

Lehigh Valley
250
1776-2026

Marking 250 years of
American Independence in
the Arts, Culture & History

Marking National History Locally

A newly sewn flag of stars and bars blowing in the warm breeze.

By Lehigh Valley 250

LEHIGH VALLEY PA. - The ring of a recently cast bronze bell.

From the steps of the courthouse, Robert Levers voice rang out on July 8, 1776 as residents gathered in Easton's Center Square were among the first to hear the words of the recently inscribed Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed them part of a new and democratic country.

The occasion of the 250th anniversary of the United States of America in 2026, provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to consider our national origins and institutions, what binds us together, and the principles and values of America's Revolutionary period that inform and stir people today.

As we move toward this historic milestone in our country's history, an array of regional cultural and educational institutions are working together to commemorate the Lehigh Valley's role in the history of the nation while considering questions, perspectives, and scholarship that shine new light on what it means to be an American.

Marking the Past, Building the Future Lehigh Valley 250.

Community Together, Then and Now.

America's 250th Anniversary in 2026 will be commemorated in the Lehigh Valley through a series of insightful and thought-provoking exhibitions, walking tours, digital offerings, and performances through a collaborative effort among regional historical, cultural, and educational institutions.

Visit <https://lehighvalley250.org/>



Heritage Day Celebration In Easton

By Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society

EASTON Pa. - Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society is a proud partner of this year's Heritage Day! Join us for a fun day filled with lively music, great food, and activities for the entire family.

When: July 12, 2025 9am - 9pm

Where: Downtown, historic Easton

Why: Heritage Day annually commemorates the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Easton (July 8, 1776).

Cost: \$20 adult and \$10 child wristbands provide admission to all NCHGS properties.

Visit http://lvhistory.org/frame/?frame_protocol=https&frame_url=sigalmuseum.org/event/easton-heritage-day for all of the events.



SUMMER'S OFFICIALLY



HERE!



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501 E Moorestown Rd., Wind Gap, PA

Shapiro Administration Files Suit Against USDA Over Termination of FLPA Food Program

By Michael Ortoski / Food Operations Dir. at Mission of Love Food Hub

HARRISBURG - Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro announced that his administration has filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The suit alleges that the USDA unlawfully terminated Pennsylvania's Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) Program agreement, which is a \$13 million commitment that directly supports 189 Pennsylvania farms and supplies 14 food banks with fresh, locally grown food.

Locally Second Harvest located in BATH Pa. who services 7 counties in Pa. including Northampton, Lehigh and Monroe have been devastated over the termination of this program.

As a Food Operations Dir. at Mission of Love Food Hub in Bangor I was involved in the program for one year. As the only 'Food Hub' in the Slate Belt, Mission of Love Food Hub bought the most food product in the LFPA program in Northampton County \$350,000 through seven different farms in the program.

We service over 4000 families every week and fresh produce is always on the top of the list of requests from our community.

The FLPA program to me is a win/win situation with 50% benefit to the people in need of food and 50% to help small farms stay in business.

When the USDA abruptly terminated our agreement without cause, they ripped away a reliable source of income for 189 Pennsylvania farms — and cut off funding that would have helped provide over 4.4 million meals to families across the Commonwealth. That's not just bad policy — it's a broken promise. A deal is a deal, and I've taken legal action today to ensure the federal government honors its commitment to Pennsylvania," the governor added.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) has administered more than \$28 million in federal LFPA funding, helping food banks reduce waste, distribute local produce, and strengthen the state's food system.

The most recent three-year contract, signed in December 2024, was abruptly canceled in March 2025 without explanation, Shapiro office says.

PDA pays vendors up front and is reimbursed by the federal government once expenses are incurred.

The lawsuit can be viewed in its entirety HERE <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/governor/documents/shapiro%20v.%20usda%20-%20complaint%20-%20exhibits.pdf>.



Warren County Commissioner Lori Ciesla, Commissioner Director Jason J. Sarnoski, and Commissioner James R. Kern III honored Planning Director David K. Dech (third from left) on his retirement after nearly 37 years with Warren County, 30 of them as head of the Planning Department.

Planning Director Honored on His Retirement

By Art Charlton

WHITE TWP., NJ -- The Warren County Board of County Commissioners honored Planning Director David K. Dech with a proclamation on his retirement after nearly 37 years, more than 30 as department head.

The Commissioners praised Dech for his knowledge and calm demeanor, noting he had been instrumental over the years in shaping the county and planning its future.

"I don't think I've ever seen Dave get upset. He's one of the most level people I know, and one of the most knowledgeable," said Commissioner Director Jason J. Sarnoski, who has worked closely with Dech over the years on issues including transportation planning.

Dech led numerous significant planning initiatives for Warren County, including Strategic Growth Plans, Open Space Plans, Farmland Preservation Plans, Environmental Resource Inventories, and Transportation Master Plans, while guiding the county through three iterations of the State Plan and the implementation of the Highlands Act in 2008.

An avid cyclist, Dech has bicycled on every single street, alley and road in Warren County, gaining a ground-level perspective of land use that he utilized in his job, Sarnoski noted.

"There's nothing you do not know about Warren County, probably because you biked it," Commissioner Lori Ciesla said to Dech during his final Commissioners' meeting, where for years he has been a fixture in the front row, delivering verbal reports on planning issues.

Commissioner James R. Kern III, a former Pohatcong mayor, said one of the great things Dech brought to the job was accessibility, as he always was ready to help local officials understand planning issues and interpret state development mandates for them.

"Your footprint is here and will be forever," county Administrator Alex Lazorisak said to Dech.

Dech, who retires on June 27, thanked the current board and past boards of commissioners and freeholders for their support. He also credited Planning Department staff, saying the department's accomplishments would not have been possible without their hard work.

The Commissioners also promoted Assistant Director Ryan Conklin to Planning Director at the meeting, noting he had big shoes to fill.

A Belvidere resident, Dech said he is training to run a half-marathon this

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