



NEWS & VIEWS

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



October 2024

www.lehighvalleyclc.org

The 2024 Labor Ticket

**Oct. 21, last day to register to vote: Oct. 29, last day to apply for a mail-in ballot:
Nov 5, Election Day. Polls open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.**



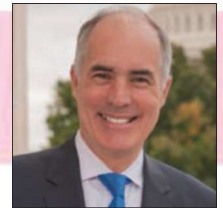
US House PA-7
Susan Wild



President
Kamala Harris



Vice-President
Tim Walz



US Senate
Bob Casey



Attorney General
Eugene DePasquale



Treasurer
Erin McClelland*



Auditor General
Malcolm Kenyatta



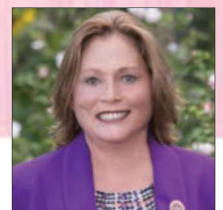
PA House 22nd
Joshua Siegel



PA House 131st
Meriam Sabih



PA House 132nd
Mike Schlossberg



PA House 133rd
Jeanne McNeill



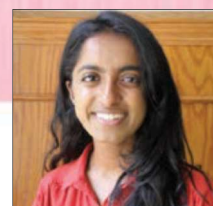
PA House 134th
Pete Schweyer



PA House 135th
Steve Samuelson



PA House 136th
Robert Freeman



PA House 137th
Anna Thomas



PA House 187th
Stefanie Rafes

(*Image credit: spotlightpa.org)

No friend to working families Ryan Mackenzie's record in Harrisburg

by Jim Irwin, President
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

Susan Wild has been a steadfast supporter of labor all across the Lehigh Valley. She has amassed a nearly perfect AFL-CIO legislative scorecard of 99 percent since her election to Congress in 2018. She's worked hard to bring back good-paying union jobs and protect our right to organize by working across the aisle to deliver results. (See page three)



We're proud to endorse US Rep. Wild in this year's election and look forward to our continued partnership with her for years to come. We welcome your participation in her re-election by joining our 2024 Labor Election campaign.

But what about her opponent? How does Ryan Mackenzie's record as a Harrisburg politician compare to US Rep. Wild's record in Washington, D.C.? Mackenzie's voting record in Harrisburg makes clear he is not for us.

Protecting the Safety of Hotel Workers Act (HB967)

The bill would increase protections for hospitality workers in the hotel industry who face exposure to unwanted sexual advances, harassment and violence. The bill would require hotels to provide devices which serve as "panic buttons" for employees working alone servicing guestrooms.

Wild's opponent voted against HB967.

The Jake Schwab Worker Safety Act (HB299)

The bill would establish a state-run Occupational Safety and Health Review Board providing for workplace inspections and health and safety standards administered by the state's Department of Labor & Industry.

Wild's opponent voted against HB299.

The Right to Organize Act (HB 950)

The joint resolution would propose amending the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's constitution to enshrine the rights of workers to organize.

Wild's opponent voted against HB950.

Raise the Minimum Wage to \$15 Act (HB1500)

Pennsylvania's minimum wage has remained stuck at \$7.25 per hour since 2009. All of our neighboring states have raised their floor well above our current rate. HB1500 would increase the minimum wage to \$15 effective January 1, 2026.

Wild's opponent voted against HB1500.

The Employee Rights Notification Act (HB785)

The bill would require state and local agencies to notify their employees and job applicants that they do not have to pay union dues, effectively allowing them to receive all the union wage and benefit increases for free. HB785 would cripple labor unions by forcing them to provide services to employees who refuse to pay for those services.

Wild's opponent voted for HB785.

US Rep. Wild has fought for Lehigh Valley working families in Congress: her opponent has not as a Harrisburg politician. Don't forget that on November 5.



Get involved 2024 Labor Election Campaign

Want to become part of a historic election this year? Do you live in Berks, Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, or Pike counties? Call or e-mail Allen Fritz, labor organizer for our region, to find out how you can help.



Allen Fritz, Zone #3 political organizer
610-621-6268
afritzwit@gmail.com

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Dennis Andrews	Treasurer	USW/SOAR
Ron Labar	Sergeant-at-Arms	Pa Joint Board #234

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The Lehigh Valley Labor Council News & Views is published monthly by the Lehigh Valley Labor Council, AFL-CIO. We are proud members of the Pennsylvania Labor Communications Association, AFL-CIO.

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 last Thursday of the month.

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Union workers rallied behind US Rep. Susan Wild at the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers #375 union hall on September 7. Since her election to Congress in 2018, Wild has supported 99 percent of AFL-CIO backed legislation. Some of the union workers demonstrating their support for her included (Clockwise from bottom left):



Members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees stand with US Rep. Wild.

Service Employees International Union members Neil Brown, Mike Baker and John Weiss stand with US Rep Wild.

A large labor crowd gathers around US Rep. Wild outside the IBEW hall, 101 South Seventh Street, Allentown.

United Auto Workers stand behind US. Rep. Wild.



The wealth gap and taxes

Lessons from the Gilded Age

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

Poor John Pierpont Morgan. According to a *Bethlehem Globe* editorial, the New York financier had “reason for disappointment” when he learned his income in 1902 only amounted to \$40 million. The March 1903 editorial explained that the sum “is considerably less than he expected.” If Morgan had “hoped to stand first in the list,” he failed to even come close. Oil magnate John D. Rockefeller had bankrolled about \$100 million in the same year.

“America in the first decade of the twentieth century was a grand promenade for the rich,” wrote Kevin Phillips, an author and commentator of politics, economics and history who passed away last year. Morgan made his money on Wall Street, spearheading mergers that created US Steel, International Harvester and General Electric. Rockefeller’s wealth originated in energy and his company, Standard Oil, controlled ninety percent of all oil in the United States at its peak in 1900. “Wealth and incomes,” added Phillips, “were concentrating, mirroring the huge new centralization of the economy through industrial combines, corporate monopolies, and trusts.” Meanwhile, the annual wage of the average working family was under \$500.

Amid this canyon-wide wealth gap, explained Phillips, the Gilded Age millionaires grew arrogant, fueling financial and political corruption that led to national turmoil. At least six severe economic disruptions struck the United States after the Civil War, including the disastrous 1907 Panic that threw millions of Americans out of work. The fact that neither Rockefeller, Morgan, nor any of the other turn-of-the-century rich paid federal income taxes only added to the nation’s wealth disparity.

Phillips persuasively argued that America had entered another Gilded Age period beginning around 1990, and its issues of widening inequality and tax cuts for the wealthy remain relevant a century later.

The AFL-CIO recently released its “Executive Paywatch,” documenting the increasing disparity between CEO salaries and workers’ wages. The average CEO pay at some of the nation’s largest publicly-traded companies increased by \$4.2 million over the past decade and it would take more than five career lifetimes for a worker to earn what an average CEO bankrolls in one year. A May 22 *Wall Street Journal* article, entitled “CEO Pay Climbed to New Heights in 2023,” reached similar conclusions. Half of the top chiefs made at least \$15.7 million last year, and most of them “received year-over-year raises of at least nine percent.” In fact, one out of four got a boost of twenty-five percent in salary. (Fig. #1)

Meanwhile, Donald Trump and his political allies have campaigned on expanding and permanently extending his 2017 tax cut law that is set to expire after 2025. A June 8, 2024 *Wall Street Journal* article noted that Trump and the then-led GOP Congress had “bet tax cuts would prove so popular” after the law’s passage “that future Congresses would extend them.” Instead, opposition mounted immediately when Americans realized that the majority of the cuts went to the wealthiest Americans. An *American Progress* post on April 30, 2024 estimated that households in the top one percent of the income distribution will receive an average tax cut of \$61,090 in 2025. The ex-president’s tax law also added to the federal debt, according to the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, and the cost of extending all his tax cuts would amount to an additional \$4 trillion over a decade. His allies suggest defunding popular public programs to pay for the tax cut extension. (Fig. #2)

Vice-President Kamala Harris and her allies see Trump’s expiring tax cuts as an opportunity to reset fiscal policy and raise taxes on corporations and the very rich. *The New York Times* reported on August 24 that “no one making less than \$400,000 a year would see their taxes go up” under Harris’s plan. She has also proposed raising the corporate tax rate to twenty-eight percent from twenty-one percent, a step that the Treasury Department estimated could bring in \$1.3 trillion in revenue over the next ten years.” The goal of these corporate taxes is to curb a company’s ability to use loopholes “to shrink their tax liability to as low as zero.” As public support grows for defeating the ex-president’s tax extension, Americans “should feel very comfortable drawing a clear line that rich people’s taxes cannot go down,” wrote Michael Linden, a former Biden administration official.

Phillips argued, in his book *Wealth and Democracy*, that Theodore Roosevelt “was the first president to seriously grapple with the excesses of the Gilded Age.” He rose to the White House believing the dictum expressed by John Hay, President Lincoln’s personal secretary, in the early 1880s: “This is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people no



(Credit: AFL-CIO)

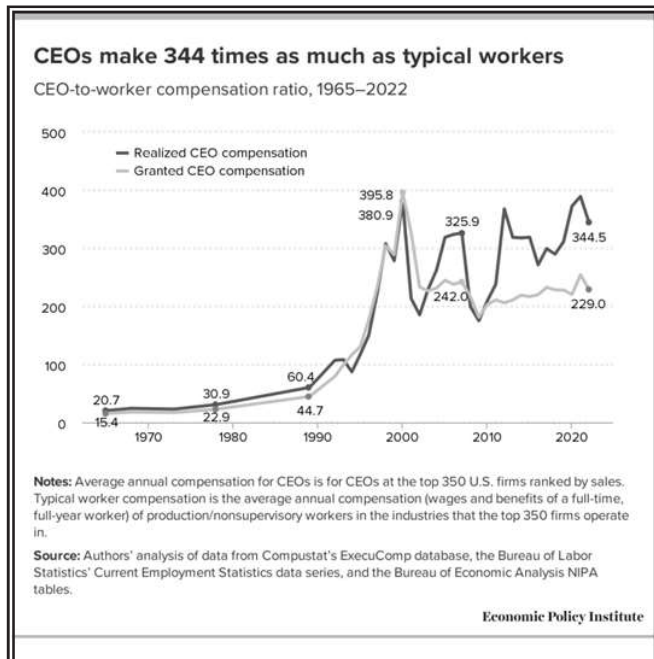


Fig. 1: CEO pay continues to soar as workers are left behind. According to the AFL-CIO, CEO salaries have risen over 1,209 percent since 1978 while a typical worker’s pay rose only 15.3 percent. (Credit: Economic Policy Institute)

longer. It is a government of corporations, by corporations, and for corporations.” When Roosevelt became president in 1901, Phillips wrote, he challenged “the organizers of the great trusts, the stockjobbers, the malefactors of great wealth and the ‘criminal rich’” over the prerogatives of the federal government which they had come to presume were theirs. Phillips admitted that the president’s “actions rarely matched his rhetoric,” but his words echoed the clamor of reform demanded by America’s working class.

Charles Schwab recognized the growing appetite for reform led by President Roosevelt. A close associate of J.P. Morgan, Schwab had engulfed himself in scandal in 1903 and attempted to recover his reputational and financial losses the following year. He began, *The Bethlehem Globe* reported, by seeking to purchase a shipyard to add to his Bethlehem Steel holdings. A reporter spotted him with his business associates at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, in Philadelphia on October 24, 1904 and asked him about the attitude he and his colleagues had toward Roosevelt in the upcoming election, “Schwab smiled broadly and replied, ‘I would rather not say anything on that subject.’”

Schwab’s sidestepping of the question proved prescient. The steel magnate sensed the mood of the nation’s working-class electorate and Roosevelt won his 1904 reelection campaign in a landslide. He swept every US region except the South and his vote margin over his Democratic opponent remains one of the largest in American presidential politics.

Some big business chiefs conceded that change was inevitable. *The Allentown Morning Call* noted in December 1906 that millionaire brewer Adolph Busch confessed that a federal income tax made sense. Calling his fellow business elites “stingy rich men,” he described “the wealthy man objecting every time the government wants to impose a tax that may affect his income” as “silly and short-sighted.” Congress passed a resolution proposing a constitutional amendment for a federal income tax in 1909. State legislatures ratified the Sixteenth Amendment to the US Constitution in 1913.

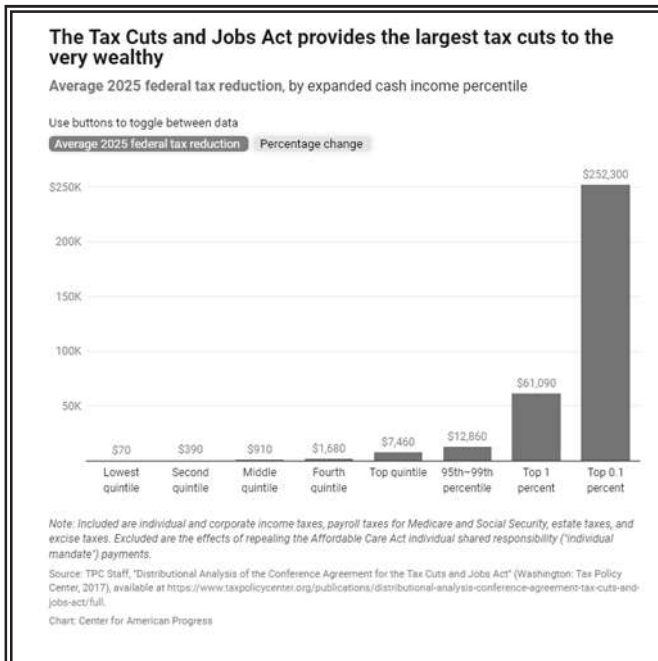


Fig. 2: Trump’s 2017 Tax Cuts & Jobs Act provided the biggest income boost to the wealthiest. The bill is set to expire in 2025 and Vice-President Kamala seeks to rollback the cuts for those at the top. (Credit: Center for American Progress)



Fig. 3: “No Lack of Big Game. The President seems to have scared up quite a bunch of Octopi.” The cartoon from the April 13, 1903 *Minneapolis Journal* depicted Theodore Roosevelt pursuing the anthracite coal trust’s George F. Baer, the beef trust’s Gustavus Swift and J.O. Armour, and the oil trust’s John Rockefeller. As working Americans increasingly demanded reform during the Gilded Age, the press often applauded the young president’s stand against the wealthy titans of industry. (Credit: Library of Congress, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2010645532>)

Tensions between Roosevelt and his big business rivals eased over his presidency but never went away. When Roosevelt forced the coal barons to negotiate with the anthracite miners in 1902, or urged railroad bosses to restrain rate hikes in 1904, or punished meatpackers for their egregious disregard for public health in 1906, the captains of industry felt aggrieved. “It would seem like a useless threshing of old straw,” *The Allentown Democrat* editor wrote on May 31, 1905, “to again go over the ground – to point out how this trust compels tribute from the producer, how that criminal corporation forces tribute from the consumer, how one law is made to enable the rich to become richer, how another law is made to enable the poor man to become poorer, how the original model of the republic is suffering oligarchic adulterations, how opportunity, which once made the United States the pride of all its sons, is slowly but surely slipping away.” (Fig. #3)

America’s workers have previously confronted gaping wealth inequality and candidates calling for tax cuts benefitting the rich. Workers demanded change during the height of the Gilded Age, pushing President Roosevelt to act, and influencing editors and reporters to draw attention to the widening wealth gap. And in the 1904 presidential election, workers re-elected the incumbent to another four-year term. Echoes from that turbulent period can still be heard as workers begin casting their ballots in this November’s election.



What are they trying to hide?

Right-wing media doesn't want you to know the truth about Project 2025

by Ron Ennis, Editor
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



What are they trying to hide about Project 2025? While many Americans have learned the document is a blueprint for a second Donald Trump presidency, the right-wing media world has bent over backwards downplaying the plan's nearly nine hundred pages.

In a September 3 post, *Foxnews.com* described Project 2025 as a "nonpartisan" report that its critics have unfairly attacked. A July 29 *Wall Street Journal* editorial claimed the document merely "a think-tank white paper." The origins of Project 2025, however, stretches back fifty years and its recommendations have grown increasingly influential in conservative circles.

The Heritage Foundation, an advocacy group founded in 1973, led and funded Project 2025, publishing the right-wing roadmap online as a book entitled "Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise." The online publication represents the

latest edition in the Heritage Foundation's "Mandate for Leadership" series, first issued in 1981. Ronald Reagan liked the first issue's proposals so much that he gave a copy to each member of his cabinet to review. By the end of his first year in office, Reagan had implemented roughly sixty percent of the Heritage's recommendations. *The Wall Street Journal's* July 31 editorial conceded that over the years the organization has grown more extreme "to court Donald Trump."

How strong are the ties between Trump and Project 2025? According to an August 22 *CBS News* report, almost three-quarters of the primary authors of the document worked in Trump's administration. "That includes the two leaders of Project 2025," wrote John Kelly for *CBS News*.

The right-wing media world would like you to think that the ex-president has distanced himself from the project's recommendations. "Trump buries Project 2025," *The Wall Street Journal* declared in a July 31 editorial headline.

But Kelly's article, entitled "Hundreds of proposals in Project 2025 match Trump's policies," identified at least 270 recommendations in the paper "that match Trump's past policies and current campaign promises." These include 170 proposals touted during his campaign, either in online platforms or his speeches.

The Journal's editors predict, however, that "not much of the Project 2025 agenda is likely to happen, even if the Republicans take the House and Senate. Democrats will block legislation with a filibuster."

Are the editors serious? Trump could impose many of the recommendations into law by simply bypassing Congress with an executive order. In an April 21, 2023 press release announcing Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation proudly said, "The Trump administration embraced nearly sixty-four percent of the 2016 edition's policy solutions after one year."

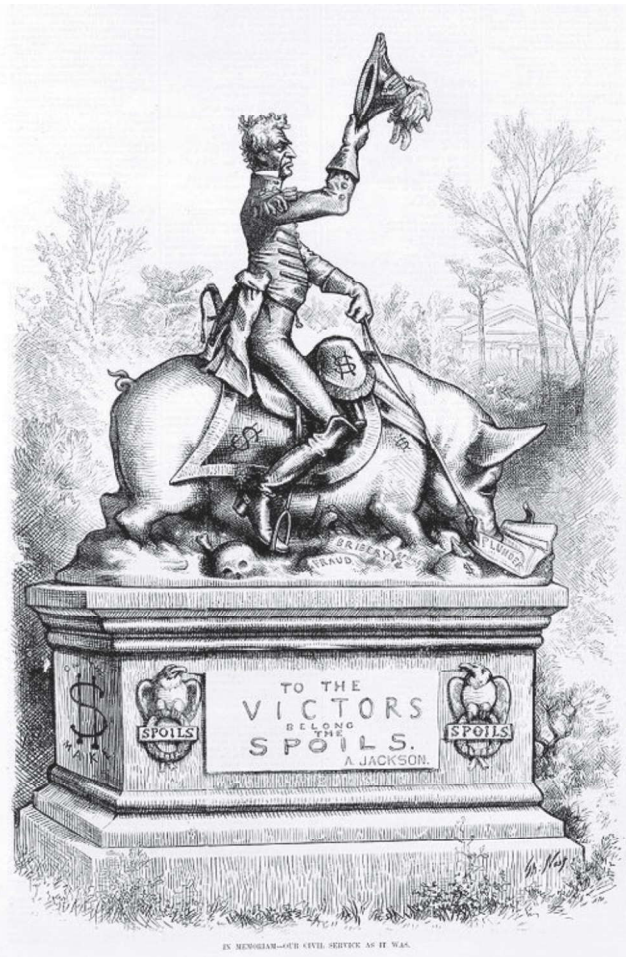
Why are right-wing pundits and editors trying to hide the truth about Project 2025?

Because they embrace many of its ambitions, despite their unpopularity with voters. For example, the Heritage Foundation's playbook cheers the US Supreme Court's 2022 *Dobbs* decision, and wishes for a government that bans birth-control pills and restricts access to contraception.

Perhaps the most radical section of Project 2025 is entitled "Taking the Reins of Government." The section details replacing tens of thousands of federal workers, who are mainly career civil servants generally insulated from politics, with presidential appointees who can be hired or fired at will. Near the end of his presidency, Trump actually issued an executive order, Schedule F, that would have allowed the replacement of career servants with partisan loyalists. President Joe Biden swiftly rescinded the order, but Project 2025 has renewed the call for Schedule F.

A reinstatement of Schedule F would be a throwback to the corrupt nineteenth century spoils system, when presidents and governors appointed party loyalists to government jobs rather than hiring workers based on skill, expertise, or merit. The constant turnover after each election cycle led to cronyism and corruption. In fact, Congress passed the Pendleton Act in 1883, protecting federal employees from being fired for political reasons. "It's all too easy to imagine an unscrupulous president using the power (Schedule F) would give him to reward friends and punish opponents across the nation," Paul Krugman, a noble laureate economist and *New York Times* columnist, wrote on July 15.

Don't lose sight of Project 2025. That is the real Trump the right-wing media is trying to hide.



"To the victors belong the spoils." The *Harper's Weekly* April 28, 1877 cartoon shows a statue of President Andrew Jackson on a pig, which is over "fraud," "bribery," and "spoils," eating "plunder." (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)



AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA AFL-CIO

IMPORTANT UNION INFORMATION ABOUT

Project 2025

There's a plan every union member needs to know about—Project 2025. This far-right plan goes after unions and union members in a variety of ways, even attacking the very labor laws that allow us to organize, negotiate a contract and enforce that contract.

Project 2025 has been written by staffers and allies of Donald Trump—and if he takes office and appoints anti-union allies throughout the executive branch next year, this is what we should expect:

BAN UNIONS AND ELIMINATE MINIMUM WAGE.

Project 2025 would allow states to ban unions and end overtime protections and the minimum wage. A Trump-Vance administration also would eliminate overtime for millions of workers.

(Economic Policy Institute, 4/8/19; Mandate for Leadership (Project 2025), Pg. 588, Pg. 605)

PUT WORKERS AND CHILDREN AT RISK.

Trump weakened worker safety laws and enforcement during his term. Project 2025 would let small businesses violate worker safety laws, putting workers in danger. It also would endanger children by allowing them to work in hazardous workplaces.

(Mandate for Leadership (Project 2025), Pg. 594, Pg. 595)

REPEAL DAVIS-BACON AND PLA REQUIREMENTS.

Trump repealed Davis-Bacon on federal projects when he was president. Project 2025 calls for a full repeal, which would end prevailing wage requirements on federal projects, leading to lower pay and more safety risks.

(Mandate for Leadership (Project 2025), Pg. 604)

WE CANNOT AFFORD FOR PROJECT 2025 PROPOSALS TO BECOME REALITY.

A Trump-Vance administration would be an existential threat to unions.

To read more about how Project 2025 would affect your union and see the plan for yourself, go to **BetterInAUnion.org/project-2025**.



For more information, visit www.afcio.org

