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The Honorable Shelley C. Chapman  
One Bowling Green  
Courtroom 621  
New York, New York 10004-1408

Dear Judge Chapman:

As a retired coal miner I am writing today to respectfully ask you to consider my life story when you are deliberating on the change of venue request made by the UMWA in the Patriot Coal bankruptcy hearing.

I began my mining career in 1975 when I was 17 years old. I chose not to go to college, but to stay at home and continue our family's legacy as a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation coal miner. Both of my grandfathers and my father were proud to be part of the West Virginia coal mining family, they instilled in me a belief that mining is a honorable profession. In 1989, I became a proud member of the Arch Coal family. During my years of employment at Arch Coal, I earned a good living and was able to provide for and meet my obligations to my family. When I suffered a back injury and health related problems, I had to retire from the job that I loved. Now at 54 years old, I have had 2 back surgeries and was recently diagnosed with gastric cancer, which I understand is significantly more common in coal miners. I am currently on several medications, chemotherapy and traveling back and forth to Houston, Texas for treatment. Now I am being told I am in danger of losing my insurance, and health benefits because Patriot Coal wants to file for bankruptcy. This would be emotionally and financially devastating to me and my family.

What I find most ironic, is how adamant Arch Coal was in 1989 about treating their employees as family. If this were a family court case and a parent wanted to walk away from their obligations to their sick children in order to start a new family, there would be outrage at their callousness. It is my opinion that there is no difference. I gave Arch Coal the best years of my life and health, and I now need for Patriot Coal to stand up to their word and honor their obligation to me, by continuing my insurance and benefits. I hope that after reading my story and those of so many of my mining brothers and sisters, that you will rule to send this coal family matter back to our home court in Charleston, West Virginia.

Sincerely,



Byron Vernatter