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SOBER SECOND THOUGHTS."

ober Second Thoughts, 1837-1838. In the above lithograph, New York tradesmen reassessed their vote for Martin Van Buren after the 1836 presidential campaign. Seven workers of various occupations expressed their dissatisfaction with Van Buren's handling of the economy following the Panic of 1837 and its effect on the nation's working class. The tradesmen included (left to right), a seamen, a carpenter, a mason, a laborer, a metal smith, a teamster, and a blacksmith. The catchphrase "sober second thoughts" recurred frequently in anti-Van Buren campaign literature. (Credit: National Museum of American History).

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> NEWS & VIEWS February 2025

### **SEIU joins AFL-CIO**

Service Employees International Union's two million members join the nation's largest labor federation

by the Service Employees International Union

he AFL-CIO and the Service

Employees International Union



(SEIU) announced earlier this month that they are reuniting to launch a new, long-term effort to make it easier for workers to win a voice on our jobs with their unions. Two million **April Verrett** SEIU service and care workers will join the nearly thirteen million-

member AFL-CIO, and together, these powerful organizations will push back on union-busting and win for working-class families.

The unions formally announced the affiliation at a roundtable discussion with workers who are fighting to win their unions on January 9, in Austin Texas, in advance of the AFL-CIO's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Civil and Human Rights Conference. The workers will share their stories of why they need new rules to make it easier to join together in unions.

At a critical moment when everything is on the line for the nation's working people, the labor movement is uniting to challenge the status quo and build a movement of workers who will fight-on the job, in the streets, at the ballot box, in our communities-for higher pay, expanded benefits and new rules that empower them to join together in unions and organize across industries. This new era of building worker power comes under the strong leader-



Liz Shuler AFL-CIO President

ship of AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler and SEIU President April Verrett, whose vision for the future is inclusive and innovative

"Workers know it's better in a union, and together we are stronger in our organizing and bargaining fights because there is power in unity," said Shuler. "CEOs and billionaires want nothing more than to see workers divided, but we're standing here today with greater solidarity than ever to reach the sixty million Americans who say they'd join a union tomorrow if the laws allowed and to unrig our labor laws to guarantee every worker in America the basic right to organize on the job."

With this news, millions of workers are doubling down on a vision to fundamentally transform our lives. Workers want to join unions because they know that pay is too low and grocery bills are too high. Childcare costs as much as rent, which also costs more than it should. Everything workers need to live is just one more chance for corporations to profit from them.

"SEIU members are ready to unleash a new era of worker power, as millions of service and care workers unite with workers at the AFL-CIO to build our unions in every industry and every ZIP code," said Verrett. "Working people have been organizing our workplaces and communities to build a stronger economy and democracy. We are ready to stand up to union-busters at corporations and in government and rewrite the outdated, sexist, racist labor laws that hold us all back. We're so proud to join

together as nearly 15 million members to redouble our commitment to building a thriving, healthy future for working people."

Today, more than sixty million workers say they would join a union if they could-but only 1 in 10 workers has a union because big corporations are allowed to subject workers who organize to unrelenting hatred, harassment and hostility. Meanwhile, support for unions is at record highs as polling shows seven in ten Americans approve of unions, including nine in ten young people. The huge gap between workers who want to join a union and those who successfully do so represents a massive failure in law and public policy.

In response, SEIU and the AFL-CIO are uniting to take on union-busting and secure the right of every worker to safely join with their coworkers in unions to raise wages and improve their jobs.

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NEWS & VIEWS February 2025

# 2024 AFL-CIO Year End report

Where we have been, where we are going

by the AFL-CIO

his isn't where any of us wanted to be in the final days of 2024. But what has given us hope as we look back on the past year is the strength and resolve of our movement and the unwavering solidarity of our unions.

We didn't get the results we wanted on Election Day. But it has become clearer and clearer in the weeks since that labor's electoral program worked, and our aim of building the largest mobilization of union voters in American history was resoundingly successful.

In a time of unprecedented cynicism about our political system and distrust for politicians, our pre-election polling found that union members trusted their fellow union members as a source about politics even more than their own families. And union members showed up to deliver a powerful message focused on key economic issues impacting our jobs, our unions and our contracts.

Nationally, more than 26,000 union volunteers from fortyeight different affiliated unions contacted more than ten million people on their phones, at their door or at their workplace—a four hundred percent increase in unique volunteers from 2022. In our battleground states, volunteers showed up an average of six times to engage in voter contact activities.

From our in-depth Project 2025 analysis and interactive digital tool and our new "Mobilize" distributed events system, to the 20,000 election-relation data and analytics support requests handled, we ensured our affiliates and federated bodies had the tools they needed to reach their members this election cycle. And our digital advertising program in battleground states-featuring our union members' own voices in each adboosted intent to vote by 4.7 percentage points and shifted candidate consideration toward Kamala Harris by 4.5 percentage points, which in a razor-thin race made a significant difference.

On election night, AP VoteCast data showed that union members broke 57 percent-41 percent for Harris, while nonunion voters broke 47 percent—51 percent for Trump. In some cases, we even outperformed 2020 with President Biden on the ballot. We just didn't reach the broader working class in large enough numbers.

So where do we go from here? We defend and build upon the momentum of worker power across the country. We organize. We take our fights to the states. We continue to lead our fights for racial justice and equity. We stand together against the attacks that come, and we hold the line. But more than anything, we're going to continue growing this movement together.

CARPENTERS' UNION .- A new union of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America was organized in this city on Thursday evening with 33 members. A. J. Freed, was chos-en president, and O. D. Quier, secretary. Mr. Fry, of the Bethlehem branch, organized the union. The union pays death, sick and disability benefits.

Carpenters' Union formed in Allentown, 1896. (Credit: Allentown Democrat, July 22, 1896)

## Brightening the lives of students

Union volunteers visit Allentown's Roosevelt Elementary

John Werkheiser, United Food & Commercial Workers #1776 Greater Lehigh Valley United Way Labor Liaison



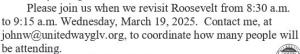
want to thank everyone that came out on a cold January 8 morning on a really short notice to distribute sheets of animal, cartoon and alphabet stickers to students as they arrived for their classes at Roosevelt Elemen-

tary School in Allentown.

I also want to thank Yasainee Burton, Communities in Service coordinator at Roosevelt, for providing local union members the opportunity to support the students. CIS coordinators connect with community partners to coordinate needed programming and events for students and their parents to create a safer, healthier, and more stable learning environment.

Burton informed me that we made the distribution of stickers to 541 students That is 541 children that just may have had a better day because of our visit.

Labor cares, and the union members who visited Roosevelt Elementary on January 8 brightened the lives of 541 students.



I look forward to hearing from you.



Union volunteers brightened the day for 541 students at Allentown's Roosevelt Elementary on January 8. From left to right: Aaron Dobbs, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley; Gabriel Iannozzi, Electrical Workers #126; Jody Weinreich, Workers United; Alexis Berg Townsend and Terry Ann Steidinger, Cohen Feeley Altemose & Rambo; Christine Miller, Workers United; Christopher Wentzel, Electrical Workers #126; and John Werkheiser, Lehigh Valley Labor Council labor liaison to the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley.

Christine Miller, Workers United officer, greeted a student.

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### Propaganda of the deed

Reaction to gross inequality, rapid technological change, mass migration

by Ron Ennis, Editor Lehigh Valley Labor Council

lexander Berkman never introduced himself when he walked onto the stage in front of several hundred striking Phillipsburg, New Jersey silk weavers on February 15, 1908. He didn't have to: everyone already knew him.

Pennsylvania authorities had recently released Berkman from prison for his notorious role in the 1892 Homestead Massacre. The Massacre, often misnamed a strike, pitted steelworkers seeking a new labor agreement against Henry Clay Frick, chairman of the Carnegie Steel Co. at Homestead, Pennsylvania. The steel boss had refused to reconsider his wage cut demands, then locked out the workers and hired strikebreakers to crush their solidarity. Violence between his men and the strikers followed. Berkman, who sympathized with the strikers, confronted Frick in his office days after the bloodshed and fired several shots that wounded him. The gunman was arrested at the scene, convicted for attempted murder, and spent the next fourteen years in jail. His arrival in Phillipsburg after his release alarmed the borough's chief of police, and he surrounded the hall with officers to persuade Berkman from giving an incendiary speech. (Fig. #1)

The 1892 Homestead Massacre marked a pivotal event in American labor history and Berkman's "propaganda of the deed" represented one of the more notoriously moments that characterized the nation's Gilded Age, a period between the Civil War and the early twentieth century. The era received its name from an 1873 Mark Twain novel that satirized the greed and political corruption in post-bellum America.

The fatal shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson on December 4 has triggered comparisons between the two eras. While the periods are not identical, their similarities "resonate with how a great many people feel about the direction of the country today," Zeynep Tufekci, a columnist, wrote for *The New York Times* on December 6, 2024. "There is a similarity to the trajectory and the mood, to the expression of deep powerlessness and alienation."

Like today, the Gilded Age saw rapid technological change, mass immigration, spectacular wealth and enormous inequality. Movements and actors targeting business and political elites have sprung from both eras' social and economic upheavals, too. Frick's business practices earned him the reputation as "the most hated man in America," and Thompson stood as a leading figure in an industry widely despised across the country. In a final striking parallel, Berkman and Thompson's suspected murderer, Luigi Mangione, were openly celebrated for their actions. While Mangione's motivations have yet to be heard in a courtroom, Berkman's act represented a "propaganda of the deed."

The theories behind propaganda of the deed emerged in early nineteenth century Europe and gave some anarchists justi-



Fig. 1: Alexander Berkman fired two poorly aimed shots at Henry Clay Frick, Carnegie Steel chief, days after the Homestead Massacre in 1892. Upon his release from prison fourteen years later, *The Allentown Morning Call* noted that Berkman "never regretted his act and would have had no regret if he had succeeded in killing Frick. It was a matter of principle, not personal feeling, which prompted the deed." (*Credit*: Allentown Morning Call, May 19, 1906)

fication for acts of violence, including insurrections, bombings and assassinations. The perpetrator(s) of propaganda of the deed intended to influence public opinion, providing an example for others to follow. He often viewed his terrorism as a necessary evil: a reaction to violence committed against him or members of his own class. He aimed to ignite a revolutionary spirit that would provoke others to challenge, if not overthrow, the ruling moneyed and political elites.

Berkman was born into a wealthy family and grew acquainted with these radical ideas growing up in the part of the Russian Empire known today as Lithuania. He immigrated to the United States in 1888 after both parents died and settled in New York City, where the eighteen-year-old knew no one and spoke no English.

Upon his arrival, Berkman fell under the influence of Johann Most, eventually working for him as a typesetter for Most's German-language newspaper, *Freiheit*. Most, a Bavarian immigrant, had arrived in New York in 1882, remarking that "whoever looks at America will see the ship is powered by stupidity, corruption, or prejudice." Most emerged as America's leading anarchist in the use of propaganda of the deed, and Berkman grew to embrace his employer's views.

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In June 1892, Berkman learned that Henry Clay Frick had locked out hundreds of laborers at the Carnegie Steel Company. The members of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers had sought to renew a three-year contract with the company chairman. Frick responded by demanding wage cuts, refusing any concessions and surreptitiously planning the importation of three hundred Pinkerton strike-breakers to Homestead. Two barges loaded with armed men steamed upriver to the plant at about 4 a.m. July 6. Before the Pinkertons could disembark, a deadly gun battle erupted between them and the steelworkers that ended in the Pinkertons' surrender. Despite the deaths of several men on both sides, Frick reportedly sat emotionless upon hearing the news, remaining undeterred in defeating the union men, who he described as "lawbreakers."

Newspapers across the country condemned Frick and the Carnegie Steel Company. They "had no right whatever to improvise a little navy of armor-covered barges to convey hired and murderous Pinkertons to (the) mills to remorselessly shoot down a body of workmen," wrote *The Allentown Democrat* editor on July 13. "There is no doubt," wrote *The New York Times* on July 7, "that the employment by capitalists of a large force of trained private police in case of trouble with workmen has a very exasperating effect."

Berkman traveled to Frick's office in Pittsburgh believing that his assassination would arouse workers to rise up against the Gilded Age's captains of industry. He posed as a New York hiring agent able to provide strikebreakers for the Homestead mill but was told that Frick was busy. Berkman returned on July 23 and, while the office attendant spoke with Frick about the returning employment agent, burst into the office firing two poorly aimed shots that wounded the steel boss. He also managed to stab Frick before being subdued. The crowd on the streets heard the gunshots,



Fig. 2: Alexander Berkman (*Credit*: Pittsburgh Dispatch, Sept. 20, 1892)

prompting a quick response from the police who arrested Berkman. (Fig. #2)

"Initial reports of the attack elicited cheers from many," labor historian Charles McCollester wrote in his book *Point of Pittsburgh*. W.L. Iams, a state guardsman sent to maintain law and order in Homestead, celebrated the news: "Three cheers for the man who shot Frick!" He was arrested by his unit, strung up by his thumbs for twenty minutes, stripped of his uniform, and tossed out of camp. "He marched with his head thrown defiantly in the air," McCollester wrote, "and was received as a hero by many in Greene County."

Ironically, some of Berkman's former allies became his harshest critics. Johann Most wrote in his newspaper that Americans neither understood nor accepted propaganda of the deed, ensuring its failure as a remedy for oppression. After Berkman began his prison sentence, he met Jack Tinford, a jailed Homestead steel striker who had tried to blow up one of the barges. Tinford rejected Berkman's actions because "the millworkers will have nothing to do with Anarchists." Frick began advertising for workers across the country, and the dispute at Homestead ended on November 13. Many of the company's former workers found themselves blacklisted for life. The defeat of the union left the workers unprotected and earning far less wages. (Fig. #3)

LOOKED FOR STEEL WORKERS AT BETH-LEHEM.—Agents representing the Homestead mills were in South Bethlehem last week endeavoring to secure steel workers to go to Homestead. The best of wages were offered, but they left without getting even as much as a promise from any one to go.

Fig. 3: (Credit: Allentown Democrat, September 21, 1892)

After serving fourteen years of his sentence, authorities released Berkman on May 18, 1906 from Pennsylvania's Western Penitentiary, near Pittsburgh. He soon returned to New York City and, with the help of friends, became editor of *Mother Earth* in 1907, helping it achieve the distinction as the leading anarchist publication in the United States. News of the strike of several hundred silk workers at the Standard Silk Co., Phillipsburg in mid-December 1907 reached Berkman. He learned that the company refused any concessions to the weavers and had hired strikebreakers in early January 1908. The hiring of strikebreakers led to intermittent violence, followed by arrests. (*Fig. #4*)

Despite the Phillipsburg Chief of Police's warning to restrain his speech, Berkman attacked the judge for wrongly sentencing strikers to jail, the silk mill bosses for their uncompromising stance against the strikers, local businesses for supporting the silk bosses, and the "scabs" for crossing the picket line. He also expressed no remorse for his 1892 shooting of Frick, which he described as an act "for the cause of labor," and said he stood "ready to go to prison again for such a cause." The crowd "repeatedly interrupted" Berkman with "loud and continued applause," wrote *The Easton Free Press*.

Six weeks later, a *New York Times* reporter approached Berkman about a recent New York City bombing incident. He asked him about the use of violence as a remedy for oppression. "Anarchists absolutely do not advocate violence," replied Berkman. "That is a mistaken idea."

"How about your attempt on the life of Mr. Frick?" the reporter asked.

"That was a different matter. I believed that Mr. Frick was personally responsible for the lockout at Homestead, and I thought that if I put him out of the way the sufferings of those poor people would be alleviated."

The reporter pressed again. "Do you think you were temporarily insane at the time?"

"No," Berkman said, only to add a comment that may have surprised many. "I simply was willing to give my life for the cause of humanity. It is no more a sign of insanity to do this than it was for Christ to give His life for the good of His fellowmen."

The December 4, 2024 shooting of a CEO triggered a nationwide reaction, echoing an earlier period in American history. And while there are important distinctions between the two eras, *New York Times* columnist Tufekci cautioned that "the rage and glee that followed (December's) killing should ring all alarms."



**Fig. 4:** Standard Silk Co. refused to negotiate with its workers. (*Credit*: Belvidere Apollo, January 30, 1908)

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### Mark your calendar Lehigh Valley Labor Council's 2025 events

February 19: Labor Council monthly meeting, 3614 Lehigh St., Whitehall March 19: Labor Council monthly meeting

March 23: Allentown St. Patrick's Day Parade

March 25-28: Workers United Convention

April 16: Labor Council monthly meeting

April 19: Labor Council Annual

Awards Dinner, Northampton Community Center, Northampton April 27: Lehigh Valley Workers Memorial, Bethlehem Rose Gardens, Bethlehem

May 5: Last day to Register to vote in the Municipal primary election

May 7-9: Pennsylvania Professional Firefighters Association Convention, WindCreek Event Center, Bethlehem May 10: National Association of Letter Carriers Stamp Out

Hunger Food Drive. Visit for more information:

https://www.nalc.org/community-service/food-drive

May 13: Last day to apply for a mail-in or civilian absentee ballot.

May 20: Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots (must be received by 8 p.m.)

May 20: Municipal Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

May 21: Labor Council monthly meeting

June 3-4: Pennsylvania Building Trades Legislative Conference June 7: International Association of Firefighters Allentown Local #302 Golf Tournament

June 18: Labor Council monthly meeting

June 21: Lehigh Valley Labor Council Golf Tournament, Shepherd Hills, Wescosville

June 23: Bucks County Labor County Golf Tournament

July 16: Labor Council monthly meeting

July 27-August 1: Workers United Joint Board union camp

August 20: Labor Council monthly meeting

September 1: Labor Day

September 17: Labor Council monthly meeting

September 19-21: Workers United Joint Board Conference,

Camelback Resort, Tannersville

October 2-4: National Association of Letter Carriers' State Convention

October 15: Labor Council monthly meeting

October 20: Last day to Register to vote in the November elec-

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

November 4: Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted mail-in and civilian absentee ballots (must be received by 8 p.m.)

November 4: Municipal Election. Polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. November 19: Labor Council monthly meeting

December 1: Lehigh Valley Labor Council annual toy drive,

Roosevelt Elementary School, Allentown

December 12: Lehigh Valley Labor Council annual holiday party, Shepherd Hills, Wescosville



### Pennsylvania's regressive taxation State's wealthiest enjoy lowest tax rates

Pennsylvania's Independent Fiscal Office released on December 17, 2024 a report concluding that our state's tax system to be "moderately regressive," meaning lower wage earners pay a higher tax rate percentage.

In fact, Pennsylvania's state and local tax system ranked as the fourth most regressive in the nation, according to a research study. The richest Pennsylvanians pay only 6.9 percent of their income on state and local taxes. To learn more, visit: http://www.ifo.state.pa.us/releases.cfm

### Pennsylvania Effective Tax Rates by Income Level (2022) Income (000s)

Lower	Upper	Total Pennsylvania Tax Rate	
\$0	\$50	10.7 percent	
\$50	\$100	9.9	
\$100	\$200	10.1	
\$200	\$500	9.5	
\$500	\$1,000	8.4	
\$1,000	or more	6.9	

# Who influenced the 2024 Election in PA? Billionaire Jeffrey Yass topped the list

A Spotlight PA analysis of eight critical races found thousands of individuals and groups donated or independently spent roughly \$60 million during the 2023-2024 cycle, supporting or opposing candidates. But just nine groups accounted for \$38.3 million of that total, a stunning sixty-three percent of the donations and spending analyzed.

Standing at the pinnacle was the Commonwealth Leaders Fund, funded entirely by Pennsylvania billionaire Jeffrey Yass. According to *Forbes Magazine*, Yass's net worth grew to \$49.6 billion last year, making him the richest man in the state. Yass opposes restrictions on China-based TikTok, and his columns on *The Wall Street Journal* Opinion pages call for defunding public education.

Yass's Commonwealth Leaders donated over \$13.4 during the election cycle. Another Yass-funded political action committee, Commonwealth Children's Choice Fund, contributed \$1.2 million. Yass's millions went entirely to Republican candidates, helping to defeat labor-backed candidates for statewide offices.

Name	\$\$\$ Spent	Party Supported
Commonwealth Leaders Fund	\$13,482,757	Rep.
House Democratic Campaign	\$10,344,974	Dem.
Committee		
Keystone Prosperity PAC	\$7,665,529	Rep.
Democratic Attorneys General	\$2,747,549	Dem.
Commonwealth Children's	\$1,250,000	Rep.
Choice Fund		
Pennsylvania Fund for Change	\$1,010,541	Dem.

For a complete list of the groups that had a major influence in the 2024 Election, visit https://www.spotlightpa.org/. *Spotlight PA* is an independent, nonpartisan, and nonprofit newsroom dedicated to investigative journalism about our state government.

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## Historical denialism

Trump's rewriting of the past

by Ron Ennis, Editor Lehigh Valley Labor Council



Now that the presidential campaign is over, you might think that Donald Trump would start leveling with the American people as he returns to the White House.

He won the election. There's no need for him to sway voters by peddling outrageous claims of a peaceful protest on January 6, 2020, of inflation at record highs under Biden, and about immigrants eating people's pet dogs and cats. But Trump is Trump and, if what happened at his opulent estate at Mar-a-Lago on January 7 is any indication, the next four years could be filled with more of the same. (Fig. #1)

Trump showcased his historical denialism during a rambling news conference at his home in Palm Beach, Florida ear-



Fig. 1: "Propaganda!" says a moviegoer to his friend, as they begin watching a 1945 US Army film of a Nazi concentration camp that had sent tens of thousands to their deaths. The movement to deny the Holocaust emerged immediately after the Second World War and is captured by editorial cartoonist Bill Mauldin, who served in the war.

During the past four years, Trump and his political and media allies have grossly distorted the violent assault on our nation's Capitol on January 6, 2020.

The above examples represent forms of historical denialism that can have harmful, in not tragic, consequences.

(*Credit*: Allentown Morning Call, January 2, 1946)

lier this month. He falsely argued that Ashli Babbitt was the "only one that was killed" on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol and that the rioters carried "not one gun" during the deadly assault. According to The New York Times, "at least seven lost their lives in connection with the attack" and "at least three rioters face gun charges, including one who took a gun into the Capitol." Authorities have confessed that we will never know how many rioters had firearms since nearly all were able to leave the Capitol without being detained and searched.

Trump made another false claim: "We have inflation, I believe, at a level that we've never had before. there's never been anything like it." As the oldest man ever elected to the presidency, the seventy-eight-year-old Trump seems to have forgotten that inflation stood at nearly fourteen percent in January 1980, far above the 9.1 percent peak reached in June 2022. CNN News reported that inflation has plummeted over the past two years and hit a low of 2.7 percent in November 2024. (Fig. #2)

Among many other historical inaccuracies he



**Fig. 2:** The consumer wanted an explanation for high prices after the Second World War. In the top illustration, labor and management accused one another for high prices as inflation approached eighteen percent when *The Easton Express* published the above illustration. The second image depicted the "GOP" and the "Dems" blaming each other for inflation, and the third image shows a farmer and a distributor pointing fingers at one another for rising consumer costs.

Inflation never approached that level during President Biden's term, despite Donald Trump echoing a constant refrain in right -wing media that the economy was the worst under Biden. Earlier this month, Trump made another unsubstantiated claim when he posted on social media that "our country is a disaster, a laughing stock all over the world."

While gasoline prices are higher as a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, most economic statistics improved during Biden's term. "President Trump is inheriting an economy that is about as good as it ever gets," Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, said in a January 5, 2025 New York Times article. Even The Wall Street Journal Opinion editors begrudgingly admitted on October 31, 2024 that "the U.S. remains a more attractive place to invest than nearly anywhere else in the world."

Of course, some Americans remain skeptical of historical data, either because they do not see improvement in their own lives or they receive "alternative facts" from Trump and his cable television and online ecosphere allies. (*Credit*: Easton Express, October 31, 1946)

gave at his Mar-a-Lago estate, Trump declared he won the 2024 election "in a landslide." But by any creditable measure, he won with one of the smallest popular vote margins since the 1800s.

There's no denying the depth and breadth of Trump's historical denialism.



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