

# President Biden

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The Lehigh Valley's GDP topped \$50 billion in 2022, the most recent data available, according to federal data published in December. That's a growth of about \$10 billion since 2017, with the increase driven by advanced manufacturing.

The White House said in a statement that under President Biden's plan "to grow the economy from the middle out and the bottom up, communities like Allentown are creating jobs, attracting investments in manufacturing and infrastructure, and revitalizing Main Streets."

The White House cited recent investments in the Lehigh Valley including Schless Bottles moving to Allentown from New Jersey, creating a \$7.5 million bottle-making operation that will create nearly 100 jobs.

In Allentown and beyond, America is "seeing a small business boom," White House Deputy Press Secretary Andrew Bates told reporters on Air Force One while en route to the Lehigh Valley for the President's visit.

The number of businesses in Allentown has grown in each of the past two years. In 2021, the city issued 424 business licenses. In 2022, it issued 455. In 2023, it issued 525.

Small businesses such as those that President Biden visited in Emmaus represent a significant part of the Lehigh Valley's economic engine.

About 84% of the business establishments in the region have fewer than 20 employees. About 51% have fewer than five.

"The Lehigh Valley is a perfect setting to illustrate the big role that small businesses play in a regional economy," said Don Cunningham, President & CEO of Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corp. (LVEDC). "We're honored that again President Biden has highlighted the region as an example of economic success."

Accompanying Biden on his tour of the businesses was Administrator Isabel Casillas Guzman, head of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The Lehigh Valley is home to downtowns flush with unique small businesses in Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, and boroughs such as Emmaus.

Small businesses are destinations for people to gather and buy products and services. They create jobs and offer experiences that drive the character of a community. That quality of life is a major economic asset of the Lehigh Valley because it attracts talent. The availability of a skilled workforce is a key driver in decisions where businesses relocate.

Small businesses also drive innovations, launching new technologies and products amid the Lehigh Valley's rich entrepreneurial ecosystem.

After visiting the businesses in Emmaus, Biden stressed the importance role that childcare plays in the economy.

"It helps everybody," he said. "It generates economic growth. Because when you can continue to work, if you have a child that needs help or needs to be taken care of, it generates economic growth. Everybody does better."

LVEDC works with its partners to support business incubators and entrepreneurial programs that help people turn their passions into profitable businesses. LVEDC publicizes resources to help businesses get started, and it administers financing programs on behalf of the Lehigh Valley's regional economic development organizations.

Biden was joined on his tour of Emmaus businesses by Gov. Josh Shapiro, U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, and U.S. Rep. Susan Wild. Allentown Mayor Matt Tuerk was among the officials who greeted Biden when he arrived at Lehigh Valley International Airport. Biden wrapped up his visit to the Lehigh Valley by meeting with firefighters and officials at Allentown's fire training academy.



## NCC Presents Hip Hop Legend Chuck D.

By NCC

BETHLEHEM, PA - Chuck D., musician, artist, activist and front man for the group Public Enemy, will be the keynote speaker of Northampton Community College's (NCC) Annual Humanities Program for academic year 2024. The first in-person keynote for the program since the start of the pandemic, the live event will take place on April 16, 2024 at 7 p.m. The event is free and is open to the public. To reserve tickets, visit: [www.northampton.edu/chuckd](http://www.northampton.edu/chuckd)

Through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and matching gifts from generous donors, NCC established an endowment for the humanities in 2009. Each year, the endowment funds an annual theme led by a member of the faculty who develops a program of engaging educational events for students, faculty and staff, and our surrounding communities.

NCC's Annual Humanities theme for 2024, "50 Years Down the Line: A Celebration of Hip Hop History and Culture," of which Chuck D.'s keynote is a part, is led by Sociology Professor, Andrew McIntosh. The theme and programming explores and celebrates Hip Hop culture's dynamic mix of influences and styles, how they came to be, how they evolved and how they continue to be practiced and thrive in American culture.

Chuck D. first rose to fame in the 1980's with a string of commercially successful albums that addressed weighty issues about race and inequality with a combination of intelligence and eloquence never seen before. Leader and co-founder of legendary group Public Enemy, Chuck D. and his fellow members have been a historically notable hip hop group, highlighted

in many culturally significant ways, including their song "Harder Than You Think" being selected for NBC's official Super Bowl XLIX commercial.

The New York Times has named Public Enemy to list of the "25 Most Significant Albums of the Last Century," and the Library of Congress added "Fear of a Black Planet" to their National Recording Registry. The group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2013. "It Takes a Nation of Millions To Hold Us Back" and "Fear of A Black Planet" were both

named to Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list in 2020, the same year Public Enemy received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the GRAMMYS.

In 2023, Chuck D and his manager Lorrie Boula produced a four-part series covering the birth and evolution of hip-hop. In partnership with PBS and BBC studios, the acclaimed series traced the genre's role in the story of America; from the past 40 years, right up to the present day. Featuring first-hand accounts from some of rap's most integral players, the series deconstructed the origins of this bold and revolutionary art form through the voices of those who were there at the start.

Chuck D., who runs his own record label, SpitSlam, has had music featured in films, docuseries, television and digital projects. He's hosted several documentaries and television episodes, like the 2006 Sun-

dance television special, "Chuck D's Musicians Studio," where he interviewed Quincy Jones. His involvement with non-profit organizations like MusicCares and Rock The Vote, earned Chuck D. the Patrick Lippert Award in 1996 for his contributions to community service. He's also a visual artist whose work has been shown in galleries nationwide, and he released a limited-edition book and print collection of his fine art works. He's a best-selling author, including his work, "This Day In Rap and Hip Hop History," and he released a graphic novel. He is an artist in all areas of Hip Hop and pop culture.

