



# NEWS & VIEWS

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

[www.lehighvalleyclc.org](http://www.lehighvalleyclc.org)



**October 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-Borghi**  
*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*

## Reverse gutting of worker safety agency, NIOSH, and restore workers' jobs

Trump puts the National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health on chopping block

by the AFL-CIO

Last spring, the Trump administration's unaccountable Dept. of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cut more than a thousand jobs at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the federal job safety research agency.

Every single NIOSH (pronounced nigh-osh) research center was facing closure, so unions mobilized, and our public pressure helped push Congress to restore some NIOSH centers and scientist jobs. However, the few staff still remaining no longer have the resources to do their jobs, and Congress may make things even worse.

Now, all NIOSH research centers are at risk of being closed again. America's workers will lose critical safety protections—and more workers are going to get hurt.

One-third of NIOSH staffers still are barred from returning to work, even though their work is mandated by Congress. In his 2026 budget proposal, President Trump sought to eliminate most of NIOSH's funding and programs—even the work being performed by those recently brought back.

We need **all** NIOSH centers to keep all Americans safe and healthy at work.

NIOSH researchers study and uncover the long-term health effects of workers' jobs and guide employers on how to protect workers from those hazards—like stress that drives police officers to burn out, cancers among military aviators, lung disease among manufacturing workers, child development challenges linked to parental chemical exposures at work, injuries among health care workers and more. But this vital research

*"The entire thing about this whole disease is it's 100 percent preventable. It's not an act of God or an act of nature. It's not something out of our control. In a wealthy country with a wealthy economy, we should be able to do better."*

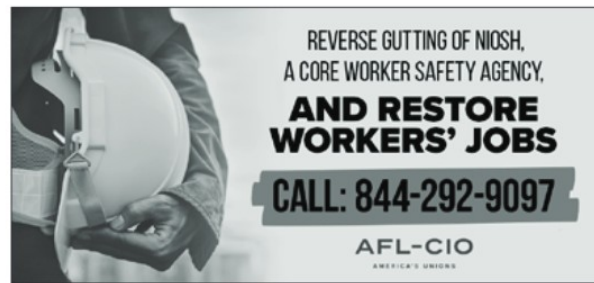
Dr. Robert Cohen, a pulmonologist at the University of Illinois, describing miner's silicosis, a fatal lung disease, in a June 19 *New York Times* article entitled "How Black Lung Came Roaring Back to Coal County."

On April 1, ninety-three percent of NIOSH's staff lost their jobs as Donald Trump gutted the worker safety agency to aid the mining industry.

remains on hold amid the chaos and confusion, and is on the chopping block completely.

By gutting this key federal agency, America's workers will lose critical health and safety research. Fewer employers will adopt lifesaving technologies and practices. And more workers will be hurt and killed on the job.

**Dial 844-292-9097 to call your representative and demand they stop the cuts to NIOSH.**



### Lehigh Valley Labor Council AFL-CIO

[www.lehighvalleyclc.org](http://www.lehighvalleyclc.org)

Phone 610-366-1358

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Gregg Potter	Executive Vice-President	IUOE #542
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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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## The great betrayal

### Trump's "big, beautiful" budget bill

by Kenneth W. Cooper, President  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers



When Donald Trump took the oath of office the first time eight years ago, I had serious concerns that he would turn out to be just another Republican president with handouts for the rich and the back of his hand for the rest, but I was willing to see if he kept his promises to working families.

I was willing to give him a chance because that's all that working men and women needed, what the members of the IBEW needed. A chance.

I saw enough in his first term to make up my mind that there were better options for the IBEW.

But nothing, I mean nothing, in his first term — nothing in my more than 60 years as an American citizen — comes close to the budget bill he just signed as a betrayal of everything I believe government should be for.

(continued on page six)



Union leaders picketed outside Penna. state Sen. Jarrett Coleman's office on September 3. Holding signs that read "Fund Public Transit" and "Better By Bus," union leaders sent a message to Coleman that proposed cuts to mass transit will drastically impact commuters. His district has 3,805 households without vehicle access who rely on mass transit daily, according to the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO. Nearly one million Pennsylvanians rely on mass transit for commuting, education, healthcare, and essential travel. For more about the need to fund public transit, visit [www.paafcio.org](http://www.paafcio.org).

Standing outside Coleman's 7535 Windsor Dr., Allentown office were: (left to right): Shelley Hoffman, PA AFL-CIO; Angela Ferritto, president PA AFL-CIO; Thomas Gallo, Steamfitters #420; Maurice Cobb, PA AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer; and Jim Irwin, president Lehigh Valley Labor Council. Also included, but not picture above, was Ron Ennis, Lehigh Valley Labor Council.

## The 2025 Labor Ticket

### Tuesday, November 4 Election: Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

#### Pennsylvania State Supreme Court retention



Christine Donohue



Kevin Dougherty



David Wecht

#### Allentown City Council



Cynthia Mota



Jeremy Binder



Cristian Pungo

#### Bethlehem City Council



Jo Daniels



Justin Amann

#### Easton City Council



Susan  
Hartranft-Bittinger



Frank Graziano

**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>





## Labor's lawyer

Clarence Darrow, "champion of the workingman," visits Allentown on October 26, 1913

by Ron Ennis, Editor  
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

**T**his summer marked the centennial anniversary of the Scopes "monkey trial," a legal case that transcends its reputation as a mere clash between religion and science. Renowned author Brenda Wineapple, in her recently published book, "Keeping the Faith: God, Democracy, and the Trial that riveted the Nation," argues that "Democracy was on trial." Her compelling 544-page chronicle not only illuminates the early twentieth century but also draws striking parallels to our own time.



**Clarence Darrow, 1913.** This photograph was taken on October 13, 1913, two weeks before Darrow visited Allentown. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

As Wineapple guides us through the events leading to *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes*, as the case is officially known, her narrative reveals that the issues of 1925 resonate powerfully today: "teachers being told what or how to teach; science regarded as an out-of-control, godless shibboleth; books tossed out of schools and libraries; loyalty oaths; and white supremacists promising that a revitalized white Protestant America would lead its citizens out of the slough of moral and spiritual decay to rise again, regardless of what or whose rights and freedoms might be trampled." Everything new is old again.

Wineapple's narrative vividly portrays the two nationally-recognized protagonists who argued the case, William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow, alongside influential personalities like journalist Henry L. Mencken, who coined the term "monkey trial."

Lehigh Valley residents knew Bryan and Darrow from more than newspaper headlines. Bryan, who argued for the prosecution, and Darrow, who led the defense of Scopes, visited the region on separate occasions and gave hours-long speeches widely reported in the local press. In an age of oratory, both men ranked as eloquent speakers.

After failing to defeat William McKinley in the 1896 presidential race, Bryan gave a campaign speech in Allentown on April 19, 1898 hoping to jumpstart a rematch that would yield a different outcome in the next election. The *Allentown Leader* described him as "a magnetic personality" with "the air of a preacher who beseeches you to follow the tenets of Jesus Christ." During his two-hour and forty minute speech, "he wielded his gift of oratory so charmingly as to make him the undisputed champion of his cause." His admirers nicknamed him the Great Commoner, Wineapple wrote, having spent years in and out of politics "representing the forgotten, the poor, the plain and anyone left out of an increasingly corporate America."

Despite the affection many held for Bryan, his polarizing nature cannot be overlooked. His staunch biblical beliefs drew sharp criticism from liberal church leaders, who likened them to a "religious Ku Klux Klan." President Theodore Roosevelt thought him a hypocrite after Bryan joined southern politicians in condemning the president's decision to invite Booker T. Washington to a White House dinner. The firestorm proved severe enough that no president invited an African-American to dinner for the next thirty years. Bryan had an equally rocky relationship with organized labor. He endorsed certain labor goals, like the eight-hour workday, but expressed reservations about strikes, the union shop clause requiring workers to join the union should they receive wage and workplace benefits, and labor power that he feared could unduly sway the economy. Eugene V. Debs, prominent labor leader and five-time presidential candidate for the Socialist Party of America, asserted after Bryan's passing that "the cause of human progress had sustained no loss in his death." If he had been elected president, "he would have muzzled free thought and free speech (and) he would have made the state and church one with the church at the top."

Darrow also had his share of supporters and detractors, and his arrival in Allentown on October 26, 1913 marked a crossroads for a man who had grown famous by the turn of the twentieth century as one of America's leading labor attorneys. Legal historians recognize him as a towering figure and students of labor history will find his legacy compelling.

Darrow's legal skills championing labor unions earned him widespread acclaim from America's working class. He defended Eugene Debs, the leader of the American Railway Union, against federal prosecution for orchestrating the 1894 Pullman Strike. He represented the United Mine Workers during their 1902 Anthracite Coal Strike and served as legal counsel for William Haywood, leader of the Western Federation of Miners, after authorities arrested him for the murder of former Idaho Governor Frank Steunenberg in 1905. Darrow, Wineapple wrote, believed in the causes that Debs, Haywood and the coal miners championed: "the right to unionize and agitate for decent working conditions and better wages." However, his defense of two ironworkers marked a pivotal turning point in his career.

Los Angeles employers had long employed labor spies, private detective agents and strikebreakers to thwart union organizing campaigns since the late nineteenth century. The *Los Angeles Times*, under the ownership of Harrison Gray Otis, dripped with anti-union sentiment in an attempt to quash the city's burgeoning labor movement. A strike staged by the International Association of Bridge and Structural Iron Workers gained momentum during the summer of 1910, threatening the power of Otis and the city's business community. On October 1, a devastating explosion at the *Los Angeles Times* building led to the deaths of at least twenty-one people and more than one hundred others injured.

In April 1911, the arrest of John and James McNamara for the bombing riveted the nation and ignited a fervent response from the labor movement. The brothers belonged to the structural iron workers union, and their arrest and trial became a *cause célèbre* of the struggle against oppressive corporate inter-



ests. Labor leaders, such as Debs and Haywood, rallied to their defense, convinced that the brothers were victims of a calculated frame-up by moneyed interests. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), also believed the brothers' innocence after John McNamara assured him that he had nothing to do with the bombing.

Gompers visited Darrow at his Chicago home and listened to the renowned lawyer express his reluctance to defend the McNamara brothers. At age fifty-four, Darrow had grown weary from his labor work. "I urged (Gompers) to get someone else," he wrote in his autobiography. "Of course I realized that the men should be defended, but I felt that I had done my share of fighting." Moreover, he had doubts about the brothers' innocence. But Gompers cautioned Darrow, Wineapple wrote, that the rank-and-file would consider him a traitor if he abandoned the brothers to the clutches of "capitalist greed." Darrow consented to represent the McNamaras.

Union members across the country began raising money for the McNamaras' defense. The Allentown Central Trades and Labor Council led a local fundraising effort in May 1911 "to defend Brothers of Labor who have been spirited away." The AFL established a "Ways and Means Committee," appealing to local, state, and national unions to donate twenty-five cents per capita to a defense fund. Amid growing rank-and-file enthusiasm for the McNamaras, Darrow's reluctance turned to despair when during trial proceedings James McNamara admitted to him that he and his brother had planted the dynamite. "I felt as does a doctor, who realizes that his patient must die," he observed.

On December 1, 1911, the McNamara brothers changed their pleas from not guilty to guilty. By admitting their guilt, as Darrow had urged, both men avoided the death sentence: James McNamara received a life sentence and John McNamara received fifteen years in prison. "From the first, there was never the slightest chance to win," Darrow said later. "There was overwhelming evidence of all kinds (against them), which no one could have surmounted if they would."

Despite sparing the brothers from execution, Darrow faced harsh criticism from labor leaders, who accused him of betraying the movement, and dropping him from their list of preferred attorneys. He seemed a beaten man, wrote Wineapple, as associates distanced themselves from him. "It is awfully hard to be deserted in this crisis by those who should stand by me," he lamented.

Darrow visited Allentown in 1913 as part of a lecture tour to regain his reputation and begin a new career as a criminal lawyer. Local newspapers advertized his October 26 visit as early as August and described him as "one of the most noted lawyers in the country." He surprised his hosts, the Allentown Central Trades and Labor Council, by giving two speeches, an afternoon lecture at the Orpheum Theatre and an evening talk at the Socialists Hall.

The business-friendly *Allentown Leader* attempted to downplay Darrow's nearly three-hour speech at the Orpheum, with a brief, dismissive article labeling him a "defender of murderers and dynamiters." In contrast, the *Allentown Morning Call* gave extensive coverage to both of his lectures. He captivated his audience "with his witty jokes," and frequently elicited applause as "a champion of the workingman."

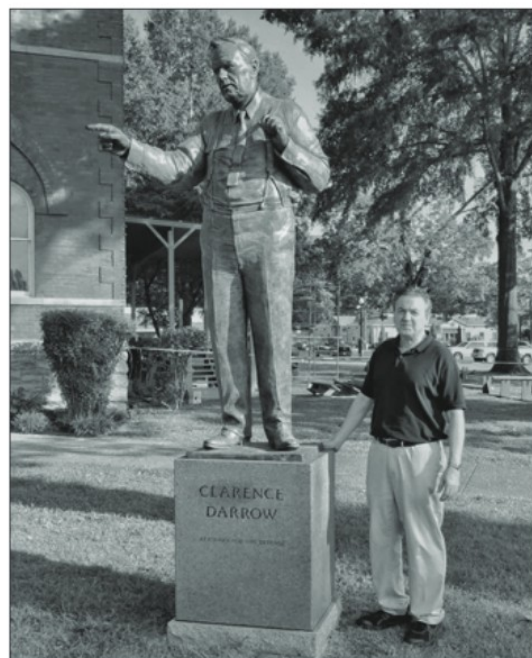
"If the business of this world was carried on by the golden rule," Darrow declared, "there would not be any use of labor unions. But it is carried on by the law of the jungle. The only

time the golden rule is working is on Sundays, and then the shops are closed." His declaration resonated with the crowd.

Darrow candidly acknowledged that "trades unions are not ideal institutions. They wouldn't do for heaven." Yet, he observed that "incomplete and imperfect as labor organizations always have been, they have still done more for the well-being of the human race than any other institution."

Continuing, Darrow urged his working-class audience to "vote for their interests . . . and see what bearing your ballot will have on the great work problems." He called for unwavering solidarity on the shop room floor, asserting, "Get half the workingmen to stand together and say they'll only work eight hours a day and you'll get it without any law." His conviction was clear; employees could transform their working conditions through unity. "The most radical thing a workingman can do is not to work."

Darrow's legacy was cemented in the 1920s as he handled several high-profile cases, including the Scopes trial, before passing away in 1938 at the age of eighty. Wineapple's book "Keeping the Faith" offers a compelling narrative that feels remarkably relevant today. Her vivid accounts of Darrow, Bryan, and other leading figures in the Scopes trial make her work not only a faithful reflection of early twentieth-century America but also a vital read for today's audiences.



**Sculpture honoring Clarence Darrow with artist Zenos Frudakis, 2017.** The seven-foot bronze statue faces a statue of his Scopes "monkey trial" adversary, William Jennings Bryan, on the front lawn of the Rhea County Courthouse, Dayton, Tennessee, the site of the historic trial. A statue of Bryan had stood in front of the courthouse since 2005, but the erection of a Darrow memorial by the Freedom from Religion Foundation in 2017 sparked local reaction. The *New York Times* reported at the time of the Darrow statue unveiling that one-third of Americans continued to reject evolutionary science.

Zenos Frudakis also sculpted the Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial in 1991, a tribute to local workers who died on the job. (Credit: [www.zenosfrudakis.com](http://www.zenosfrudakis.com))



## Your most valuable asset

### Social Security ninety years later

by Ron Ennis, Editor  
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



**W**hat is your most valuable asset? Your home? Your savings?

The answer, according to a study by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, is unequivocal: Social Security. For nearly everyone Social Security stands as the most significant financial asset, constituting one-third of the total wealth for middle-class Americans. For those less fortunate, such as individuals with disabilities, it serves as a ticket out of poverty. Social Security is indispensable for nearly everyone, save for the wealthiest ten percent in the United States.

Yet, despite its crucial importance, Social Security has not received the respect it deserves, noted Jeff Sommer, a *New York Times* columnist, who writes on markets, finance and the economy. He describes it as “a precious ninety-year-old legacy” that some politicians have allowed “to fall into disrepair.”

Others seek to dismantle Social Security entirely. In March 2025, Elon Musk called the program a “ponzi scheme,” a sentiment echoed by E.J. Antoni, Donald Trump’s August 2025 nominee for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. “This is the megatrend behind MAGA,” wrote Holman W. Jenkins, Jr., columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* on September 3, warning of a strategy to undermine the program by eroding public trust.

This past August marked the ninetieth anniversary of the law creating Social Security. The average monthly payment for a retiree this summer was \$2,005, translating to hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime. For those who defer claiming benefits until age seventy, Social Security’s worth exceeds well over \$1 million.

However, those benefits could be in jeopardy unless Congress and the president act. The program’s trustees announced this past summer that benefits could be trimmed by twenty-three percent by 2033. “Eight years isn’t that far away,” cautioned the *Journal’s* editor on June 20, 2025. Only the richest ten percent would remain unscathed by such benefit reductions.

The challenge has not changed for decades. America’s declining birthrate has long strained Social Security, as fewer babies mean fewer workers contributing to the trust fund. Furthermore, this trend is not unique to the United States; high-income nations began experiencing a baby bust in the 1970s, but it now has spread to countries such as China and India. “The demographic winter is coming,” said Jesus Fernandez-Villaverde, an economist specializing in demographics at the University of Pennsylvania. He estimated that global fertility fell to between 2.1 and 2.2 births per mother last year, which he argued was below global replacement for the first time in human history. Efforts to reverse declining birthrates have thus far failed.

To preserve all promised benefits, sacrifices are inevitable, but who bears the sacrifices remains contentious. Raising the Social Security payroll tax or increasing contributions from the wealthiest Americans could resolve the issue. We need a fix now. “Social Security is the most important asset that most Americans have,” Sommer concluded. “Congress and the president are responsible for this problem. They need strong reminders that they’ve got to fix it.”



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act at approximately 3:30 p.m. August 14, 1935. First recipient received their check in January 1937. (Credit: Library of Congress #cph.3c23278)

## The great betrayal

(continued from page three)

Not only will this bill kill hundreds of thousands of jobs that would have been IBEW jobs, but it will rip the rug from under a generation of would-be apprentices and billions of dollars of our wages will evaporate.

This isn’t just about the elimination of union-friendly tax incentives for clean electric generation jobs. This is the wholesale abandonment of a project to electrify our economy that would have made us the competitive marvel of the world with the kind of blue-collar careers we haven’t seen in generations.

Now it’s in tatters.

And why? What is it all for?

They’ll say they made overtime tax-free. But it isn’t true. You still pay payroll taxes on overtime, and the maximum deduction is \$12,500, getting smaller the more you make. But who’s working overtime when they’re sitting on the bench?

And it excludes rail workers. And it ends in 2028, after the next presidential election.

You know what doesn’t have a \$12,500 maximum? The deduction they left in to alleviate the struggle of owning and operating a private jet.

And you know what doesn’t expire? The \$960 billion tax cut for the wealthiest. Their tax cut is forever.

Wages will fall, and tariffs will drive prices up. The average family’s energy bill will go up significantly over the next half-decade, and more than 300 rural hospitals will shutter.

This so-called One Big Beautiful Bill is the greatest transfer of wealth from working people to the rich in our nation’s history.

So many of our members wanted to believe that Donald Trump was different. An elite who would betray his own in favor of us for once.

This is the great betrayal.

Trump and the Republicans betrayed you and me. The billionaires and their families? They’ll be fine.







Jim Irwin, president of the Lehigh Valley Labor Council, addressed between 350—400 at the start of the annual Pete DePietro Labor Day picnic at the American Club, Coplay on August 31. He thanked the large crowd for attending the solidarity-filled event, the many families that brought their children to the picnic, and all our state and local elected officials that have remained friends of working women and men.

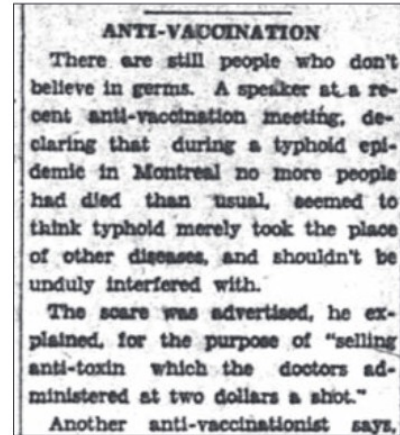
The Council's request for school supply donations for Donegan Elementary, South Bethlehem and Roosevelt Elementary School, Allentown received a generous response from those who attended the picnic. Donegan and Roosevelt are both United Way Community schools, and attendees were asked to bring donations or make financial contributions that would be delivered to the school. The labor council also purchased roughly \$1,000 in additional supplies thanks to the 50-50 drawing and additional cash contributions.

The council's annual picnic received its name after Peter M. DePietro, a long-time union leader and former Northampton County Labor Council president, passed away in 2013.



Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn in "Adam's Rib," 1949. This movie was one of several Tracy-Hepburn films featured on Labor Day on the Turner Classic Movie channel. Meanwhile, the Movie Channel showed crime dramas. Neither channel featured worker-related films this past Labor Day. C-Span III had a one-hour segment on the "West Virginia Mine Wars."

Television networks routinely show holiday films during Christmas season, horror classics on Halloween, war films on Memorial Day, etc. Hollywood, indeed most of the media, has historically ignored labor's contributions to America. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)



"There are still some people who don't believe in germs," wrote the *Bethlehem Globe* editor on April 23, 1928. (see above)

The editor noted that vaccine opponents quote "a masterpiece of folly" and "self-evident foolishness" when arguing against scientifically-tested treatments for humankind's worst contagions. One hundred years later, the past is prologue.

During his nearly seven months in office, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. has stoked chaos and confusion at the Department of Health and Human Services, replaced the agency's health experts with vaccine critics, canceled millions of dollars in medical research, and claimed that Covid-19 shots are the "deadliest" vaccines ever made.

Florida has gone further by becoming "the first state to end all vaccine mandates, including for schoolchildren," the *New York Times* wrote on September 3, 2025. The state had previously required children entering school to be immunized against measles, mumps and rubella, chickenpox, and hepatitis B, among other infectious diseases. But the state's surgeon general, Dr. Joseph A. Ladapo, argued that "Every last one of (the vaccine mandates) is wrong and drips with disdain and slavery."



“ ”

■ ■ ■

"This is a most unfortunate Labor Day for labor. The labor movement has taken it on the chin repeatedly in the last several decades, but President Trump is the most ruthlessly anti-labor president since before the Great Depression. If the labor movement does not fight harder than it has since Mr. Trump regained the presidency, its future will be dire. . . .

"If the labor movement wants to fight for its survival, it must return to mass mobilization tactics, reminding Americans that their rights come through working together—not through supporting a president who talks about helping American workers while slashing working safety regulations, supporting tariffs that raise the cost of consumer goods and stripping workers of their legal rights to contracts."

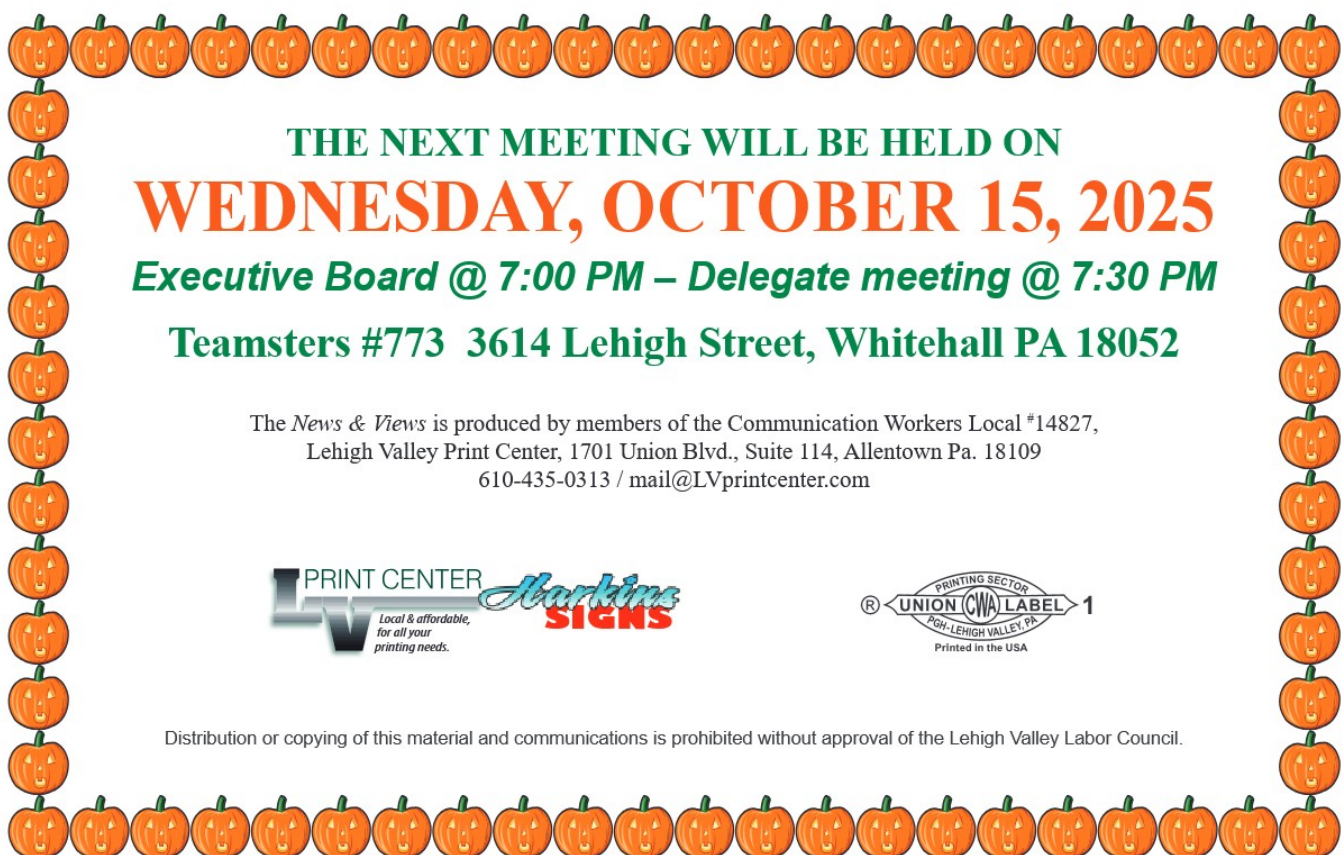
Erik Loomis, in a September 1, 2025 *New York Times* essay, "Trump is Wiping Out Unions. Why Are They so Quiet?" Loomis, a professor of history at the University of Rhode Island, recently wrote "A History of America in Ten Strikes," placing the struggle for worker justice at the heart of American history.



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A decorative border of orange pumpkins with green stems and leaves, arranged in a rectangular frame around the central text.

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE HELD ON**  
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025**  
**Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM**  
**Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052**

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