

Your Honor, Please take a moment of your time to read <sup>letter</sup> sent to you by retired miners previously employed by Peabody Coal Co.

A lot of retired coal miners are at an age that puts their health at risk, and myself am 67 years old.

Many miners have old injuries, and health problems related to the many years of underground mining.

From the time I started to work for Peabody Coal in (1968). Our health care was guaranteed, and that was one reason I stayed with Peabody for (32 years).

Health care promised to my family and myself inspired me to choose coal mining for a profession. I have other skills, electrician, welder, equipment operator.

The promise of health care was enough for me to choose underground work rather than working outside in the fresh air and sunshine.

Because of old injuries I am totally disabled by Disability Social Security ruling. Without the coverage provided by contract with the coal Co. considering private plus would be impossible, and cost prohibitive.

Your decision will impact my wife as well as myself along with thousands of other families.

Along with this note I am sending a letter to briefly explain conditions miners face

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on a daily basis. I sincerely hope you  
can find time to read it along with  
many others!

Your consideration in this matter  
issue will be greatly appreciated

Respectfully, Charles Merrill

October 6, 2012

The Honorable Shelley C. Chapman,  
I am writing this letter in an attempt to convey to you how very important your trusted decision is to the thousands of retired coal miners. First I would like to take this opportunity to explain the conditions of underground coal mining.

Most conditions in the underground mining are very dangerous. Roof falls are daily occurrences, that have to be dealt with by adding a lot of roof support. This condition puts people's lives at risk.

Coal dust is an issue causing black lung. Thanks to "MSHA" Mine Safety Health Administration, conditions have improved since the years that the retired miners were underground.

Explosions caused by methane gas, along with improper ventilation can possibly kill everyone in the mine. In some cases the explosions have caused damage to the outside.

There are actual cases where five or six hundred men have died in just one explosion. For

example, a mine in West Frankfort, Illinois exploded and killed 500 men. Mangrove mine in West Virginia killed 203 in an explosion. These are just two examples of how dangerous underground coal mining is.

Electrical shock is another hazard. Men are constantly having to handle electrical cables with voltages ranging from 440 ac volts to 950 ac volts with some electricity going as high as 4,160 ac volts.

When working underground there is a lot of machinery that creates a lot of noise that ramps high in all kinds of decibels. Until some years ago dynamite was used to break down the coal from the coal face. The dynamite created a lot of dust and was very hard on the hearing of the miners. Today many coal miners are having trouble hearing, it also caused tinnitus, I know because I am one of them.

Water is a problem in many mines. Water can be ankle deep, knee deep or even higher. Work is performed regardless of water conditions. Miners often

wear knee high rubber boots and  
rain suits. I personally  
experienced this when the long  
wall flooded at Peabody Camp  
# 11 in Morganfield, Kentucky.  
I had to carry a pump into  
water chest deep, with a roof height  
not quite head high.

Moving equipment is another  
thing that caused a lot of  
injury and even death. Miners  
often die, lose limbs, or become  
paralyzed due to injuries from  
mobile equipment.

These are only a few examples  
of the hazards of underground  
mining that the miners face  
daily to produce the coal so  
the coal company can make a  
profit. Peabody Coal and its  
subsidiaries are the largest in the  
world!

The coal is needed to produce  
electricity to serve the public  
and industries with the power  
necessary for daily life.  
Without the coal there would be  
a lot of black outs all over the  
country. Most of the electricity  
used in and around New York  
is transmitted by transmission  
lines from coal fired generating  
plants, I do not know of any

coal mines that actually exist  
in New York.

Until a better solution is  
provided we need to utilize the  
coal reserves we have. We have  
more coal reserves than oil in  
the country. We buy oil from  
other countries not coal.

I along with many others  
think the government has  
dragged their feet when it comes  
to using clean coal. Clean  
coal is possible, if the government  
would do what it can to make  
it possible.

There are a lot of issues I  
would like to convey to you,  
but I know you are very busy  
and your time is limited, but  
I would like to tell you something  
about myself.

I worked for 32 years for  
Piedmont Coal Co. not one day  
for Patrol or Magnum. I had  
bolted for several years in low  
coal, low enough that I worked  
on my knees during my whole  
shift. This is one of the most  
dangerous jobs in the Mine.  
Bolting is very strenuous and  
very intrusive on a persons  
hearing.

I was forced to end my

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career early because of arthritis in most of my joints including my spine. Both of my knees have had to be totally replaced, which was what put the final touch to the end. I have a right foot that was crushed in the mine, I have permanent nerve damage to the point that I can not feel the gas pedal enough when I drive. It is to the point that I have to watch my speedometer to avoid a speeding ticket, or use the cruise control, which I do most often.

My condition is very uncomfortable, just to wear a shoe and to walk a length of time. But, I live with it along with a stinging sensation that is often there.

While working bolting, I lost a digit from my right hand, middle finger. The third finger is curved and will not straighten due to the same accident. I have lost teeth because a chair flew back and hit me in the front of the mouth. I have eye injuries due to metal and dust from coal. Coal miners have given life

and times working for Peabody Coal Co., and like all other coal companies, the dollars in profit is their main concern.

The move to Patriot, Arch & Magnum Coal Co's from Peabody is a move that was set up to fail. It is very strange that only mines that have contracts with the Union to provide health insurance and health care were put in this pool. This in my opinion is a plan to get out of the agreements that were made with the workers and members of the United Mine Workers of America.

In closing I would like to thank you for your time and the service you provide.

I am a veteran, I served three years of the Vietnam War. I am totally



disabled according to the  
Social Security System.

I believe in the Justice  
System! I also believe  
you will give this matter very  
serious consideration, and  
your decision will be what is  
fair for the people who have  
given so much. So the utilities  
can produce electricity for the  
good of the citizens and the  
Nation. Thank you very much

Respectfully,  
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