

Paul Whitehead (2025)



Paul Whitehead served 28 years in the office of the General Counsel of the Steelworkers Union in Pittsburgh, PA. In 2009, he moved to Penn State to join its School of Labor and Employment Relations. He retired in 2021, and since that time has served as a trustee to several benefit funds for retired Steelworkers.

Whitehead was born in Chicago and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin. Like his five siblings, he attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He paid for college via summer jobs in his hometown's paper mills, where he gained a deep appreciation for how unions and collective bargaining underpin a healthy democracy. He earned his undergraduate degree in labor studies in 1973 and masters of science in industrial relations in 1975. He received his J.D. cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1978 and clerked the following year for federal District Court Judge James Doyle of the Western District of Wisconsin.

In 1980, Whitehead joined the Steelworkers legal department, where his work spanned labor, benefits, Chapter 11 bankruptcy, and trade law. Whitehead engaged in collective bargaining with managers from the steel, iron ore, can, rubber and tire, oil, and paper industries. He rose to become the Steelworkers' General Counsel in 2001 and served in that capacity until 2009, when he moved to Penn State to teach. Over his 28 years with the Union, the Steelworkers grew through organizing and mergers to become the largest industrial union in North America.

As a professor of practice at Penn State, Whitehead taught labor and employment law, collective bargaining, and-- as a resident professor in the Penn State Law School-- the law of employee benefits. Upon his retirement from Penn State, the School of Labor and Employment Relations established a teaching award in his name. Whitehead sat on the Board of Trustees of the Community College of Allegheny County from 1994 to 2007 and chaired the Board from 1998 to 2007.

In retirement, Whitehead serves on boards of trustees for retirement benefit plans, including the AFL-CIO Mutual Benefit Fund; the Retirees of Continental Tire, N.A. Health Care Trust; and the Retirees of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company Health Care Trust.

He is married to the former Marcia Thompson of Pittsburgh. Their son John works as a petroleum engineer in Houston, Texas. In his free time, Whitehead enjoys reading, music, exercise, political volunteer work, and travel.

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