

October 2, 2012

The Honorable Shelly C. Chapman,

In writing this I am in hope of giving you a better understanding of the life of a coalminer and his family. To that point; what they sacrifice and endure to maintain a living. With the understanding that their benefits will be there for them and their families if they do not survive.

My husband is first generation Italian coalminer. His father came over and worked in the mines and died in 1953 when my husband was four years old. At that time they could not connect his death to working in the mines. Yet he died of pneumonia.

In our area coalmining was the main source of employment. Sorry to say, you could feel lucky to get on at the mines. Lucky to have good pay and good benefits.

When I first married my husband, he was working second shift and over time every night. So I knew what time he would come home and it took me months, maybe a year to fall asleep before he came home. Then I got to where I could fall asleep, but would wake at the time he was due home. Where we lived we could hear the mine whistle calling change of shift. What you did not want to hear was the whistle any other time. I'll never forget the night the whistle sounded an alarm and my husband did not come home. There's no one to call, you just have to wait, and wait. The things that run through your mind are horrible. Knowing they are three hundred feet underground. Knowing that piece of roof had fallen on his back before, the scar better there than had it hit his head and killed him. Knowing he had seen horrible injuries to friends and even a death.

When he finally came home the next morning he told me there had been a fire and if people had not stayed to help put it out there would be no work the next day.

I have watched my husband get up every morning and cough up black sputum for years. But he was a lucky one that it cleared after several years of retirement. What about all those that have died and left widows and are now suffering from black lung?

I have seen many widows and children of black lung and other mine related deaths and injuries. They have been able to continue on due to their benefits.

Please, please do not let another large company turn our history back in time.

Our great country cannot continue to allow the corporate world to see only the money. We are here; we are people who have built this country on our broken backs and deaths. We only ask for what we have always worked for and were legally given. Our benefits.

If we lose our benefits I will be one of the many that will have to try and go on social security disability.

All we ask is you to consider the real people that are involved, there are thousands suffering. Please do not contribute to their suffering by allowing their benefits to be removed.

Sincerely

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