



# NEWS & VIEWS

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



March 2024

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



**A**llentown Morning Call union journalists staged a one-day walkout on February 1, joining staffers from seven other newsrooms across the country protesting stalled contract negotiations with Alden Global Capital. The NewsGuild-Communication Workers of America members said that the billion-dollar hedge fund, which purchased newspapers owned by Tribune Publishing, has been “strip-mining its media assets for profits” since the 2021 buyout. Behind the striking journalists is the Sixth Street lot where the venerated Morning Call newsroom once stood. See page seven for a related photo and story.

# Union membership on the rise 139,000 workers joined a union in 2023

by the AFL-CIO  
January 23, 2024 press release

Today the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released its annual report on union density. The report shows that union membership grew by 139,000 in 2023. Union membership in the private sector increased by 191,000 members, with a majority of new members under the age of forty-five. These numbers are a result of how more than 900,000 union members won double-digit wage increases through new contracts last year. AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler released the following statement in response to the report:



Liz Shuler

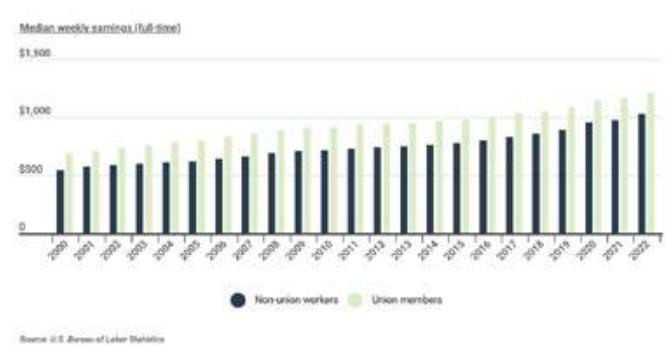
“Workers are fed up with low wages, few benefits, and a lack of dignity and respect on the job, which is precisely why more are interested in joining a union now than ever before. Although union density remained flat in 2023, that doesn’t reflect the surging momentum that working people have carried into this year. Waves of workers across industries and geography are joining unions despite vicious union-busting campaigns by large corporations.

hoarding billions of dollars—have made it their mission in life to stop their own employees from having a voice at the workplace.

“The labor movement is more focused and committed than ever on ensuring that every worker who wants a union has a fair shot at joining one. Organizing is happening at a rate not seen in generations, and new federal investments by the Biden administration in emerging sectors of the economy creates more opportunity for workers to attain good union jobs. The AFL-CIO’s Center for Transformational Organizing has become a hub for multi-union organizing strategy and investment in the clean energy and technology sectors as new jobs emerge over the next several years catalyzed by these federal funds. Working people are on the rise, and the progress we’re seeing now is just the beginning.”



## Union members enjoy higher wages than non-union workers



Union members command higher wages and benefits than non-union workers.

“Polling data shows that seventy-one percent of Americans support unions, the highest level in nearly 60 years, with eighty-eight percent of young people showing support for unions. And as the BLS numbers show, the union difference in wages remains strong, driving increased interest among workers to have a voice on the job.

“Every worker who wants to join a union should be able to without facing intimidation and harassment from their employer. Corporations spend more than \$400 million per year on union-busting consultants to stop worker organizing, and corporate leaders like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos—themselves

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

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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 last Thursday of the month.

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# Memorials to fallen workers dot the Lehigh Valley

Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial slated for April 28

Sunday, April 28 marks the thirty-third annual Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial Day ceremony. The event at the Bethlehem Rose Gardens, Union Blvd. and Eighth Ave., Bethlehem, will remember over 4,100 local workplace tragedies dating back to before the Civil War. (Fig. #1)

Family survivors and friends will gather at 1 p.m. at the Workers' Memorial monument to remember loved ones and co-workers lost to a



Fig. 1: Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial currently lists over 4,100 local workplace deaths.



Fig. 2

jobsite accident or work-related disease. The event is held every April on the anniversary of the creation of the 1971 Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the federal agency charged with enforcing workplace safety laws. The labor council's website, lehighvalleyclc.org, lists all the fatalities in chronically order and is updated annually in April.

At least four other memorials dedicated to fallen workers dot our region. The Allentown Firefighters Local #302 monument is located at the city's West End Fire Station, 2145 Turner St., Allentown. The Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial lists twenty-three Allentown firefighter fatalities. (Fig. #2)



Fig. 3

The Bethlehem Police Star Lodge #20 memorial is located near the northside of the Fahy Bridge. It honors six Bethlehem officers killed in the line of duty. (Fig. #3)



Fig. 4

The Lehigh Portland Cement Workers monument is located at Bethel Bible Church of Mt. Zion's Church Hill Cemetery, Rt. 611, Lower Mount Bethel Township. In our region's worst industrial accident, thirty-one workers died in a premature explosion of roughly twenty tons of dynamite on March 26, 1942 at the Sandts Eddy Quarry, located six miles north of Easton. (Fig. #4)

#4)

The Bethlehem Steelworkers Memorial is located at Second and Northampton Sts., South Bethlehem. According to the Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial list, nearly 880 laborers died at the local plant. Over twenty percent of all local workplace fatalities occurred at Bethlehem Steel. (Fig. #5)



Fig. 5

# Council dinner will honor Pa. House Reps. Schlossberg, Schweyer

April 13 ceremony will celebrate two local state-lawmakers who champion working-family issues

by Gregg Potter, International Union of Operating Engineers #542 Executive Vice-President, Lehigh Valley Labor Council

The Lehigh Valley Labor Council's Annual Award dinner will honor Pennsylvania House Reps. Mike Schlossberg and Peter Schweyer on Saturday, April 13 at the Northampton Memorial Community Center. Union leaders, labor advocates, and rank-and-file members have long recognized both state lawmakers as tireless advocates for working families since their arrival in Harrisburg.



The night of solidarity will once again be held at the borough's community center located at 1601 Laubach Ave., Northampton. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres begin at 5:30 p.m. with music by Jake Kaligis, an award-winning singer-songwriter. A family style dinner follows at 7 p.m. Coffee and dessert will be served before our awards program. Besides honoring state Reps. Schlossberg and Schweyer, we will also present Jeremy Warmkessel, Allentown Firefighters #302 with our President's Award, and SMART #19 with our Local of the Year Award.

We have sponsorship opportunities for our event:

- Presenting Sponsor \$2500
  - Three tables of eight
  - Inside cover Ad Booklet
  - Union/Corporate Signage at Event
  - Multiple Acknowledgements Verbal/Printed
- Representative to address audience
- Platinum Sponsor \$2000
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Rep. Pete Schweyer

Single seat pricing is \$80 and a table of eight is \$650.

All booklet advertising is in color. Advertising costs are:

- Inside/Outside Cover \$350
- Full Page \$275
- Half Page \$175
- Quarter Page \$125

Deadline for seating and all advertisements is April 4 by the close of business. Please send payment to:

Dennis Andrews, Lehigh Valley Labor Council  
1705 Northampton Street  
Easton PA 18042



# When tragedy strikes more than once

Some families lost two or more members to workplace accidents

by Ron Ennis, Editor  
Lehigh Valley Labor Council

George Myers thought very highly of Anthony and Paul Mondello, describing both father and son as “really great men.” According to the February 21, 1999 *Allentown Morning Call*, the Mondellos had perished two days earlier in a workplace disaster that killed three other workers. Myers expressed a special fondness for twenty-five year old Paul, who had planned to marry his daughter. “In two months, he was to be my son-in-law,” he explained, “and now he won’t be.”

On February 19, 1999, a thunderous explosion leveled a chemical plant near the ABE Airport, killing five workers and injuring thirteen others. The 8:15 p.m. blast sent shock waves “as far away as Lehighton and Tobyhanna to the north and Trexlertown and Longswamp Township to the west.” In addition to Anthony and Paul Mondello, the deaths included Terry Bowers, Ruben Soto and Paul Wanamaker. All but Bowers worked at Concept Sciences, Inc., 749 Roble Road, the scene of the tragedy. Bowers worked for a vending company.

April 28 marks the thirty-third annual Lehigh Valley Workers’ Memorial Day ceremony at the Bethlehem Rose Gardens. For over three decades, family survivors, friends and labor activists have held a memorial service every April remembering workers who died in an accident or from a job-related disease. The local gathering joins a nationwide remembrance of the Occupational Safety & Health Act’s creation on April 28, 1971. (Fig. #1)



**Fig. 1:**  
The Lehigh Valley Workers’ Memorial at the Bethlehem Rose Gardens 8th & Union Blvd. Bethlehem April 28, 1 p.m.

In case of inclement weather, the event will be held inside the DAR House at the park.

## The Lehigh Valley’s Top Ten Industrial Accidents (as of April 2024)

March 26, 1942 Lehigh Portland Cement	- 31 killed	<i>premature dynamite explosion</i>
January 6, 1881 Allentown Rolling Mill	- 14 killed	<i>boiler explosion</i>
August 17, 1905 Lehigh Portland Cement	- 11 killed	<i>landslide</i>
July 14, 1877 Lehigh Iron Ore Mine	- 8 killed	<i>boiler explosion</i>
June 2, 1910 Coplay Cement	- 8 killed	<i>premature dynamite explosion</i>
October 18, 1945 Bethlehem Steel	- 8 killed	<i>toxic gas leak</i>
June 21, 1879 Lehigh Iron Ore Mine	- 7 killed	<i>boiler explosion</i>
April 13, 1910 Nazareth Portland Cement	- 7 killed	<i>premature dynamite explosion</i>
April 19, 1920 Lehigh Portland Cement	- 7 killed	<i>premature dynamite explosion</i>
April 25, 1890 Unicorn Silk Mill	- 6 killed	<i>fire</i>
March 2, 1894 Williams & Son Slate	- 6 killed	<i>cave in</i>
March 24, 1948 Bethlehem Steel	- 6 killed	<i>blast furnace spill</i>
February 11, 1959 Ingersoll-Rand	- 6 killed	<i>compressor explosion</i>

**Fig. 2:** Lehigh Valley’s top ten industrial accidents, according to total fatalities. The 1999 Concept Sciences’ blast remains the worst workplace tragedy in Lehigh County since the 1920 Lehigh Portland Cement disaster that killed seven quarrymen.

Explosions, from a steam boiler, a compressor, a chemical solution, or dynamite, caused our worst workplace tragedies. A list of over 4,100 workplace fatalities can be viewed at the Lehigh Valley Labor Council’s website, [www.lehighvalleyclc.org](http://www.lehighvalleyclc.org). Click on the link “Workers Memorial” at the top of the homepage. The list is updated annually each April.

This year’s event also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Concept Sciences blast, which remains Lehigh County’s worst workplace tragedy since the First World War. In April 1920, seven workers died in a premature dynamite explosion at Lehigh Portland Cement Company’s Ormrod quarry. The region’s worst known workplace disaster remains the Lehigh Portland Cement Company’s Sandts Eddy quarry blast in Northampton County. Roughly twenty tons of dynamite prematurely exploded on March 26, 1942, killing thirty-one workers. (Fig. #2)

Nearly 500 police officers, firefighters and first responders from across the state participated in the search and recovery efforts at the Concept Sciences’ blast site. The disaster prompted numerous lawsuits and fines. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration cited the company for twenty alleged violations totaling \$641,200, and a federal grand jury indicted the owner on twelve counts. But in the years that followed a federal judge dismissed the counts against the company owner and OSHA reduced its penalties, as Federal Express built a depot to replace the structure destroyed in the 1999 explosion.

Family survivors remembered the horrors of that day years later. "It's like no one has ever forgotten it," said Joanne Mondello, wife of Anthony, in a 2003 *Morning Call* interview. "People stop you on the street and they are still appalled."

While the April 28 Workers' Memorial Day event will remember the 4,100-plus local workplace deaths, family survivors who struggled after the loss of a loved one will not be forgotten. Countless stories of families grieving over a spouse, parent or child can be viewed on the Lehigh Valley Labor Council's website [www.lehighvalleyclc.org](http://www.lehighvalleyclc.org). Click on the link "Workers Memorial" at the top of the homepage. Some families, such as the Mondello family, buried more than one relative.

Anna Boylan Walsh had more than her share of heartbreaks by the time of her death on June 24, 1926. Her passing "came as a climax to a life marked by five distinct tragedies," reported *The Allentown Morning Call*.

The seventy-three-year old South Bethlehem widow lost three sons to workplace tragedies. John, her second eldest son, perished in a fatal fall from a stack at the nearby New Jersey Zinc Company plant in October 1896. William met a similar fate at Bethlehem Steel in January 1910 when he fell from a thirty-foot scaffold, and Philip died at the company's coke works three years later when a steel plate fell thirty feet from above on top of him.

Walsh's eldest son died as a child when a train of coal cars ran over him in October 1877, and a daughter perished in a July 1911 Philadelphia fire. The mother of seven children lost five of her offspring in five separate accidents, but "she maintained an unusual and admirable spirit of fortitude, which . . . endeared her to a large number of friends," wrote *The Morning Call*. The Church of the Holy Infancy conducted her funeral Mass and buried her with other predeceased family members in South Bethlehem's St. Michael's Cemetery.

Unlike Anna Walsh, Katherine Sandor lost two husbands to workplace accidents. Her first husband died while working as a rigger at Bethlehem Steel's Saucon plant on August 9, 1920. Forty-six year old Frank Sandor had crawled out on a crane track to replace faulty rigging. The crane operator claimed he never saw Sandor after his crane ran over him, sev-

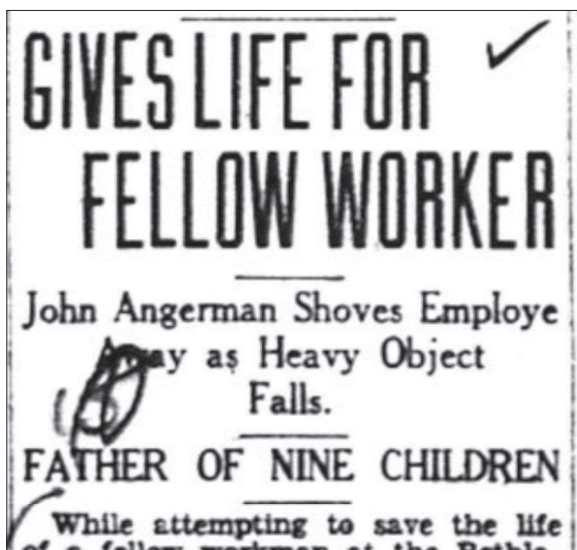


Fig. 3: John Angerman gave his life to save a fellow steelworker on May 10, 1928. His wife, Katherine, lost her first husband to a workplace tragedy at Bethlehem Steel eight years earlier. (Credit: Bethlehem Globe, May 11, 1928)



Fig. 4: Workplace mishaps "robbed" Hattie Gould twice. She lost her first fiancé, known as William Wykene or William King, in 1899 and her second fiancé, Edward Hoy, in 1903. (Credit: Easton Express, October 24, 1903)

ering both arms and legs, causing almost instant death. St. John's Hungarian Catholic Church held a Mass for Sandor and buried him in St. Michael's Cemetery, South Bethlehem. He left behind his widow and three young children.

A few years later, Katherine Sandor married John Angerman, another South Bethlehem steelworker. According to *The Bethlehem Globe*, the forty-four year old Angerman saw a co-worker in trouble on May, 10, 1928. "He noticed a piece of iron dangling dangerously from a crane above the head" of a fellow workman. He ran toward him and pushed him aside, but "was struck by the heavy metal himself." The ambulance rushed him to St. Luke's Hospital where he died several hours later from a fractured skull. Katherine Sandor-Angerman survived her husband, caring for nine children. (Fig. #3)

Although Hattie Gould did not lose a husband, workplace tragedies robbed her of two fiancés. A large reel of insulating wire weighing nearly a ton crushed her first betrothed on June 19, 1899. He worked as a lineman for the Edison Illuminating Company, Easton, *The Easton Free Press* wrote, and suffered fatal internal injuries when the heavy spool fell on him while he and his coworkers tried to unload it from the company wagon. He "gave a groan when struck and was rendered unconscious" before medical aid removed him to the hospital "where he died several minutes after he was carried into the building." The Spanish-American War veteran was twenty-four years old.

Four years later, Gould planned an October 31 wedding with twenty-one year old Edward Hoy. She had a job as a housekeeper for a wealthy Easton family; he worked as a brakeman for the Central Railroad of New Jersey. A week before their marriage, the Easton man was squeezed between two rail cars at Bound Brook, New Jersey and died later that same day in the hospital. "This is the second time Miss Gould has been robbed of her fiancé by death," wrote *The Easton Express* on October 24. (Fig. #4)

Behind the Lehigh Valley Workers' Memorial's 4,100 fatalities are countless stories of grief and loss over a spouse, parent or child. Some family survivors suffered more than once, having lost two or more loved ones to a workplace accident. The April 28 event begins at 1 p.m. and is open to the public.



# Raise the wage floor

## Keystone Research Reveals 1.34 Million Workers Would Benefit From Proposed PA Minimum Wage Increase

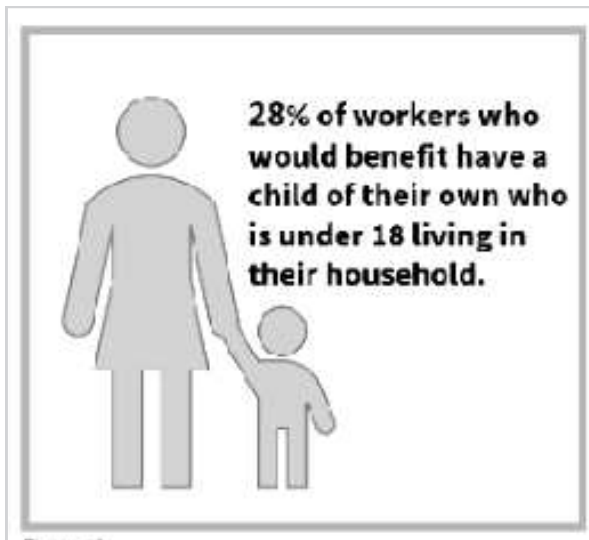
by Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director  
Keystone Research Center

The Keystone Research Center (KRC), a leading economic think tank, has released a new report titled, “Who Benefits? The Demographic Impact of a minimum wage increase in Pennsylvania.” The report sheds light on the powerful benefits that increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026 would deliver to workers across the states.

In tandem, KRC also released fact sheets with a breakdown of who would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage by county and by state legislative district.

The research conducted by KRC shows that over 1.3 million workers in Pennsylvania would see their wages increase if the minimum wage is raised to \$15 per hour. This would not only reduce poverty rates but also help decrease gender and race pay disparities. The report highlights that a higher proportion of rural workers would directly benefit from the increased minimum wage, because too many currently earn less than \$15 per hour.

“Today’s \$7.25 per hour minimum wage in Pennsylvania is simply not enough to ensure that workers can provide for themselves and their families,” said Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director at Keystone Research Center. “Raising the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026 would not only improve the lives of millions of workers but also lead to a stronger and more equitable economy.”



**Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 by 2026 would benefit over 370,000 Pennsylvania parents.** According to the Keystone Research Center, these workers are parents to a child under eighteen who lives in their home. Childcare is just one expense that has outpaced general inflation. A \$15 per hour minimum wage is closer to a living wage and would make a positive difference in the lives of hardworking parents. (Credit: Keystone Research Center)

Five out of every six workers (84%) who would benefit from a proposed \$15 by 2026 are adults 20 and over, not teenagers, and many have significant work experience. Over half of those who would benefit are between twenty and thirty-nine years old, and a considerable number of those who would benefit (37%) have at least some education beyond high school.

According to the findings, workers across many industries stand to benefit from the proposed minimum wage increase. The educational services, healthcare, and social assistance sectors, which have shouldered a disproportionate burden during the COVID-19 pandemic, would see 25% of their workers benefit from the wage hike. Additionally, 26% of workers in the wholesale and retail trade industry, where nearly 1 in 4 workers earn less than \$15 per hour, would experience a positive impact.

“It’s important for working families to know that they have lawmakers in Harrisburg that are looking out for them,” said Representative Dave Madsen (D-Dauphin County). “They have a state House that’s advocating for them as well and some friends in the Senate that want to see wages go up. This report makes it clear that whether we should raise the minimum wage in Pennsylvania should no longer be a question.”

KRC’s report emphasizes that raising the minimum wage is long overdue. Since 2009, the minimum wage in Pennsylvania has remained stagnant at \$7.25 per hour due to legislative inaction. This failure to keep up with inflation has led to a decline in purchasing power for low-wage workers, particularly more family’s most essential needs such as housing, gasoline, and education.

“The fact that it’s now fifteen years since the General Assembly raised the Pennsylvania minimum wage is a case of legislative malpractice,” said Representative Justin Fleming (D-Dauphin County). “Meanwhile, our neighboring states’ lawmakers have taken action to ensure their workers are paid enough to make ends meet. We must pass HB 1500 this year – hard-working families across the Commonwealth cannot wait any longer.”

The report also highlights that increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2026 would inject more money into Pennsylvania’s economy. Low-wage workers often spend all of their increased income and do so where they live, providing a boost to local businesses and communities. By linking future wage adjustments to inflation, the report argues that Pennsylvania’s workers would no longer face the same stagnant wages in the future.

“Raising the minimum wage is not just about increasing income; it’s about creating a strong foundation for working families to thrive,” said Angela Valvano, Executive Director of Better PA. “It is part of a comprehensive policy agenda that includes fair taxation, quality education, and economic empowerment for working families.”

“This KRC report provides comprehensive and localized analysis of the impact of raising the minimum wage that backs up what I hear from my constituents every day,” said Representative Patty Kim (D-Dauphin County). “Working families are having a hard time making ends meet. This report lets each lawmaker know how many of their constituents will benefit if we finally raise the wage. 2024 needs to be the year we get this across the finish line.”

(Editor’s note: visit [keystoneresearch.org](http://keystoneresearch.org) for this and other labor-related reports.)





**An empty lot remains on February 1 after bulldozers tore down the Allentown Morning Call newsroom last year.** City Center, the developer behind many Allentown projects, has owned the North Sixth and Turner Sts. site since 2016 and plans to turn the property into a five-story, 231-unit apartment complex. Journalists unionized with NewsGuild-CWA in 2019 and began working remotely the following year when The Tribune Publishing Company, which owned the newspaper, closed the building during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contract negotiations remained ongoing between the union and the company when Alden Global Capital took over the Tribune newspapers in February 2021. The Morning Call’s twenty union journalists joined more than 200 reporters, photographers and other staffers at six other major newspapers for a one-day strike on February 1, accusing the hedge fund of having “slow walked negotiations and offered non-starter proposals.”



## Lehigh Valley families received Wild’s aid US Rep Wild returned more than \$10 million in federal benefits to Lehigh Valley residents in 2023

by Ron Ennis, Editor  
Lehigh Valley Labor Council



Last year, Lehigh Valley congresswoman Susan Wild returned nearly \$10.4 million in federal funds back to her District 7 constituents.

“I work every day on behalf of the people of our community, which includes helping constituents who are having issues with VA benefits, Social Security, tax refunds, and more,” she posted on her website. “I’ll never stop fighting to make the government work better for the Greater Lehigh Valley.”

In 2023, Wild’s staff resolved 4,170 constituent cases. These included helping 590 individuals with passport problems. The top federal agencies she and her staff assisted with included the Department of State, the Internal Revenue Service, and Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Since her arrival in Washington in 2018, Wild and her constituent advocates have resolved nearly 16,000 individual cases, returning a total of \$34.9 million in federal funds.



US Rep.  
Susan Wild



**HE THINKS IT LOOKS UNFAVORABLE FOR THE WORKMEN.**  
The outlook at the South Bethlehem iron and steel works is not at all favorable to the locked-out workmen. The “bosses”—evidently backed by the stockholders—are increasing the force employed at the mills, and the indications are that in a short time the works will again be in operation, even though the men who were locked out are not reemployed. The result will be that a great many of them will engage in other callings or leave the town. The effect of the result of this difficulty, we fear, will be damaging to ironworkers all over the country.—*Easton Call*.

**An injury to one, is an injury to all.** John Fritz, Bethlehem Iron Company superintendent, locked out workers over a workplace dispute in June 1883. Backed by the company’s stockholders, Fritz refused to negotiate with the men and instead employed strikebreakers to take the jobs of those he had dismissed. *The Easton Call* editor believed that the defeat of the South Bethlehem laborers would “be damaging to ironworkers all over the country.” (Credit: *Bethlehem Daily Times*, July 31, 1883)





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**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024**  
*Executive Board @ 7:00 PM – Delegate meeting @ 7:30 PM*  
**Teamsters #773 3614 Lehigh Street, Whitehall PA 18052**  
 (One block east of the Whitehall Township Police Department)

The *News & Views* is produced by members of the Communication Workers Local #14827,  
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