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Union Energy Launches Coalition at Cleveland-Cliffs Steelton

*Labor and business leaders, union members, community leaders join to
create sustainable, innovative energy economy*

CONTACT: Nicki Herdson
herdson@kateco.com
717.428.9452 | mobile

STEELTON, PA (August 26, 2024) –Union Energy, a collaboration between the PA AFL-CIO and the PA Building Trades, held its campaign kickoff today at Cleveland-Cliffs Steelton, the nation’s oldest operating steel mill. Labor leaders, union members, and climate researchers spoke about the importance of creating union jobs.

Pennsylvania AFL-CIO and Union Energy President Angela Ferritto asked the crowd if they could feel the Union Energy, “that undeniable sense you are part of something bigger, something powerful; that’s the energy that unites all of us in the PA labor movement, and it has never been stronger.” President Ferritto underscored the role union members will play in creating a sustainable future. “Today is the beginning of a united powerful coalition between unions, faith communities, students, businesses, and academics. We will plant the seeds of a new energy sector where unionized workers lead the way with the same determination and resilience that has always defined us. I ask each of you to harness that union energy, let it remind you there is nothing we cannot achieve.”

Ferritto also shared a new publication, “Pennsylvania Climate Jobs Plan: A Worker-Centered Approach to an Equitable Clean Energy Future,” written by the IRL Climate Jobs Institute at

Cornell University, which was released today. The report can be viewed at www.UnionEnergyPA.org.

Robert Bair, PA Building Trades president and Union Energy secretary-treasurer, spoke about how Pennsylvania leads the nation as an energy exporter and producer. "Cleveland-Cliffs built this country," he said, "and it will build the steel of tomorrow cleaner than it has ever been." Bair talked about opportunities for union jobs in all industries. "These opportunities will help build the middle class, do it safely, protect our planet, and give our kids jobs in the future. When the middle class does well, the country does well."

Jim Snell, UA/Steamfitters, Local 420 business manager and executive vice president of Union Energy, affirmed his union's support for the coalition. "My union is 100% committed to this effort," he said. "We see this as an opportunity to create an innovative, sustainable economy that generates union energy and a future where both the environment and workers can thrive. As we confront the urgent challenges of climate change, we need good union jobs with wages, benefits, and security."

Mike Fishman, executive director, Climate Jobs National Resource Center, spoke about his union roots in construction and then as president of a union in New York. Fishman discussed the work Cornell University has done to combat climate change because he has seen firsthand how "workers are hit first and hit worst." Fishman said workers need to be involved in climate action. "The goal is for labor leaders and workers to put their own plans to get to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. As part of a worker centered future, we have to do it in a way that offers good paying jobs. With workers, unions, and environmentalists all working together, we will build one great plan for the future."

Maurice Cobb, PA AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer, shared the importance of unions creating momentum to shape the future. "We can no longer afford to deny our climate is changing; we see it in our daily lives," he said. "The question is not whether the changes are happening but how we respond." Cobb said the recently passed Solar for Schools legislation is a step forward, yet none of the solar panels that will be installed on school buildings are union made. The installation of the solar panels, however, will be done by union members "because we considered the trajectory, jumped in front of this, and knew where the next move would be. This is a seismic shift in our economy to create good union jobs, to make sure these jobs align with our values, and to move forward to a cleaner, more sustainable future."

Today's event kicked off a week of activities as part of the coalition's public launch. Partnering with the Climate Jobs National Resource Center and Cornell University, Union Energy is dedicated to creating a sustainable and innovative energy economy - today - that allows all Pennsylvania families to have an opportunity to work in union jobs with union benefits. The public launch will highlight the work of the organization to mobilize support across the Commonwealth, particularly in counties impacted by economic challenges. Events will be livestreamed on the [Pennsylvania AFL-CIO Facebook page](#).

WHAT: Union Energy Public Launch

EVENTS: Tuesday, August 27 -Business Roundtable
UMWA Regional Office, 135 Wayland Smith Drive,

Uniontown, PA, 2:00 pm

Wednesday, August 28 - Union Members in Public Office

4:00 pm

Thursday, August 29 - Higher Education Town Hall

3:00 pm

Friday, August 30 - Union Apprenticeship Facility Tour

- IUOE, Local 66, 457 Christopher Rd., New Alexandria, PA
- IBEW, Local 5, 5 Hot Metal Street, Suite 100, Pittsburgh, PA
- IUPAT, D.C. 21, 2190 Hornig Rd., Philadelphia, PA
- SMART, Local 19, Central PA Training Center, 102 Windsor Avenue, Hamburg PA
- UA/Steamfitters, Local 420, 14420 Townsend Road, Philadelphia, PA

10:00 am

Saturday, August 31 - Tree Planting

Washington, PA

Washington Park, Firefly Gardens, Washington Business District

10:00 am

Labor in the Pulpits

- Temple Ohev Sholom, 2345 N. Front Street, Harrisburg (8/30 6:00 pm)
- All Saints Episcopal Church, 310 Elm Avenue, Hershey (9/1, 10:00 am)

Labor Day

Labor Day events throughout the Commonwealth

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Union Energy's mission is to ensure that the transition to a clean energy economy creates high-quality, unionized jobs that provide fair wages, comprehensive benefits, and safe working conditions. We are committed to protecting the environment while fostering economic growth and stability for workers and communities. By partnering with labor unions, employers, policymakers, and local organizations, we aim to champion sustainable energy solutions that support workers' rights, promote social equity, and advance environmental stewardship. Learn more at UnionEnergyPA.org.