

# Can Pennsylvania Lead the AI Revolution?

By The Philadelphia Citizen

PHILADELPHIA - "As with every great industrial leap, the race among states to lead the AI revolution is reaching a fever pitch. We are living through a transformation that could shape the 21st century even more profoundly than railroads and steel defined the late 19th century, or the personal computer and the Internet transformed the close of the 20th. We are now entering the steep part of the hockey-stick curve for AI innovation — when breakthroughs move from research labs and pilot projects into the physical world, driving exponential changes in how we produce energy, manufacture goods, move people and freight, and secure national defense.

In this age of "future shock" innovation, progress is inseparable from energy and infrastructure — and infrastructure, in turn, is inseparable from political will. The states that will win are those able to cut through permitting bottlenecks, align policy with industry needs, and move capital to the ground quickly. Speed, strategy and scale — mirroring the first movers in tech's Magnificent Seven — will decide who builds the competitive platforms that fuel generations of growth.



A big-deal AI gathering — in PA

Pennsylvania disrupted this competition with a bang last month. On July 15, U.S. Senator David McCormick hosted the inaugural PA Energy and Innovation Summit at Carnegie Mellon University. The event didn't just draw President Trump and key Cabinet officials; it brought together one of the most formidable concentrations of capital and influence ever seen in the Commonwealth, and perhaps in any state.

Leaders representing trillions of dollars in market value and investment capacity — from Blackstone President Jon Gray, with over \$1 trillion in assets under management, to executives from the UAE's sovereign wealth fund — sat alongside CEOs of the nation's largest energy companies, top labor leaders and senior executives from the world's leading technology firms.

For a day, PA became the meeting ground for global capital, industrial might, and cutting-edge AI innovation, positioning the Commonwealth to play a defining role in the new AI economy. The spectacle amplified momentum already building under Governor Josh Shapiro, layering more than \$90 billion in new data center, energy and workforce announcements on top of prior wins. In a rare moment of unity, Shapiro, a Democrat, sat alongside McCormick, a Republican, projecting bipartisan resolve in the nation's most competitive swing state...

## Lehigh Valley Entrepreneurs Star at StartUp Lehigh Valley Pitch Competition

By Paul Muschick / (Photos courtesy of Lehigh University)

LEHIGH VALLEY- A Lehigh Valley-based company that has developed a process to clean contaminated water from oil and gas, mining, and other industrial operations was a prize winner at the 7th Annual StartUp Lehigh Valley pitch competition on Aug. 5.

The competition, which was broadcast live and livestreamed by WFMZ, gives early-stage businesses an opportunity to showcase their innovations and win funding to further advance their research and development.

Entrepreneurs play a key role in the Lehigh Valley's \$55.7 billion economy. Entrepreneurs bring new products and technologies to market, create jobs, and strengthen communities. Supporting entrepreneurs is one of the priorities of Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) in the organization's recently adopted strategic plan for 2025-2027.

Hydron Desalination, which has its research and development operations at the Ben Franklin TechVentures business incubator in Bethlehem, won the second runner-up prize in the pitch competition. The company uses specialized absorbents to extract clean water from contaminated sources including high-concentration brines.

A solvent and heat are used to separate brine from water. And the solvent can be reused.

"Think of it like a sponge," Co-founder and CEO Sachin Nair said during his pitch at StartUp Lehigh Valley.

He said the process helps the environment, addresses water scarcity, and is energy efficient, with plenty of opportunities to generate revenue, including by extracting minerals from contaminated water.

"At Hydron, we're solving one of the largest wastewater problems on the planet," said Nair, a chemical engineer whose previous roles included working at Air Products.

The \$2,000 second runner-up prize was provided by Entrepreneurship at Lehigh University. The university puts on the StartUp Lehigh Valley pitch competition.

"Through events like this, we continue to prioritize and reinvest in entrepreneurship as part of our university strategy, 'Inspiring the Future Makers,'" said Nathan Urban, Ph.D., Lehigh University's Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and a member of LVEDC's Board of Directors. "StartUp Lehigh Valley exemplifies our commitment to fostering innovation and creating opportunities for impact both locally and beyond."

Also competing in StartUp Lehigh Valley was BIRE Technologies, of Bethlehem, which developed technology to generate environmentally friendly hydroelectricity, without using dams or propellers. The company's equipment generates energy by mimicking the tail movement of fish.

"We took our inspiration from salmon, a fish that swim against the current effortlessly, to reinvent how we can capture energy from rivers and tides, anywhere, anytime," CEO and Co-founder Amin Mivehchi said during his pitch.

The Lehigh Valley has a robust network of organizations to assist entrepreneurs with everything from free advice to financing to networking opportunities. A new event the Lehigh Valley Entrepreneur Summit, will bring all those resources together for the first time on Oct. 21.

StartUp Lehigh Valley was held at the ArtsQuest Center during Musikfest, the nation's largest free, ungated music festival that typically draws more than 1 million people to see more than 500 performances over 10 days.

AcQumen Medical Inc., a life sciences startup co-founded by Lehigh University engineering graduate Dori Jones, won the top prize of \$20,000. The company, based in Minneapolis, developed a real-time monitoring system for medical devices. The prize was provided by Lehigh University.

Also winning prizes at StartUp Lehigh Valley were:

Lectra Technologies LLC, of Camp Hill, won the first runner-up prize of \$3,000, for wearable technology for muscle rehabilitation and healing that is powered by artificial intelligence. The prize was provided by PSECU.

Sylf, of Scranton, won the Audience Choice Award of \$1,000, for its automated alcoholic beverage dispensers that serve cocktails and hard seltzers at high-volume venues. The prize was sponsored by Lehigh Valley Health Network, part of Jefferson Health.

KiposTech, of Lancaster, won six months of support from the Lehigh Valley Ventures Lab, for its AI-powered, filter-less air disinfection and monitoring for livestock farms.

The finalists had three minutes to pitch their products to a panel of three judges: Emma Fleck, Professor of Entrepreneurship at Susquehanna University; Stephen Tang, Chair of NOW Diagnostics Inc.; and Kathryn Colonna Worriow, Founder of LifeAire Systems.

