# WS&VIE PENNSYLVANIA LABOR COMMUNICATIONS Association Lehigh Valle **LEHIGH VALLEY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO** Labor Counci 2000 **"UNIONS JOINING TOGETHER AS ONE"** February 2024 www.lehighvalleyclc.org

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ewly-elected officers of the Lehigh County Labor Council, January 1971. Photograph taken at the Allentown Labor Temple Bldg. 124-126 North Sixth St., Allentown. See page three for related photograph.

Front-row: (left to right) vice presidents Joan S. Toth (Electrical Workers #1944) and Mary Mayshack (Amalgamated Clothing Workers #128); Executive Vice-President Robert Kohler (Paperworkers #691); Blanche S. Engler (AFSCME), financial secretary; President Rudolph Zieger, Sr. (United Steelworkers #1371); Joseph Humenik (Brewery Workers #264), recording secretary; vice-presidents Marie Diehl and Franklin R. Kuhns (Postal Workers Union #177).

Second row: (left to right) Rev. Dr. Willis D. Mathias, council chaplain; vice-president Virginia Baer; Trustees Lois Werner (Electrical Workers #1944) and Anna Onkotz (Amalgamated Clothing Workers #128); vicepresidents Michael Boykas, Jr. (International Union of Painters #1269), Martin Bukovina (Amalgamated Clothing Workers #128), and Woodrow W. Labenberg (International Assoc. of Machinists); Otto Urban (Insurance Workers International Union #12), sergeant-at-arms; vice-president David Schneck (Allentown Firefighters #302);

Back row: (left to right) vice-presidents Joseph Neimeister (United Steel Workers #2599) and LeRoy J. Brown (IUOE #543); Alfred F. Boandl (United Steelworkers #3048), Lehigh County United Fund Labor Rep.; Trustee Warren Leiby (AFSCME), Committee on Political Education chairman: and Trustee Samuel Rowe.

## Penna. AFL-CIO Scholarship Deadline for essay is March 28

by the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO

The Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Scholarship Essay Contest is a chance for students to learn more about the importance of Organized Labor in



America. Over the years, we have awarded tens of thousands of dollars to students furthering their education.

Scholarships are available exclusively to Pennsylvania AFL-CIO affiliated union members and their families. They are offered to students in two categories: graduating high school seniors (Class of 2024) and all post-secondary students. Students in each category must address their respective topic in a submitted essay. The essay's title must include the category for which you are applying. Each entry must be a typed document of at least 1,500-words, neatly prepared and formatted as a PDF file. Application form must be included in your essay PDF file, or as a separate PDF attachment. The entry deadline is March 29, 2024. Send to: percapita@paaflcio.org

A first, second and third place scholarship will be awarded in each category. First place will receive a \$2,000 scholarship, second place a \$1,500 scholarship and third place a \$1,000 scholarship.

Unions have helped people gain economic security through good wages, strong benefits, and fairness in the workplace. The benefits of union membership are particularly important for those working to provide a better life for their families in a post-COVID world.

Category 1 includes graduating high school seniors (Class of 2024). The essay topic:

What has COVID revealed about the division of labor in our country and what we constitute as essential workers?

Category 2 includes all post-secondary students. The essay topic:

How would a \$15 minimum wage impact different parts of our economy? You may consider the impact on low-wage workers, on families, on small businesses, on large corporations, and on the government.

Essays less than 1,500 word will be disqualified. Essays will be judged in April and awards will be announced in May 2023.

For an application form, visit www.paaflcio.org. For more information contact Monica Virgilio at 717-231-2853 or e -mail at percapita@paaflcio.org.

The Lehigh Valley Labor Council is a sponsor of the scholarship program. If your union affiliate would like to join the labor council and dozens of other labor organizations as a sponsor of the scholarship program, please make your check payable to the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO and mail it to: Penna. AFL-CIO, Attn: Secretary-Treasurer George Piasecki, 600 North Second Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101.



By the AFL-CIO

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and Microsoft Corp. announced the formation last month of a new partnership to create an open dialogue to discus how artificial intelligence (AI) must anticipate the needs of workers and include their voices in its development and implementation.

To learn more, visit the AFL-CIO's website at: aflcio.org/press/releases.



#### Lehigh Valley Labor Council AFL-CIO www.lehighvalleyclc.org Phone 610-366-1358

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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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Ron Ennis John Weiss

APWU #268 SEIU #668



Northampton County Judge Brian Panella swore in newly-elected Lehigh Valley Labor Council officers at the January 17 council meeting. Held at the Teamsters #773 union hall, the officers included: (*front row, left to right*) Mike Shupp, Leslie Franklin, Ron Ennis, John Werkheiser, Mike Ahern, and Lenny Perrone; (*against the back wall, left to right*) Gregg Potter, Dennis Andrews, Anne Radakovits, Jon Roth, Jim Irwin, Angie DeLeon-Solis, and Mike Wallery. Their terms expire January 2027. (*Credit*: Kevin Deely)

## TeenWorks 25th anniversary dinner February 10 Partnership between local unions and United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

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



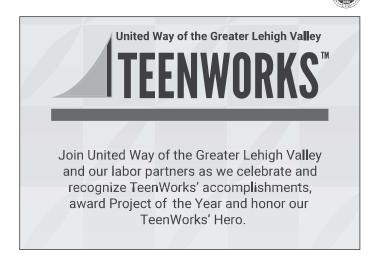
Please join the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and our labor partners on February 10 at the Northampton Memorial Community Center when we recognize TeenWorks 25th Anniversary.

The event, beginning at 5 p.m. with our dinner at 6 p.m., will celebrate and recognize TeenWorks' accomplishments, announce the Project of the Year Award and the Zach Kraus Spirit of Service Award, and honor our TeenWorks' Hero. Tickets are \$75 per person and \$500 for a table of eight. The event will be held at 1601 Laubach Ave., Northampton.

The unique partnership between United Way and organized labor has granted opportunities to local teens since 1999. Together, we have funded more that 550 community service projects with more than \$550,000. This outstanding accomplishment is possible because of the generosity of you and your members.

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 purse higher education or trade school. You have helped us do this, and we want you to see what your dollars do in person. The event is sponsored by Capital Blue Cross.

We hope you will join us for our anniversary dinner on February 10. Please rsvp at johnw@unitedwayglv.org, or call me if you have any questions at 610-770-4636.



## Our area's Labor Day roots How Lehigh Valley workers celebrated the holiday a century ago

by Ron Ennis, Editor Lehigh Valley Labor Council

he Lehigh Valley Labor Council will celebrate its annual Labor Day picnic on September 1, joining a nationwide tradition of honoring the many contributions made by working women and men to America's strength, prosperity, and well-being.

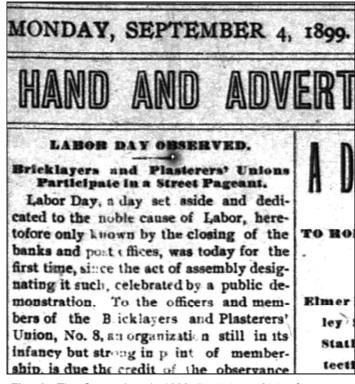
At the beginning of the twentieth century, the holiday attracted thousands of local workers and their families in grand parades and all-day celebrations. Local newspapers splashed banner headlines on their front pages, but the celebrations faded by the 1920s reflecting changes in America. "The holiday now seems to mean nothing except a chance to get away from the job on the first Monday in September," wrote *The Allentown Morning Call* on September 2, 1962. Why does the holiday no longer hold the prominence it once had?

Local workers had held parades before the Civil War, often alarming the local press. The *Northampton County Whig & Journal* reported on May 16, 1849 that canal boatmen and driver boys "have had several processions through our streets" of Easton, demanding wage increases for transporting anthracite coal. The weekly newspaper worried about the boats blockading the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company's canal near the city and feared the unrest would spread. "All good citizens must disapprove of demonstrations of this kind," demanded the editors, "and we trust the matter may be speedily accommodated by the parties." These events, while discouraged by the local press, limited themselves to specific labor groups and were not related to a wider labor movement. (*Fig. #1*)

The strike of the Mauch Chunk Companics Boatmen. Quite an excitement prevailed in this

place during the past week, and continues up to this time, on account of the strike for higher wages by the boatmen of the above company. Four or five hundred boats are now moored in the Lehigh dam. The boatmen, with their hands and driver boys have had several processions through our streets. One of the parades came off on Monday last, when they were addressed in the Square.

**Fig. 1:** Lehigh Canal captains and mule drivers conducted a public display in Easton protesting working conditions in May 1849. "All good citizens must disapprove of demonstrations of this kind," wrote the *Northampton County Whig & Journal*. (*Credit*: Northampton County Whig & Journal, May 16, 1849)



**Fig. 2:** The September 4, 1899 *Bethlehem Globe* front page records our first Lehigh Valley-wide Labor Day celebration.

Before the federal government established Labor Day as a federal holiday, several states created their own holiday for honoring workers. Oregon became in 1887 the first state to create a worker holiday, although it was observed on the first Saturday of June. Colorado, Massachusetts, New Jersey and New York followed with their own official celebrations for workers. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that September 5, 1887 marked "the first occurrence of 'Labor Day'" in Pennsylvania. Our state joined Connecticut and Nebraska in enacting a workers' holiday by the end of the 1880s.

The closing of schools and businesses marked some of the first recorded Labor Day activities in our area. In 1890, Bethlehem's three silk factories stood idle and banks shutdown, but its giant South Side steel mill continued its operations. In Easton, only the public schools and banks closed for the day. None of the local newspapers reported a labor march or picnic.

On June 28, 1894, Democratic President Grover Cleveland signed legislation making the first Monday in September of each year a federal holiday. *The Easton Express* reported that Easton's Bricklayers and Plasterers' Union celebrated the inaugural holiday with a picnic a short distance above Chain Dam on the Lehigh River. Otherwise, the holiday was not widely recognized in the four years after the law's passage. Local newspapers reported mostly baseball games and bicycle races. "There wasn't much evidence of Labor Day in Allentown," wrote the September 7, 1897 *Allentown Daily Leader*. Although the bankers had a holiday, "the public schools were in session and the stores were open as usual."

Local Labor Day activities grew on the eve of the twentieth century. According to news accounts, workers held the first area-wide Labor Day celebration on September 4, 1899 in Bethlehem. "Labor Day, a day set aside and dedicated to the noble cause of Labor, heretofore only known by the closing of the banks and post offices, was today for the first time since the act of assembly designating it such, celebrated by a public demonstration," began a front-page article in *The Bethlehem Globe*. The newspaper credited the Bricklayers and Plasterers' Unions with organizing the first local observation of the holiday. The day-long celebration began with a parade of about five hundred workmen at Main and Broad Sts., Bethlehem. The marchers included: the bricklayers, plasterers and carpenters of Bethlehem and Easton; Easton's Ingersoll-Sergeant union machinists; Allentown bricklayers; and bands from all three cities. They marched across the old Lehigh Bridge and finished at South Bethlehem's Municipal Hall, where workers "were treated to a sumptuous lunch." (*Fig. #2*)

Interestingly, Bethlehem stopped participating in Labor Day celebrations in the decade that followed while workers in her sister cities continued with their annual festivities. Why?

Steel laborers, calling public attention to work weeks as long as eighty-four hours, struck fear in Bethlehem Steel's executive suites. The steel bosses reacted swiftly when American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers gave a speech on March 14, 1902 describing the need for eight-hour workday legislation to hundreds of steelworkers and their families in South Bethlehem's Municipal Hall. "All government labor should be eight-hours a day," said the labor leader, "as an example for others to follow in a movement which means so much for the human family."

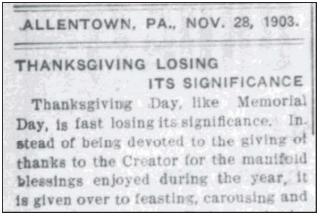
According to Gompers in congressional testimony weeks after his lecture, company officials had planted a spy in the crowd's midst to record the names of steelworkers who cheered the labor leader's message. He told lawmakers of his unsuccessful attempt to discover the spy's identity, adding that Bethlehem Steel Superintendent Archibald Johnston dismissed dozens of steelworkers from the company's payroll after Gompers gave his speech. Johnston's mass dismissals sparked a rare inquiry from The Bethlehem Globe, the local newspaper most sympathetic to the company. In explaining the mass firings, The Globe's editors opined that the company "has evidently been exercising its right to discharge workmen pretty freely of late. ... " The newspaper's reporter noted that nearly all the discharged men had attended the Gompers lecture. Johnston's dismissals had a chilling effect on public demonstrations supporting labor in Bethlehem, and Labor Day celebrations disappeared for years from the town. "Labor Day was not observed in the Bethlehems," wrote the September 4, 1905 Bethlehem Globe, "except by the closing of the Post Offices and the banks." (Fig. #3)

#### MEN DISCHARGED.

#### Steel Works Employes Attribute Dismissal to Unionism.

One of the men who claims he was discharged from the Bethlehem Steel Works this week because of his affiliation with trades unions stated this morning in West Bethlehem that 59 employes in various departments of the Steel Works have been similarly

**Fig. 3:** Bethlehem Steel officials fired dozens of steelworkers in the weeks after AFL President Samuel Gompers gave a speech calling for an eight-hour workday law on federal contracts. A April 21, 1902 *Bethlehem Globe* reporter learned that nearly all the men dismissed had attended Gompers's South Bethlehem speech. (*Credit*: Bethlehem Globe, April 19, 1902)



**Fig. 4:** By the time area workers held their first Labor Day rites, holidays had already veered far from their true meaning. One local news editor lamented how Thanksgiving and Memorial Day were "fast losing (their) significance." He pointed to the "young men going from saloon to saloon until beastly drunk" and warned that "unless a halt is called the old method of celebrating the day . . . will be entirely turned over to revelry." (*Credit*: Allentown Morning Call, November 28, 1903)

Meanwhile, Labor Day celebrations grew in Easton and Allentown. "Seven hundred union men" marched in the city's largest holiday celebration declared the September 2, 1901 *Easton Express*. The long list of marching workers included Carpenters, Hod carriers, Sheet metal workers, Plumbers, Woodworkers, Machinists, Theatrical Stage workers, Painters, Trolley conductors and motormen, Pattern makers, Printers, Iron Moulders, Electrical Workers, Brewers, Trainmen, Cigar makers, Clerks, Barbers, Bakers, and Shoemakers. The Shoemakers entered a float where men were cutting leather and running a sewing machine, wrote *The Express*. The Electrical workers also entered a float "fitted up with a telephone and other electrical devices."

Allentown workers held their first Labor Day celebration on September 2, 1901. Leading the festivities was Solomon Goebel, who remembered his first parade in 1861 when he had left Allentown as a young man to join the Union Army's First Defenders to protect Washington D.C. at the start of the Civil War. Goebel rode a white horse, followed by 115 fellow bricklayers in ranks behind him down the streets of Allentown "in a parade whose strength surprised the people," declared *The Allentown Daily Leader*.

The *Allentown Democrat* noted that the Allentown bricklayers represented the largest contingent of marchers and labor unions from Bethlehem and Easton also "sent strong delegations" to the parade. Joining the Allentown bricklayers were the Bethlehem bricklayers, Easton bricklayers, Hod carriers, Allentown carpenters, Woodcarvers, Woodworkers, and Cigar makers. In the afternoon, union members and their families gathered in Daeufer's Grove, near Rittersville for a picnic and to hear speeches.

Curiously, the *Democrat* reported that "the Hod carriers held their picnic in Fairview Grove, near Wescosville." A Hod carrier's duties include carrying and delivering materials such as bricks, mortar and other construction materials to the masons or bricklayers. According to the *Daily Leader*, the Hod carriers had "many stalwart colored men" in their ranks. Linking the two newspapers suggests that white and Black workers held separate Labor Day picnics in Allentown.

## Why the tight race? Answer may lie in asymmetric amplification

by Ron Ennis, Editor Lehigh Valley Labor Council

oe Biden touted the success of his economic policies during his visit to Emmaus in January. "I just came away from this really reassured that what we've done has had an impact," Biden remarked, "not just here in eastern



Pennsylvania, but throughout the country."



The president made those remarks after spending the afternoon talking to shop owners and customers in the borough, before concluding his visit at the Allentown Fire Training Academy, Lehigh Street, Allentown. "Everyone is doing better, and they believe it, they know it, it's beginning to sink in," he said

to Allentown Morning Call reporters and oth-

President Joe Biden

But why do polls show him in a tight race with his expected opponent? Money from Biden's American Rescue Plan and a grant secured from US Congresswoman Susan Wild helped fund the new fire training center. Statistics furnished by the White House showed that Allentown's unemployment rate had dropped to 3.9 percent, down from 6.4 percent since 2021. During the same period, the city added 32,000 jobs and inflation had

ers.



US Rep. Susan Wild

cooled since peaking at 9.1 percent in 2022. Although the nation's economy has rebounded well since the aftershocks caused by the pandemic, polls show Biden continues facing doubts.

When asked during his visit why surveys failed to match reality, the president replied that Americans had not heard how his initiatives had improved their lives. "What we haven't done is let them know exactly what's changed," he said to the Morning Call.

There may be more to this disconnect from reality than supposedly Biden's poor salesmanship. According to a recent post in the Briefing Book, asymmetric amplification has contributed to this mismatch. Ryan Cummings and Neale Mahoney wrote in their report, entitled "Asymmetric amplification and the consumer sentiment gap," that "Republicans cheer louder" than Democrats "when their party is in control and boo louder when their party is out of control." The former White House economic advisors admitted in their November 13, 2023 post that both major political parties express more negativity when the other party controls the White House, but "the magnitude of this partisan bias is roughly two and a half times larger for Republicans than for Democrats." Right-wing media talks as if the nation is facing another Great Depression, never mind reality.

Years ago, models aiming at consumer sentiment relied on economic fundamentals, such as the inflation rate, unemployment rate, and quarterly stock market returns. Cummings and Mahoney discovered that "these models have broken down" and that partisanship has grown in influence since 2006, especially



"We find that Republicans cheer louder when their party is in control" of the White House, "and boo louder when their party is out of control," wrote Ryan Cummings and Neale Mahoney, two former White House economic advisors, in explaining the gap between voter sentiment and real economic fundamentals.

among Republicans. "When a Republican is in the White House, Republican survey respondents feel about fifteen index points better than predicted about the economy, whereas Democrats feel around six index points worse," the authors wrote. "When a Democrat is President, Republicans feel about fifteen index points worse than the economy, but Democrats only feel around six index points better."

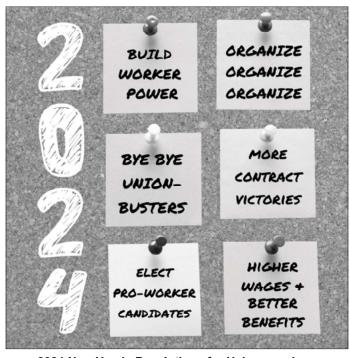
Voters of both parties express partisan bias, but the magnitude of their bias is not the same: right-wing voters exhibit far greater asymmetric amplification, fifteen points versus six points, than their left-wing counterparts.

Cummings and Mahoney concluded that their essay left room for other explanations for this divergence from reality. Increased social media, and its "penchant for amplifying bad news, may be dragging down views of the economy." The sources that inform voters may also play a role. FaceBook, Twitter, TikTok, and other questionable sources sway many at the polls. The "differences in the intensity of partisanship in media viewed by Republican versus Democrat survey respondents could be contributing to the asymmetric amplification we document," suggested Cummings and Mahoney.

Selling his signature legislation to voters should improve President Biden's polls numbers as the 2024 election cycle unfolds. But asymmetric amplification, especially on the part of his opponent's supporters, will contribute to the gap between economic reality and perceptions of the nation's economy.

"When a Republican is in the White House, Republican survey respondents feel about 15 index points better than predicted. . . . When a Democrat is President, Republicans feel about 15 index points worse than the economy."

Ryan Cummings and Neale Mahoney, in a November 13, 2023 Briefing Book post entitled "Asymmetric amplification and the consumer sentiment gap." The +/- fifteen point swing for Republicans far exceeds the shift in Democrats.



2024 New Year's Resolutions for Union members

#### These politicians subverted democracy on January 6, 2021 Now, they want your vote on November 5

The following seven Republican Pennsylvania House members joined other GOP lawmakers on January 6, 2021 in refusing to certify the 2020 presidential election results and keep the losing candidate, Donald Trump, in power.

Dan Meuser (9th Dist.) Scott Perry (10th Dist.) Lloyd Smucker (11th Dist.) John Joyce (13th Dist.) Guy Reschenthaler (14th Dist.) Glenn Thompson (15th Dist.) Mike Kelly (16th Dist.)

(Credit: Washington Post, January 2, 2024)



"The union is not just an organization, it's a spirit. It's something within all of us that says, I'm not going to stand here and let my brother or my sister get put down and get mistreated."

"Local 1196: A Steelworkers Strike," a documentary film review by University of Pittsburgh Prof. Dan Holland in *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Autumn 2023. Filmmaker Samuel George recorded the comment in 2021 by a striking steelworker at Allegheny Technologies, Inc., in Brackenridge, Pennsylvania. The strike lasted thirteen weeks.



*February 10*—25th Anniversary TeenWorks Dinner, Northampton Memorial Community Center, 1601 Laubach Avenue, Northampton.

- February 14-First day to circulate and file nomination papers
- March 17-Allentown St. Patrick's Day Parade
- April 8-Last day to Register to vote in the Primary Election
- *April 16*—Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot
- April 23-Primary Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- April 28-Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial
- September 1-Labor Day Picnic

November 5-General Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### **Our Labor Day roots**

(continued from page five)

By 1909, the Lehigh Valley's three major cities – Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton – and Bangor conducted joint Labor Day events rotating each year among the towns. The festivities grew larger in successive years, and when the all-day program concluded at the Allentown Fair Grounds on September 4, 1916 "conservative estimates place the number of people in attendance at ten thousand," reported the *Allentown Morning Call.* Labor delegations joining Allentown included Lehighton, Slatington, Bethlehem, Easton, Nazareth, Bangor, and Mauch Chunk, later known as Jim Thorpe.

A look at local news accounts suggests that the pre-First World War years marked the high-water mark for workers celebrating the holiday. "By 1925, the labor-related aspects of the Labor Day celebration had been reduced to small gatherings of union members," wrote Frank Whelan, the Lehigh Valley's best-known historian, in a September 2, 2002 *Morning Call* article. The holiday was "well on its way to becoming the benchmark end-of-summer," as news accounts focused instead on traffic jams and shopping sales while ignoring the day's labor roots." (*Fig. #4*)

Several explanations caused the change. Anti-union attitudes embraced by conservative, business interests in the 1920s seized America's political climate that had previously nurtured reform in the pre-war years. The 1917 communist takeover of Russia had struck fear in political and business leaders, fueling a backlash against immigrants, many of whom had filled the ranks of labor since the late-nineteenth century. Like other holidays, commercial interests replaced Labor Day's true meaning with diversions such as motion pictures, dog competitions and train trips to the New Jersey shore. And according to the September 2, 1960 *Morning Call*, the holiday's importance in the Lehigh Valley "was somewhat diminished" by the celebration in the anthracite regions of Johnny Mitchell Day, October 29, the date which signaled the end of the 1902 coal miners' strike led by mineworkers president John Mitchell.

Our region's Labor Day roots remain colorful, while its celebration has endured over the past 120 years of change.





LEHIGH VALLEY LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO PO Box 20226 LEHIGH VALLEY, PA 18002

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