Yablonski recalled in a December 31, 2019 *Smithsonian Magazine* interview.

The tragic deaths of the Yablonskis became a catalyst for change within the federal government, the UMWA and the broader labor movement. The triple murders compelled a multi-year investigation by federal authorities; it also sparked changes within the UMWA and other unions, fueled by the fervor of reform following the 1960s. In a powerful display of solidarity, twenty thousand miners in West Virginia staged a one-day strike the day after the bodies were discovered, protesting against Boyle, who they believed orchestrated the murders. When asked if the UMWA was involved, *The New York Times* reported that Chip Yablonski replied, "I'm convinced of it without even knowing."

Jock Yablonski's supporters galvanized into action, establishing the Miners for Democracy (MFD) in April 1970 to spread their deceased leader's vision of reforming their union. Instead of derailing the reforms he had championed, Yablonski's murder inspired UMWA members to challenge the autocratic Boyle and purge their union of the corruption that had led to exploitative contracts and lavish lifestyles for top union officials.



Fig. 2

Top: Jim Young, outgoing president of the Pennsylvania Labor History Society, gave opening remarks.



Left: Paul Clark, newly-elected president of the PLHS.



Bottom left: Jacqui Cavalier, newly-elected vice-president of the PLHS.

Harriet Ellenberger and John Werkheiser were re-elected secretary and treasurer, respectively.

The legacy of Jock Yablonski and the MFD served as the focal point for this year's Pennsylvania Labor History Society (PLHS) conference in Uniontown, near Yablonski's former home. Jim Young, the PLHS's outgoing president, set the stage with opening remarks, while Paul Clark, the newly-elected president and a professor at Penn State's Labor School, led the June 20 – June 21 conference. Clark's 1981 book, *The Miners' Fight for Democracy: Arnold Miller and the Reform of the United Mine Workers*, chronicles the transformative journey of the UMWA in the wake of Yablonski's death.



Fig. 3
Abby Tancin

PLHS's newly-elected vice-president Jacqui Cavalier, an American Federation of Teachers #2067 officer at the Community College of Allegheny County, extended a warm welcome to nearly forty attendees at the Coal & Coke Heritage Center, located on Penn State's Fayette Campus, Uniontown. The campus served as the host for the PLHS convention where Abby Tancin, the campus's archivist, led an enlightening tour of the center's museum. This museum stands as a powerful tribute to the bituminous miners of south-western Pennsylvania. She shared fascinating insights into the center's collection, including contributions from coal mining families, such as a donation of dynamite, which had prompted a call to emergency personnel, state troopers and campus police. Her cautionary words, "Don't always trust what a family donates for historical purposes," resonated with her labor history audience. (Figs. #2 & #3)

In a compelling televised Zoom meeting, Paul Clark engaged with Chip Yablonski, Jr., who vividly recounted the changes made to the UMWA's constitution after his father's death. During Boyle's era, said Chip, the union morphed into a one-man organization, with Boyle wielding an iron grip over contract negotiations with coal mine bosses and dismissing input from the rank-and-file. He strengthened his grip by appointing many top union officials, ensuring their loyalty to him. However, the MFD's relentless pursuit for reform led to the invalidation of the 1969 election. A mandatory new election with government oversight in 1972 marked a turning point for the UMWA. Boyle's defeat by MFD-endorsed candidate Arnold Miller heralded a new era as miners embarked on rewriting their union's constitution. They sought to empower the miners with the right to approve or reject labor contracts and the right to elect their national and district officers. It wasn't always a smooth process, Yablonski remembered. "A lot of movements in the 1970s thought more democracy would get a better outcome, but that isn't the case, because some people aren't prepared to lead."



Fig. 4 (left to right): Michael J. Healey, Charles McColester, and Nick Molnar joined PLHS President Paul Clark in a panel discussion to describe how workers in the late 1970s expressed their demands for democratic reforms within their unions.

A distinguished panel of three activists from the MFD's formative years, Michael J. Healey, Charles McColester and Nick Molnar, joined Clark in describing how workers expressed their demands within their unions to address the technological, demographic and cultural changes that emerged in the late 1960s. The PLHS held its annual awards dinner after the panel discussion beginning with brief remarks from Angela Ferritto, president of the AFL-CIO, who knew that the labor crowd eagerly awaited keynote speaker Cecil Roberts. (Fig. #4)

Roberts, president of the UMWA, is considered one of the most dynamic and forceful orators today. His spell-binding elocution hints at his West Virginian roots, giving him authenticity when he talks about workers and, especially, coal miners. He pulls his listeners into a story and makes them feel as if they were eyewitnesses to the event. He appeared at the Lehigh Valley Labor Council's 2011 annual awards dinner, delivering an electrifying speech that brought the cheering crowd to its feet on multiple occasions. He announced in January 2025 that he will retire after his term expires later this year. (Fig. #5)



Fig. 5
Cecil Roberts

Roberts began his speech with anecdotes that touched upon contemporary issues. He portrayed the UMWA as a proud immigrant union, highlighting its rich diversity by noting, "At one time the national union newsletter was printed in twenty-five languages." He recounted a chilling story from his youth, when a retired miner shared a harrowing command from a coal mine boss before going underground on his first day on the job. "If there is a cave-in at the mine, get the mules out first." When the newly-hired miner asked why the animal was prioritized over his own life, the coal boss coldly replied, "We can always hire another man, but we have to buy another mule."

Roberts, however, devoted most of his speech to the legacy of Yablonski and the MFD movement. He began by evoking the memory of UMWA president John L. Lewis, who led the union from 1920 to 1960, as a revered leader. Miners held him in such high esteem that his image often hung alongside President Franklin Roosevelt and Jesus in their homes. When Lewis's successor passed away shortly after assuming office, Lewis handpicked W.A. "Tony" Boyle to take the presidency in early 1963. (Fig. #6)

While Lewis and Boyle were autocrats, Roberts emphasized that Lewis genuinely cared for his members and enjoyed widespread support from the rank-and-file. Boyle lacked these essential attributes, but it was the 1968 Farmington Mine Explosion that heavily influenced Yablonski to run against Boyle the following year, Roberts added.

The West Virginia disaster ranks as one of the worst industrial tragedies since the Second World War, claiming the lives of seventy-eight miners, of which nineteen bodies were never recovered. Roberts recalled one miner left behind a widow and sixteen children, adding that the safety division of the UMWA under Boyle consisted of a single employee overseeing roughly 5,400 mines. According to the *Smithsonian Magazine*, Boyle labeled the incident as "an unfortunate accident," and praised the coal company's safety record while neglecting to meet with the miners' widows. Investigators never determined the cause of the disaster, but the union president's "tepid reaction" to the tragedy prompted Yablonski to run.

Roberts described the assassins as not the brightest, who left behind fingerprints and other clues that led to their swift arrest. The prosecution eventually implicated Boyle, who was arrested in 1973 and convicted of murder the following year. He served three life sentences until his death in prison in 1985. Eight others also served prison sentences.

In an interview with a West Virginia media outlet, Roberts expressed disappointment at failing to staunch the decline in coal mining jobs. "I would love to have been able to organize more people," he lamented, "but it's really hard to organize in an industry that's losing people left and right." Yet, as the PLHS conference showcased, "Jock" Yablonski and the Miners for Democracy ignited the rise of democracy within the labor movement that will continue burning for years to come. (See chart and caption on page six)



Fig. 6: John L. Lewis. The image of the revered UMWA president hung alongside Franklin Roosevelt and Jesus in the homes of many coal mining families. How many union members today even know the name of their national union president? (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)



TeenWorks' annual picnic slated August 12 Autoworkers #677 will host event

by John Werkheiser, Labor Liaison
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley



United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley invites you to our TeenWorks' annual summer picnic. Join us for a fun-filled evening to discover the impactful projects TeenWorks students are leading, find out how you can get involved and explore how these student-leaders support and uplift our community.

The picnic is slated for Tuesday, August 12, 5:30 p.m.—8 p.m. The United Auto Workers #677 will host the event at their union hall, 2101 Mack Blvd. Allentown. The event is rain or shine and is free to attend, but you must register. Please RSVP at johnw@unitedwayglv.org, or call me if you have any questions at 610-770-4636.

The TeenWorks program creates a safe and diverse space that encourages teenagers to give back to their community and helps bring to life their community service projects. Every teen board member has graduated from high school and went on to pursue higher education or trade school. You have helped us do this, and we want you to see what your dollars do in person. The unique partnership between United Way and organized labor has granted opportunities to local teens since 1999.



Missing the point What King Louis XVI and Trump's allies got wrong

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



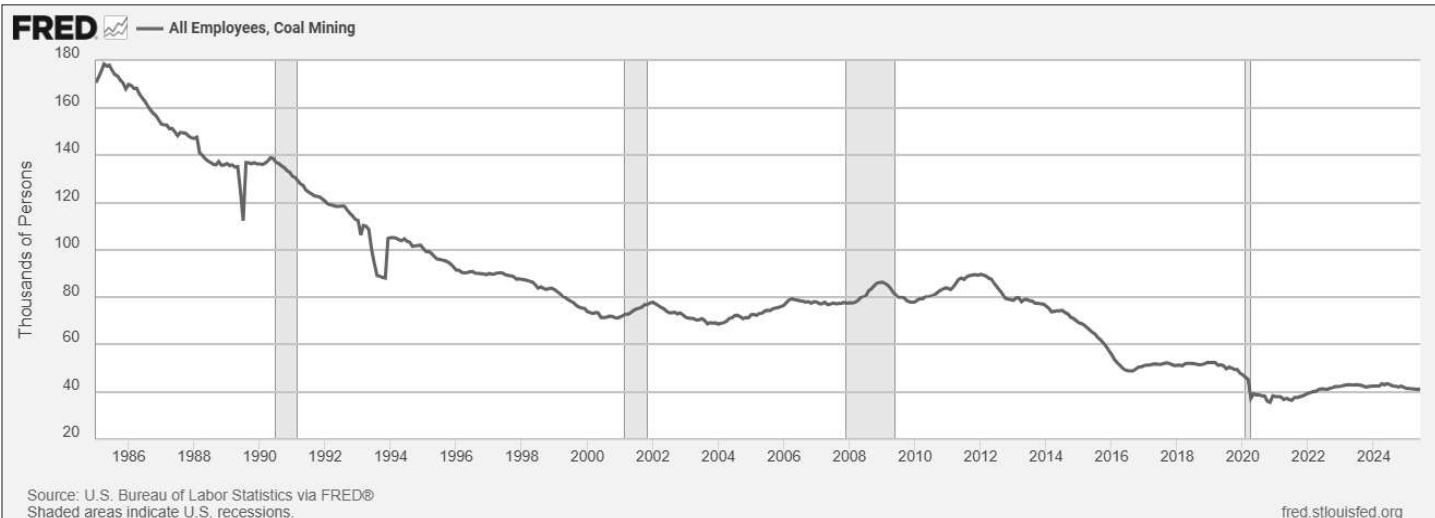
On July 14, 1789, a Parisian mob stormed the Bastille, France's infamous prison that symbolized King Louis XVI's monarchical power. Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, a leading social reformer in the French Assembly, rushed to the king and informed him that a mob had taken over the prison.

"Why, this is a revolt!" exclaimed King Louis.

"No, Sire, it is a revolution," the Duke replied, implying that the prison takeover represented not a riot, but the first salvo in a movement to transform France. Historians consider the storming of the Bastille as the start of the French Revolution.

Like King Louis, Donald Trump's allies misunderstand the nationwide protests that have greeted his return to the White House. Kimberley A. Strassel described an anti-Trump protest as a "futile gesture" that accomplishes nothing. *The Wall Street Journal* columnist wrote on June 13 that they don't "move (Trump and his allies) to alter a single policy." She described the protestors as "too radicalized" with a message that lacks "any moral claim."

After the June 14 "No Kings" rallies in his district, congressman Ryan Mackenzie said protestors outside his offices



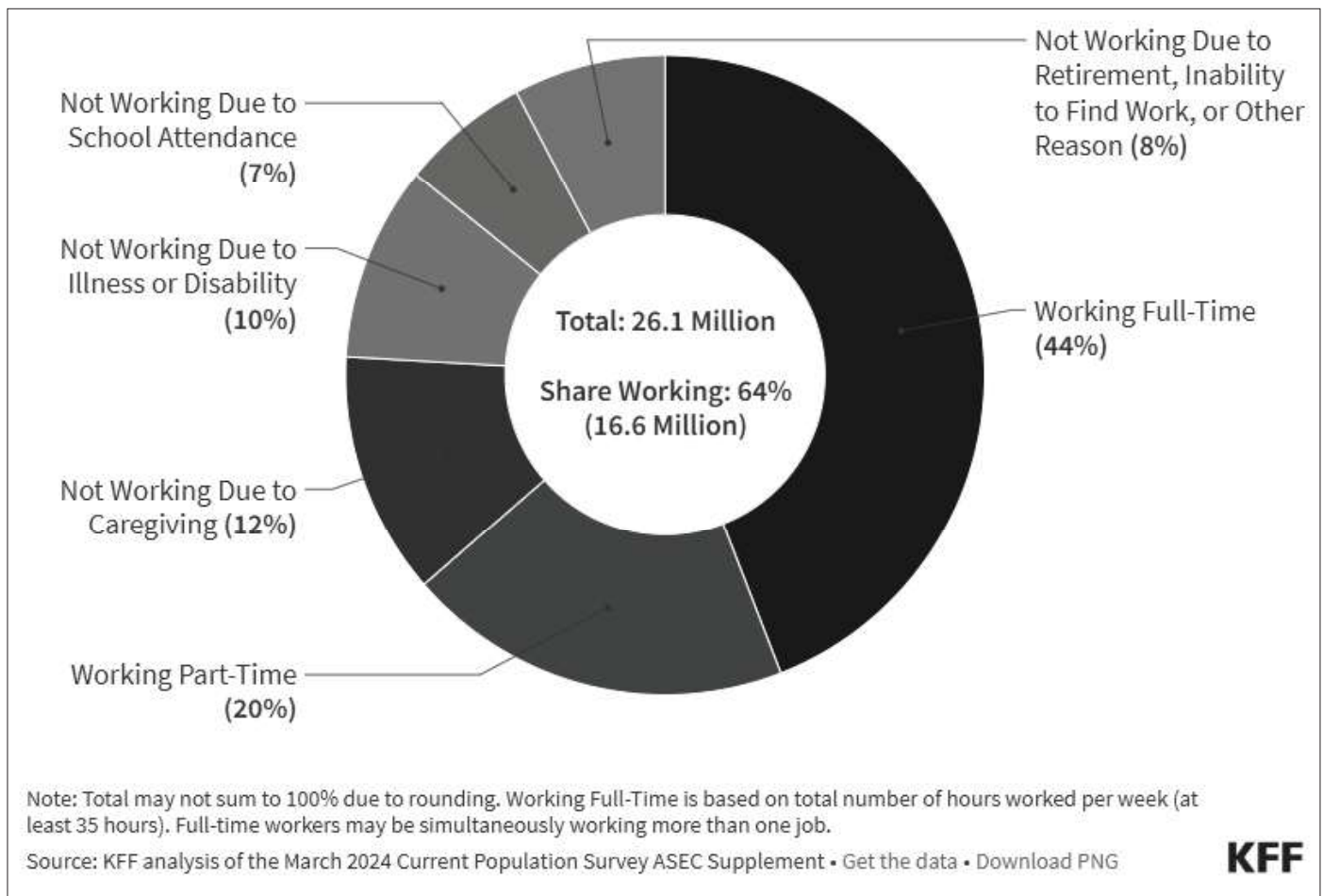
Coal mining employment in the United States has plummeted dramatically for decades. As the Federal Reserve chart above depicts, the number of coal miners has dropped precipitously in the past forty years. A little over 40,000 miners are currently employed, down from roughly 180,000 in 1985.

Donald Trump boasted during a 2020 presidential campaign stop in Johnstown, Pennsylvania that he was "putting our great coal miners back to work." Yet, there were 6,400 fewer miners when he made that claim than when he took office in 2016. Coal production had declined thirty-one percent and more than five dozen coal-fired power plants had closed during his first term.

While Trump often blames environmental regulations, other factors have also fueled coal's downward spiral.

Replacing pick and shovel operations with increased mechanization led the decline in jobs, but losses accelerated in the 1980s after President Ronald Reagan's weak enforcement of trade agreements allowed foreign steel to flood the domestic market, forcing mills to close across the country. Steel producers were a major customer of coal companies. The employment losses in mining mounted in this century when Republican lawmakers embraced fracking for natural gas production. For example, Gov. Tom Corbett in 2016 issued an executive order that allowed fracking in state parks and forests. The actions by him and fellow GOP lawmakers helped bring down the cost of natural gas extraction below the cost of mining coal. (Credit: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, July 3, 2025)





Trump and his GOP's Medicaid "work requirements" have little to do with work. In his argument for "The Big, Beautiful" bill, Trump claimed that his cuts to Medicaid would eliminate the waste, fraud, and abuse caused by millions of people who refuse to work. But as KFF, formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation, shows in their chart above, most Medicaid recipients already work and many others have legitimate reasons for not working. The KFF based their analysis on Census Bureau data and included Medicaid covered adults, age 19–64, who do not receive benefits from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and are not also covered by Medicare. Additionally, GOP-led states that experimented with tying Medicaid benefits to work requirements met limited success. "The bureaucracy and confusion" of their policies "resulted in thousands of people losing their Medicaid coverage," according to Jeanne Whalen in the June 23, 2025 *Wall Street Journal*. Trump's bill, supported by Sen. Dave McCormick and US Rep. Ryan Mackenzie, represents one of the largest transfers of wealth from the poorest working Americans who rely on the government program to the wealthiest one percent who will receive massive tax cuts.

had gone too far. "I think it is getting to the point where some of these people are taking it beyond the freedom of speech," he reportedly said. Gerard Baker, editor-at-large for *The Wall Street Journal*, declared in a June 17 column that protesters had grown increasingly violent and blamed "both sides (for) their ever more apocalyptic campaigns to win at all costs."

Why are Trump supporters dismissive of protesting like King Louis XVI? Why do they object to protests against Trump? Contrary to Strassel's opinion, conversion is not necessarily the goal of protesting. Many protesters recognize their actions are unlikely to change the minds of those who support the current president, especially someone like Mackenzie who, according to Tom Shortell of *LehighValleyNews.com* on April 13, "has proven to be a vocal supporter of Trump."

Strassel also misreads history. Women's suffrage, civil rights, and ending the Vietnam War are seen in hindsight as movements having a moral core, but at the time were highly contentious. The fact that she fails to see the moral message of today's "Stand-Up for Democracy" rallies, suggests she exhibits the same blindness as those who opposed suffrage, equal rights and peace in Vietnam decades ago.

Mackenzie and Baker also need to do a reality check when they point their partisan finger at their opponents. From 2012 to 2022, the Anti-Defamation League counted about 450 U.S. murders perpetrated by political extremists. Of these killings, right-wing extremists committed about seventy-five percent. "As this data shows," wrote David Leonhardt, a *New York Times* Opinion columnist, on May 17, 2022, "the American political right has a violence problem that has no equivalent on the left."

Baker digs his theory deeper in a hole by failing to recognize that no president ever endorsed violence, except Trump when he pardoned the January 6, 2021 rioters who acted on his behalf to overturn a free and fair election.

While voting is done only twice a year, protesting is a democratic practice that participants can engaged in daily. Protesting may have a long and uncertain time line in comparison to voting, where the results are known quickly, but enthusiastic, non-violent protests are the ones that can change America's direction over time.

Showing up and protesting is not a revolt; it's what democracy demands.



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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2025
Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM
Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052

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