



August 10, 2013

Your Honorable Judge Kathy A. Surratt-States
Thomas F. Eagleton US Courthouse
111 S. 10th Street, 4th Floor
St. Louis, MO 63102

I cannot imagine the cases and decisions you have been involved in making during your career. None of them could have been easy. It is my belief that most people involved in our judicial system sacrifice much in order to assist the masses in being treated fairly.

Which is why it is troubling to say the least when one considers the recent bankruptcy ruling for "Patriot" Coal.

My father is an 80 year old retired coal miner. It was not an easy job. My dad went underground in a dangerous situation every day for many, many years. He did this to provide for his family. He missed holidays for that extra shift. He exposed himself to black lung, COPD, emphysema, etc. In doing so he also provided warmth, electricity, comfort etc. for millions of people. Including you and your family. Including the owners and board members of "Patriot" Coal.

Is it fair that my dad and numerous miners like him now will lose their health insurance because of the greed and selfish behavior of a few? No, it is not. Is it fair that these miners and their families gave up short term gain of pay increases for years to secure the future wellbeing of their families in the form of a fair pension and decent health insurance? No, it is not.

Can you help me understand your decision? When did it become legal or moral to break a promise? A contract? These men and women did their part. They worked, they saved, they planned, and they sacrificed. Then they lost. They lost big. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to suddenly find yourself or your parents at 80 trying to purchase health insurance?

Put yourself in their place. Or in my place. Could your parents suddenly lose all their benefits? Could you or your spouse? I guess it could happen to any of us.

Coal mining is a dirty business. It has inherent risks. Most of them health related. I don't believe any of the miners of my father's generation would have ever suspected the biggest risk was being lied to and cheated by the companies they worked for or ignored by the judicial system we all count on to fight for us.

There was a time a person's word meant something. I realize companies need to make a profit. I understand businesses have difficulties. I also am aware that some companies do things that may be seemingly "legal", but that doesn't make it right. They may combine several companies and rename them and then declare bankruptcy. They may then call themselves by another name. They may then refuse to follow through on their promises.

Then honest, hardworking people, such as my father, part of the "greatest generation" have to scramble in the "sunset" of their lives to provide and protect themselves and their spouses. My folks never expected to be given anything. They do deserve what they worked so hard for.

They deserve to be treated fairly. They deserve what they were promised.

In the future, coal mining may be a thing of the past. Other sources of energy will be an option. This decision isn't really about coal or coal mining. It is about hardworking people doing their job, negotiating contracts year after year to secure their families health and future and then being told "So sorry, no can do".

That sucks. That isn't fair. That is wrong.

Can you, Judge Surratt-States, help make it right?

I thank you for taking the time to read this. I thank you for making this terrible wrong right.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Leeper Evans

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