

Today, tens of thousands of women and men in the greater Westmoreland County area have the benefit of a negotiated union contract with their employer, with a voice and a vote on improving wages, benefits and working conditions.

Labor's struggles and accomplishments are many, though often not so well known. Here are a few historical facts about the working people of the Westmoreland County area, and the labor unions they've built and continue to organize today!

Westmoreland's Labor Tradition

Organized workers here are well-known for earning higher wages and better benefits. These union-negotiated improvements provide upward pressure for pay for all workers in the area.

Unions represent ordinary working people, not the wealthy "elite." Labor today is an important force in Westmoreland County communities. The coalition of labor unions in the area is [the Greater Westmoreland Central Labor Council AFL-CIO](#).

Labor council members provide mutual support to union members during disputes, and are involved with many community activities, events and causes. The council encourages non-union workers to become union members. The council monitors the actions of political representatives and elected leaders locally, as do the state and national AFL-CIO in Harrisburg and Washington, D.C.

Progress for the average worker did not come easily. Before unions became strong, workdays were long and pay was often very low. Early efforts by workers for self-improvement were sometimes branded as "conspiracies" against the power of corporations and the wealthy.



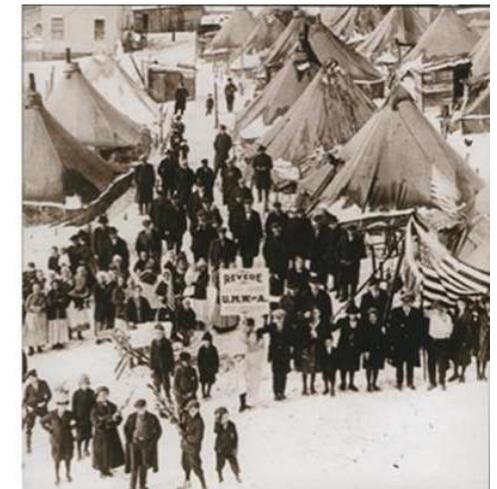
- Labor councils were established in many Western Pennsylvania communities as far back as the 1820-30s.
- The founding convention of what became the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was held in downtown Pittsburgh in 1881, building the power of unions like the building and construction trades that to this day help millions of families maintain a living wage.

- Westmoreland County has a diverse economy now, including manufacturing, commerce, energy, transportation, health care, public service and many more modern industries. It has also included production of glass, electrical components, aluminum, rubber, and much more. But it wasn't long ago that the economy

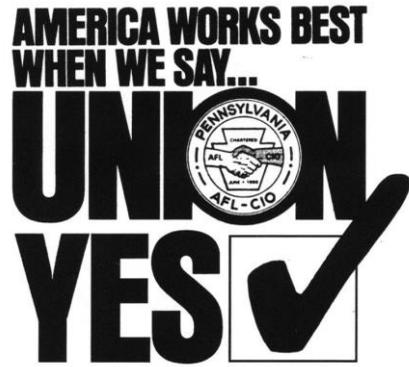
centered on farming and [coal mining](#).

- The modern industrial age brought a demand for coal to run steam engines and furnaces. Westmoreland coal miners faces many hardships: low pay, "script" instead of money useable only in company stores, sparse company housing and dangerous working conditions. More than 50,000 mining fatalities are reported in Pennsylvania since the 1870s.
- The United Mine Workers of America was formed in 1890 to support all coal workers. In 1891, 10,000 coke workers in this region walked out to protest low pay and poor conditions at Henry Frick's properties. (Coke is a coal by-product needed to make steel, once produced in "beehive ovens" still visible on area hillsides.) In this strike, 7 union miners were killed at the [Morewood Massacre](#). Frick went on to manage Andrew Carnegie's nearby steel mill at the [1892 Battle of Homestead](#).
- The [1910-11 Westmoreland Coal Strike](#), saw 15,000 UMW members at 65 area mines joining together to improve wages and working conditions, with more casualties.

- In the wake of these early conflicts, labor unions steadily gained acceptance. Wages and working conditions improved as a result. As the economy changed, unions have adapted, now representing a broad cross-section of the workforce - labor, service and professional.
- The [Congress of Industrial Organization \(CIO\)](#) that helped millions organize during the 1930-50s had its first convention in Pittsburgh in 1938. And Pittsburgh is home base for the [Steelworkers Union \(USW\)](#) since 1937.
- Workers in the private sector gain the right to organize with the [1935 National Labor Relations Act](#). Public, educational and health care employees in Pennsylvania only gained collective bargaining rights through later state and federal legislation.
- [Pro-labor laws for Pennsylvanians](#) are the result of many decades of coalition-building by workers and their unions. Labor laws in our state are considered among the best in the country due to the continual efforts of unions.



Tent City for evicted miners and families, Westmoreland Strike, 1910-11.



Let Political Leaders Know

Where You Stand -



- Full Collective Bargaining Rights for Public & Education Employees
- Protect American Industrial Jobs
- Demand Union Construction
- Stop Contracting Out Our Jobs
- Fair Compensation for Injured & Unemployed Workers
- Affordable Family Health Insurance
- Strengthen Social Security
- A Healthful Environment
- More Job Opportunities
- Demand the Right to Organize & other workers' issues!



The Greater Westmoreland County Labor Council is a local branch of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

The Labor Council represents the collective interest of its affiliated unions and of the working people of Westmoreland County. It consists of affiliated unions that designate delegates who elect an executive board and conduct Labor Council business at monthly meetings.

The Labor Council helps local unions within its jurisdiction with various organizing campaigns, community services, civil rights issues, and works with charitable organizations. The Labor Council also lobbies with local politicians on issues of concern to workers.

The GWCLC believes that it is essential for all voters to have the necessary information for making educated political choices. The Council plays an invaluable role in the struggle of the AFL-CIO to improve the standard of living for working people.

The GWCLC is one of nearly 500 state and local labor councils of the AFL-CIO and are the heart of the Labor Movement.

Labor Councils are democratically elected bodies dedicated to represent the interests of working people at the state and local level. We mobilize our members and community partners to advocate for social and economic justice and we strive daily to vanquish oppression and make our communities better for all people -- regardless of race, color, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, or ethnic or national origin.

Greater Westmoreland
Central Labor Council AFL-CIO

OFFICERS

- President Walter Geiger*
- Vice President Phil Horrell*
- Secretary Harriet Ellenberger*
- Treasurer Rosemary Trump*
- Financial Sec. Donna Semega*
- Trustees: Linda Butler*
- Mary Caldwell, Mike Andrejco*
- Executive Board Members:*
- Helen Noel, Dan Kremer*
- Rachel Shaw*
- Sergeant-at-Arms Bob Thomas*



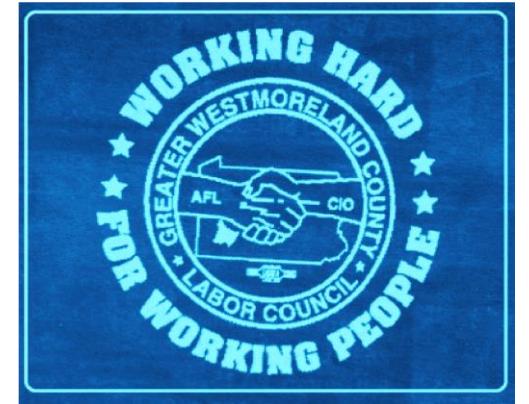
MONTHLY MEETINGS

All union members are invited
3rd Monday of each month,
General Meeting at 7:00 PM,
Hempfield Fire House #2,
421 Thornton Road
Greensburg, PA 15601.

(January & February - 4th Monday)

If you are interested in getting active and helping the labor movement grow, please email: ellenberger@zoominternet.net.

Greater
Westmoreland County
Labor Council



Greater Westmoreland County
Labor Council AFL-CIO
One Northgate Square
Greensburg, PA 15601



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Website - <http://pa.aflcio.org/gwclc>

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