



The Northeast Tennessee ORGANIZER

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The Morning After Is Already Here

THERE IS A PATTERN TO AMERICAN POLITICS. A right-wing government runs itself into the ground. The public turns against it. And before working people can build an alternative, the center moves in with a simple offer: just give us the keys back and we will restore order. The window between those two moments is the one that matters. It is open right now.

The Collapse Is Real

Trump's second term has been a case study in the distance between populist rhetoric and plutocratic governance. The United States added only 181,000 jobs in all of 2025—the fewest in a non-recession year since 2003—while tariffs raised costs for the average household by \$3,800 per year^{1,2}. The Supreme Court struck down his tariff regime 6 to 3 in February 2026³. The Congressional Budget Office found the One Big Beautiful Bill takes \$1,200 annually from the bottom ten percent while giving \$13,600 to the top ten percent and throws 11.8 million people off Medicaid⁴. Trump had promised not to touch Social Security or Medicaid⁵. DOGE then moved to cut roughly 7,000 SSA positions and targeted 80,000 VA cuts⁶.

The electoral signals are clear. Democrats swept Virginia's statewide offices by as much as 15 points⁷. In North Carolina's March 3rd primaries, three Democratic incumbents who voted to override Governor

Stein's vetoes were ousted by progressive challengers; Nasif Majeed, who voted for legislation defining sex in biological terms, lost 69 to 27 percent⁸. MAGA is collapsing. But that is exactly when the danger begins.

The Familiar Playbook

After Watergate, Democrats ran Jimmy Carter as a reform outsider. He deregulated banks and airlines, appointed the Fed chair who deliberately induced a recession, and abandoned labor. AFL-CIO president George Meany called him a conservative⁹. After 2008, Obama staffed his economic team with Wall Street insiders. His mortgage relief program promised 3 to 4 million modifications and delivered roughly one million while nine million families lost their homes^{10,11}. Not a single senior bank executive was prosecuted¹². Ninety-five percent of income gains from 2009 to 2012 went to the top one percent¹³. Democratic centrists represent a coalition whose interests are served by managed capitalism with better optics. They are against us not because they are evil, but because we want different things.

The Lineup for 2028

Gavin Newsom governs California with the nation's highest state unemployment rate and an \$18 to \$35 billion deficit he refuses to address with taxes on the wealthy^{1,14}—while crimi-

nalizing homelessness and having done podcasts with Charlie Kirk and Steve Bannon to signal cross-aisle credibility. Buttigieg offers vague appeals to AI disruption. Next American Era, launched in February 2026, is led by a former congresswoman now lobbying for OpenAI and Oracle¹⁵. Third Way is running conferences aimed at opposing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez¹⁶. This is not a left flank preparing to govern for working people. This is the party establishment clearing the field.

What Northeast Tennessee Tells Us

The material stakes are impossible to ignore here. Median household income in the Tri-Cities runs 70 cents on the national dollar, with poverty rates exceeding 20 percent in Johnson City and Kingsport¹⁷. Ballad Health failed 74 to 80 percent of its state quality benchmarks for four consecutive years while CEO compensation nearly doubled to \$4.3 million¹⁸. Food insecurity has hit 16.8 percent—the highest in 20 years¹⁹. These conditions predate Trump. The “return to normal” centrist Democrats are selling a return to the conditions that produced all of this.

The Fight to Name the Problem

Two stories are being told about why working-class life is so hard. The right blames immi-

grants and cultural elites—a false answer that connects to a real feeling of abandonment. The centrist story calls for competent management without naming corporate power, landlords, or hospital monopolies. The socialist story names the cause: wages are low because unions were broken; healthcare is unaffordable because it is a profit center; hospitals close in rural communities because there is no money in keeping poor people alive. These are not mysteries. They are decisions, made by people who profit from them.

The Window and What to Do With It

DSA has surpassed 100,000 members²⁰. May Day 2025 brought hundreds of thousands into the streets in more than 1,000 towns²¹. The 2025 convention voted to work toward an independent mass socialist party²². A general strike on May Day 2028, backed by UAW and the Chicago Teachers Union, is being built now²³.

Fascism is not defeated in blue cities. It is defeated where it lives—in the communities it recruits from, in the economic despair it feeds on. A new moderate will not fix the Ballad Health monopoly. A return to normalcy will not reverse 50 years of wage decline. The window is open. What we do with it will shape working-class life for a generation. ■

NO KINGS. NO BOMBS. NO BILLIONAIRES.

Eight Million Dollars in Cameras Can't See What's Missing

FREEDOM HALL POOL OPENED IN 1974. For more than fifty years, it was where Johnson City kids learned to swim and working families spent summer afternoons without paying resort prices. It closes permanently on April 3, 2026. The city received an engineering estimate last August: repairs would cost \$750,000. Deputy City Manager Steve Willis called it “an incredible amount of money.” The city did not pay it.

One month before that report landed on Willis's desk, the Johnson City Board of Commissioners approved an \$8,063,000 contract to lease hundreds of cameras from the surveillance company Flock Safety. The vote was 4-0, supported by Commissioners Brock, Cox, Hunter, and Wise. It happened on the consent agenda—the section reserved for routine items that require no discussion. Nobody debated it. The whole thing passed in under a minute.

Two hundred and ninety cameras. Ten years. Eight million dollars. No public comment. Two months after cameras were already going up, the commission held a community roundtable to hear what residents thought.

The pool cost \$750,000 to save. The cameras cost \$8 million to lease. The city found one of those affordable.

What the Cameras Actually Do

Flock Safety photographs every vehicle that passes one of its cameras and builds a searchable record of where that vehicle was, when, and in what direction it was traveling. The cameras capture license plates, vehicle make, model, color, and what the company calls a “vehicle fingerprint”—distinguishing features like bumper stickers, body damage, and roof racks that allow tracking even when a plate is obscured.



Johnson City's cameras join a national network of roughly 90,000 Flock cameras performing more than 20 billion vehicle scans per month across 5,000 law enforcement agencies in 49 states. By default, local data is shared with any agency within a 500-mile radius. Seventy-five percent of Flock's law enforcement customers have enrolled in the National Lookup Tool, which allows any participating agency anywhere in the country to search the full network.

Think about what that data reveals. Your car outside a methadone clinic twice a week. Your car at a domestic violence shelter the night you left. Your car in the lot of an abortion provider, an HIV testing center, or an immigration legal aid office. Your car at a union meeting. Your car in front of a house at 3am. None of those trips were anyone else's business. Flock logged them anyway. And because license plates, property records, and social media are public, anyone who cross-references Flock data with those records gets your home address—and from there, your name, your relationships, your photograph.

Flock Cameras Don't Prevent Crime

JCPD's own figures show 11 pilot cameras contributed to 15 arrests over nine months. Crime in Johnson City was al-

ready falling—down 12 percent in 2024—before a single new camera went up. The National Institute of Justice rates license plate reader technology as a crime deterrent “Ineffective.” Every randomized controlled trial conducted over 15 years has returned null results on crime reduction.

Flock markets claims of “up to 70% crime reduction,” but an investigation by 404 Media found those numbers rest on a company-produced study whose own named academic co-author said he would have done things “much differently” and that the underlying data was too “incomplete” for meaningful analysis.

A System Other Cities Are Abandoning

Since early 2025, at least 30 cities have canceled Flock contracts or rejected new ones. Denver's city council unanimously refused a contract renewal after hundreds of residents showed up to oppose it. Ithaca's mayor ended the city's contract: “I don't know that I could live with myself if I allowed something to exist in our community that directly or indirectly led to someone's civil liberties being violated.” Oak Park, Illinois canceled after data showed 84 percent of drivers stopped in Flock-related traffic stops were Black, in a city where Black residents make up 19 percent of the population.

What were these cities responding to? In Texas, a police officer ran a nationwide Flock search logged as “had an abortion, search for female.” The Electronic Frontier Foundation obtained documents showing the department consulted prosecutors about charging the woman. In Virginia, agencies ran nearly 3,000 immigration-related searches on the state's Flock network. The EFF analyzed 12 million Flock searches from more than 3,900 agencies and found hundreds related to political demonstrations, including anti-Trump protests in 2025.

JCPD policy prohibits using the system for immigration enforcement or targeting based on protected characteristics. However, so did policies in the departments that used the data improperly. We're repeatedly told the honor system doesn't work, unless it's the people who want power over us. Johnson City's commissioners voted yes on the consent agenda without mentioning any of this.

The Budget Tells the Real Story

JCPD received a 16 percent budget increase in FY2025, bringing its total to \$19.4 million—the city's largest operating budget share by a significant margin. Johnson City Transit stops service at 6:15 p.m. on weekdays and 5:15 on Saturdays. No Sunday service. No night service. In a city where more than one in ten households has no car and more than one in five residents lives in poverty, the transit system closes before second shift ends. The FY2023 transit capital budget was approximately \$410,000. The Flock contract's steady-state annual cost is \$970,375.

Two months before approving the cameras, the Commission unanimously paid \$28 million to settle a lawsuit documenting that JCPD had maintained an “unconstitu-

tional pattern and practice” in sexual assault investigations. More than 60 women were victimized by serial rapist Sean Williams while the department looked the other way. Total payouts reached \$30.6 million. The city’s general fund balance fell from \$54.9 million to \$24.6 million. Residents absorbed a 14 percent property tax increase. The Blue Plum Festival did not return. The pool closed.

Five months after the settlement, the same commission approved a ten-year, eight-million-dollar contract to expand the capabilities of the depart-

ment whose failures produced it. That is the transaction this city made. That is what the consent agenda hid.

What Residents Deserve to Know

JCPD has declined to tell residents where the cameras are located, saying it would reduce their effectiveness. Residents built jemappingproject.org themselves—a community-maintained map of reported camera locations—because the city responsible for this infrastructure will not account for where it sits. There is also

deflock.me, a nationwide website where people report camera locations.

Johnson City could not find \$750,000 for a pool that served low-income families for fifty years. It found \$8,000,000 for a surveillance system that other cities are canceling, built by a company with documented security failures and a CEO who calls civil liberties concerns criminal sympathy, to expand the reach of a department whose misconduct cost taxpayers more than \$30 million.

These are priorities. They belong to the Commission that

voted yes without discussion. We have a right to demand they cancel this contract before nearly \$1 million of our money is spent invading our privacy. We have a right to ask why this city found money for cameras it would not spend on buses, pools, or the survivors of its own police department’s failures. And we have a right to demand that the next decision this city makes about our lives gets more than a minute on the consent agenda. ■

Centrists Out of Step: Abolish ICE Is the Majority Position

SINCE THE MASS DEPORTATION SURGE BEGAN last year, ICE’s record of brutality and criminality have driven millions of people into the streets, the largest sustained anti-ICE mobilization this country has seen. The murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, and the victory of Minneapolis over ICE that followed, poured fuel on a fire that was already burning.

The public’s verdict on the Trump regime’s mask-off turn has been swift and unambiguous. According to the Economist/YouGov poll conducted February 27–March 2, 2026, half of all Americans now support abolishing ICE, among them a majority of independents (52 percent) and nearly a quarter of Republicans (23 percent). A clear majority of Americans say ICE uses excessive force. Nearly half say they have no confidence in the agency at all.

This is what we mean when we say the morning after is already here. The new world struggles to be born, and the centrists line up to kill it in the cradle.

Centrists Intend to Kill the Movement

The Democratic Party’s centrist establishment has not been subtle about its intentions. Third Way, the corporate-funded out-

fit that exists largely to police the party’s left flank, put out a memo in January warning that abolishing ICE risks “squandering one of the clearest opportunities in years to secure meaningful reform” while “handing Republicans exactly the fight they want.”² Third Way speaks for the people whose money funds it, the same financial and corporate interests that benefit from a workforce kept precarious, deportable, and afraid to organize. The public’s anger, in their telling, is a resource to be managed rather than something that might determine policy. That is not a strategic assessment. It is a class position.

This is the familiar playbook. Reform the rhetoric. Keep the structure. Buy enough time for the anger to fade. The centrists positioning themselves for 2028 are not neutral managers

of a difficult moment. They are representatives of a class that has always found ICE useful. They are already working to transform majority support for abolition into a years-long negotiation about body cameras, training, and supervisory chains of command.

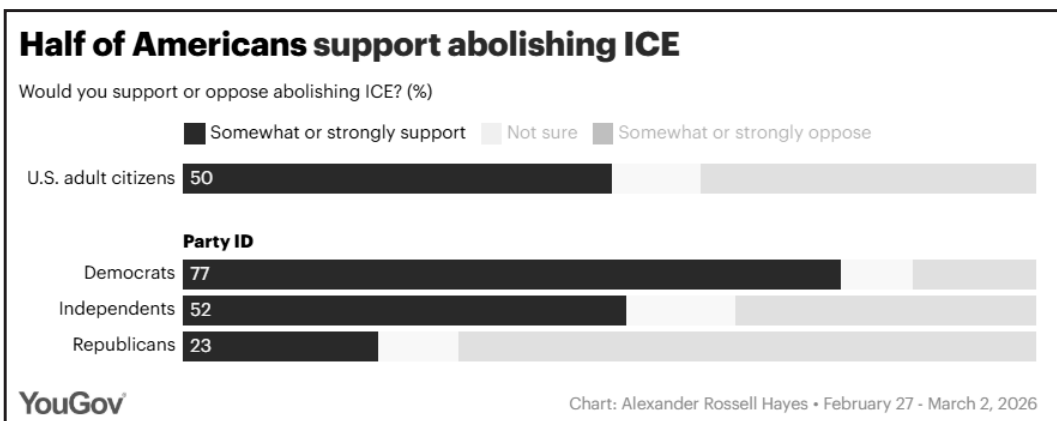
This is not a disagreement about tactics. It is a disagreement about whose interests the Democratic Party exists to serve and what role the state should play in the class struggle. The centrists have answered that question consistently for fifty years. There is no reason to expect a different answer now.

There Is No Southern Exception

The South is not exempt from these national trends. The January 2026 NPR/PBS News/

Marist poll tells a story that defies efforts to set the lowest expectations. Fifty-eight percent of Southerners say ICE is making Americans less safe. Sixty percent say ICE has gone too far in enforcing immigration laws. A majority view the anti-ICE demonstrations as mostly legitimate protests.³ “Abolish ICE” does not stop at the Mason-Dixon Line, no matter what our politicians pretend.

And we sure have some pretenders here in Northeast Tennessee. Some even wear their accommodation with ICE as a pragmatic virtue, noting warm relationships with local sheriffs, describing their votes for ICE collaboration as unavoidable, consoling themselves with the thought that a “no” vote would not have changed the outcome anyway. They express something like regret and ultimately conclude



that the right response to facilitating a harmful system is to seek a humane working relationship with those who run it.

287(g) Helps ICE and Hurts Us, No Matter How You Spin It

The fight to abolish ICE must begin in our cities and in our counties, and we must reject local accommodation, no matter how much our centrists wish to give it the appearance of “reasonable” policy-making. 287(g) agreements are a prime example. The program deputizes local law enforcement to carry out federal immigration enforcement, and serves as a force multiplier for ICE’s masked men.

Our county sheriffs, constables, and commissioners have been all too willing to sign on. Sullivan County operates under both the Warrant Service Officer model and the Task Force Model, the latter of which authorizes deputies to stop, question, and detain people on suspicion of “illegal” status during ordinary patrol duties—traffic stops, calls for service, encounters on the street. It’s a warrant for racial profiling and terror, and Sheriff Cassidy is all aboard. Washington County operates under the WSO model alone, which Sheriff Sexton sold

to commissioners as purely administrative, confined to the jail. Nothing changes, he said. Just paperwork. And every single Washington County Commissioner backed him up.

But there is no version of 287(g) that is just paperwork. Every model serves to bolster an agency the majority of Americans want abolished, and to enable the real and devastating deportation of community members—farmworkers, kitchen workers, parents of children in our schools—picked up for something as trivial as a speeding ticket.

Sullivan County: The People Said No, The Commission Said Yes

In February, ICE conducted a sweep in Sullivan County in close coordination with Sheriff Cassidy’s office. Twenty-nine people were taken.⁴ The operation bore the hallmarks of ICE at its most inhumane—not “paperwork,” but community raids that left people feeling unsafe in their own neighborhoods.

Just days later, the Sullivan County Commission met to consider accepting \$215,000 from the Department of Homeland Security and the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security to formally

expand and equip Sheriff Cassidy’s 287(g) Task Force operation. The commission chambers were packed. Speaker after speaker rose in opposition. “This is where we get to decide what side of history we’re going to be on,” one attendee told the commission.⁵

The commission placed both resolutions on the consent agenda and passed them unanimously, without permitting the full public comment the packed room had come to deliver. And is it any wonder? This is the same commission that voted to make the still-unfinished Sullivan County jail the most expensive construction project in the county’s history. They chose concrete and cages over the affordable housing, healthcare, and education. Cages for immigrants and cages for the poor are two expressions of the same politics, and the Sullivan County Commission has enthusiastically endorsed both. At least they didn’t bother with the

performative hand-wringing we’ve seen in Washington County.

What Is To Be Done

The people who packed that Sullivan County commission chamber knew exactly what they were there for. They came because they oppose ICE, because they oppose their county’s collaboration with ICE, and because they understand that the morning-after fight is happening now, in these rooms, on these agendas. That room full of people is the proof that abolition has a home in Northeast Tennessee, whatever our commissioners and sheriffs pretend.

Our immediate demands follow directly from that reality:

No to any new funding from ICE for any purpose in any county in our region.

No to any commissioner approving any increase in the sheriff’s budget until 287(g) agreements are cancelled.

Our long-term position is that of today’s majority: abolish ICE, plain and simple.

We are not naïve about the terrain. The right dominates the Sullivan County Commission and most of the offices in Northeast Tennessee. Their position on ICE is an honest one: they support it, and they say so.

For us, the first task is to win the battle against the centrists intent on giving ICE collaboration an appearance of reasonableness while castigating the majority as extremists. Break that false consensus and more people will see the right’s position for what it actually is: a minority opinion in defiance of the public will.

If a new world is to be born, it will be people like those who packed the Sullivan County Commission chambers who will ensure it happens. Sustained, organized working-class power, rooted in communities and built through relationships, is what turns a majority position into a political reality.

That is what the morning after looks like when it is built from below. If this is your fight too, it is time to get involved. Join us at northeastnds.org. ■

FIGHTING POSSUM SOLIDARITY FUND

Northeast Tennessee DSA’s Fighting Possum Solidarity Fund supports organizers who incur hardship as a result of their efforts to build people power in and around Northeast Tennessee.

The fund provides cash grants to those everyday heroes—DSA members or not—who carry on the fight for immigrant rights, housing justice, labor rights, queer liberation, bodily autonomy, and more.

This is how we beat the bosses, the landlords, the bigots, and the fascists. We don’t have billions, but we have each other. Building a fighting movement means taking care of our own!

LEARN MORE +
DONATE TODAY



GET INVOLVED

Northeast TN DSA

Meets the last Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm.

- Attend **online** by registering at ntdsa.org/ meeting, or
- Attend **in person** at the Appalachian Liberation Library, 419 W Market St, Johnson City

YDSA at ETSU

Meets Wednesday evenings. For time & location, email ydsaetsu@gmail.com.

Fascism: Finance Capital's Insurance Policy Against the Working Class



THERE'S A PARTICULAR KIND OF VIOLENCE that comes dressed as paperwork. It looks like lease renewals, mortgage statements, and subsidized housing wait lists. This is violence wrought by financial capital, and we can see it written all over our region.

In Johnson City, median rents rose 24–35% between 2023 and 2025¹. The city's own report admits these hikes “outpace household income growth” and “likely create some affordability challenges for area renters.” No kidding, especially with a 1% vacancy rate that gives landlords virtually unlimited leverage. Meanwhile, the number of mortgages in Northeast Tennessee that are “seriously underwater” jumped 29% last year². More and more of our neighbors owe the bank more than their home is worth, making it impossible for them to sell or refinance.

This is the squeeze of finance capital. On the rental side, institutional investors and algorithms extract maximum payment from people with no alternatives. On the ownership side, the same financialization inflates prices beyond what wages support, leaving working people in mortgages they can get out of. The renter and the underwater homeowner aren't in different situations; they're in different rooms of the same burning house.

This financialization of everything, housing included, creates a society where a tiny minority owns the means of shelter, the resources, and the credit, while the vast majority works merely to service that ownership. Such a society is inherently unstable. It generates contradictions that cannot be resolved within the framework of democratic consent.

The Contradictions That Finance Capital Cannot Resolve

The first contradiction is that financialization extracts value

without creating it. A private equity firm that buys apartment complexes, strips maintenance, and raises rents isn't building anything, it's siphoning wealth upward, steadily destroying the purchasing power and stability of the working class that the whole system depends on.

The second is that finance capital needs the state desperately—for bailouts, property rights enforcement, contract law, and suppression of labor unrest—while simultaneously needing to convince people that the state is their enemy and the market is freedom. This is why the same political movement that defunds public housing also demands the Federal Reserve protect asset values.

The third is that financialized housing turns a basic human need into a speculative asset class. The conditions that make housing *profitable*—scarcity, rising prices—are the same conditions that make it *inaccessible*. The system cannot solve the housing affordability crisis without devaluing the asset that millions of people's retirement savings are tied up in. It is structurally incapable of fixing the problem it created.

When Reform Is Off the Table

These contradictions don't stay abstract for long. They show up as evictions, as skipped medications, as payday loans taken out to cover rent. This misery hardens into anger, and anger, when it has nowhere to go, becomes fuel.

When that fuel starts to smoke, the owning class has two options: concede reforms, like with the New Deal, or redirect the anger toward scapegoats—immigrants, trans people, women—while consolidating control.

This second option is fascism. It's deployed when the ruling class calculates that conceding reforms would cost too much. They capture the

state instead, and make sure the machinery of government serves the extractors, not the people.

The post-2008 period essentially foreclosed the reform option: The political center spent fifteen years bailing out banks while telling working people that austerity was responsible governance. That credibility is gone. When the anger finally has nowhere legitimate to go, the scapegoating infrastructure—already built, already funded—is right there waiting.

Fascism isn't a personality type or a brand of meanness, though it can feel that way. It is a political response to the contradictions that finance capital creates and cannot resolve any other way.

The Ground Is Ours

Here's what finance capital cannot do: it cannot pick up your neighborhood and move it somewhere more profitable. Capital is stuck here, which means it's accountable here—if we make it so. That's where our power lives, and we don't need to wait for an election to use it. We can organize now, right where we live, starting with the most basic act: talking with our neighbors.

The financiers count on us feeling powerless. But they need our neighborhoods, our towns, and our labor. They cannot extract wealth from a place if the people of that place refuse to be extracted from.

The road back from fascism runs through our home. When we take back control of where and how we live, we starve the beast. The rentier class knows this. It's time we all did too. ■

JOIN DSA TODAY

The ruling class fears nothing more than regular people getting organized. Join DSA to turn your anger into solidarity, action, and a socialist future worth fighting for. Let's build working class power and bring real democracy to our society and economy!

Visit dsausa.org to learn more & join today, then get involved with our Northeast Tennessee chapter!

APPALACHIAN LIBERATION LIBRARY

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Leftist Lending Library
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War, Weapons, the Working Class—and BWXT

Four weeks into Operation Epic Fury, the bombs are still falling, the Strait of Hormuz is closed, and the war on Iran shows no signs of restraint. While pundits debate geopolitics, a simpler, more brutal transaction is taking place. The working class of multiple nations is paying for war with their labor, their safety, and their lives, while a transnational capitalist class collects the dividends.

War doesn't merely "cost" the working class; it devours us. In the United States, it is the children of working-class communities who are sent to the front lines, young people whose futures are consumed by a conflict that serves interests far removed from their own.

In Iran, the cost is even more pointed. Over 1,500 Iranians have been killed¹ in the bombing campaign so far. Their love, labor, and futures have been stolen from their families, their communities. The Iranian working class, already squeezed by years of sanctions, now finds itself ground up in a conflict it neither chose nor can escape.

The financial dimension of war is theft. In the U.S., nearly \$900 million per day² is being extracted from the public treasury and funneled directly into the pockets of defense contractors. The \$11.3 billion³ in munitions expended in the first week of Operation Epic Fury represents a staggering transfer of wealth. Each Tomahawk missile is a product of human labor—factory workers, engineers, supply chain workers—whose efforts have been directed not toward housing, healthcare, or climate stability, but toward destruction.

When the munitions run low, the Pentagon will demand more. Public money flows to private hands; human labor is converted into instruments of death; the defense industry grows fat while communities crumble.

Jonesborough, Tennessee: Pentagon Subcontractor

The supply chain for those weapons passes much closer

to home than you may realize. Defense contractor BWXT plans to construct a high-purity depleted uranium (HPDU) manufacturing plant here in Northeast Tennessee.

When operational, BWXT's plant will produce 300 metric tons of HPDU annually⁴; enough for more than a million rounds of 30mm armor-piercing incendiary ammunition.

BWXT's third-quarter 2025 revenue reached \$866 million, with government operations accounting for 71% of that total⁵. This is public money, generated by the labor of American workers, being funneled into corporate profits. The product of that labor? Depleted uranium weapons already being deployed in active war zones.



Contamination Here and Abroad

The munitions made from HPDU do not simply disappear after a conflict ends. They fracture, ignite, and scatter as radioactive and chemically toxic contamination. The fine uranium oxide dust produced when they burn is readily inhaled, retained in the lungs, and deposited in lymph nodes, bones, the brain, and reproductive organs. It travels by wind and rain, settles into soil and waterways, and enters the food chain. The contamination persists across generations.

The same risks come with the production. Processing HPDU

generates small, insoluble uranium particulates. Inhaling or ingesting this DU dust causes kidney damage, while long-term exposure may lead to lung cancer or reproductive harm. DU in soil creates contamination that lingers for decades. Waste from processing raises levels of radioactive material in water—particularly for the families who live closest to the facility. The profits from all of this flow to BWXT and its shareholders. The contaminated groundwater, the radioactive emissions, the ever-present possibility of accidents: those stay right in Jonesborough.

Just this week ten out of fifteen members of the Washington County Board of Commissioners voted to rezone agricultural land—surrounded by homes, farms, and schools—to industrial, because BWXT wanted it and because these commissioners, apparently, like to feel good about producing weapons of war, whatever the cost to the community.

Here is what makes that vote especially hard to swallow. BWXT already has industrially zoned property suited for expanding its operations. "Inside the existing M2 industrial zone...we have enough footprint to fit in the expansion," BWXT's President of Tennessee Operations Ron Dailey has told WJHL⁶. The company indicated it would proceed with expansion on that property if the rezoning wasn't approved. And at the March 23 meeting, we learned that the projected job numbers and tax revenue would be the same wherever they put their facility. Two-thirds of our commissioners gave away use of land that belonged to this community anyway, to a corporation whose product is meant for no other purpose than killing.

Our Fight Isn't on the Front Lines

The opposition and organization that has arisen here against BWXT represents a refusal to accept that our community

should be sacrificed for the profit of the military-industrial complex.

The war on Iran and the expansion in Jonesborough are two sides of the same coin, one that connects the Pentagon to the war machine's shareholders, the battlefield to the backyard, and the extraction of wealth and health from working communities to the enrichment of the billionaire class.

The American worker has no enemy in the Iranian worker. The enemy is the system that extracts labor, converts it into destruction, and distributes the plunder among the ruling class. The workers who manufacture missiles in Connecticut, or depleted uranium in Tennessee, and the workers who dodge them in Tehran share a class interest in disarmament, in peace, in the redirection of resources to life-sustaining purposes.

The trillions spent on war could fund the transformation to renewable energy, free healthcare and education, dignified housing. That wealth was created by workers. It belongs to us.

The only force capable of ending this cycle is workers themselves, organized across borders, united not by nationality but by class, and determined to build a world where human labor is no longer converted into human death.

The international working class did not start this war. We will, though, as always, pay its bill: in blood, in futures, and in the slow erosion of the public resources that might have built something worth living for.

What is being done to us—in Tennessee, in Tehran—is not a tragedy that fell from the sky. It is a decision made by the powerful. It can be unmade by the many. ■

The *Northeast Tennessee Organizer* is a publication of the Northeast Tennessee chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. All labor is donated.

¹Citations for articles in this issue: northeasttndsa.org/newspaper/issue5