

KENNETH WARREN STRIBLING
before the
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOLVENCY OF MULTIEMPLOYER
PENSION PLANS
Hearing on
“How the Multiemployer Pension System Affects Stakeholders”
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Thank you Senator Johnson for your kind words, I am humbled and appreciate your support.

Good morning. My name is Kenneth Stribling I am a retired Teamster from Local 200 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I am also co-chair of the Milwaukee Committee to Protect Pensions, which is one of many committees across the country that are part of the National United Committee to Protect Pensions, the NUCPP.

First, I want to thank you, Senator Hatch and Senator Brown, Senator Portman, Congressman Neal and the other members of the Joint Select Committee, for inviting me to be here today and being so supportive. Also, I am very honored that my Senator, Ron Johnson introduced me. Thank you again Senator for those kind words. He and Senator Baldwin from the great state of Wisconsin have been very supportive of our efforts to save our pensions. They recognize, as you do, that fixing underfunded pension plans is a bipartisan issue.

Let me tell you my story, I worked for 30 years for four different trucking companies that paid into the Central States Pension Fund. I retired from USF Holland in 2010. My benefits moved with me because my employers paid into the same plan, ensuring that I'd have a secure pension for life.

I need this pension income more than ever. I am married with 5 adult children, 7 grandchildren and 2 more on the way. I love my family dearly, and thanks to my pension, I'm not a financial burden to them but instead my wife and I have been able to help out our kids and grandkids with childcare and support when life's emergencies happen.

I will never forget the day I received my letter from the Central States Pension Fund with the news that they were applying to the Treasury Department to reduce my monthly pension benefit by 55%. Life changed that day. You have no idea what it's like to be retired on a fixed income and suddenly be told your monthly check would be cut in half. I was devastated and so was my family.

After receiving this shocking news, I felt something needed to be done. I joined with other retirees to stop cuts and find solutions and we have been at it ever since. I felt compelled to become involved in the movement to find a solution to the pension crisis. Not only would a reduction radically change my retirement years but also affect countless households across the country. This involvement has also changed our lives.

I have been through contract negotiations when we have sacrificed wage increases to have better health and pension benefits. I believe we have done our part with shared sacrifice. In addition to giving up wage increases we often endured tough work conditions, long shifts and cold nights on unheated docks and manual labor.

Another day I will never forget is November 17, 2017. The day we learned my wife, Beverly, has terminal pancreatic cancer. Stage 4 cancer that has spread to her liver. My wife is a fighter and plans on outliving her current diagnosis. She also is retired, after working nearly 30 years as a teacher. Fortunately we have a close and supportive family. Beverly's son and daughter-in-law put their careers on hold and moved back to Milwaukee to spend time with her and help with her care. Bev's sister retired and also moved home. And with the help of all our children and extended family I have been able to continue to remain active in this movement which includes travel and meetings. My involvement has taken much of my time and energy and at times I thought I couldn't continue. But my wife made me promise to stay committed until a solution was found.

I live with a very uncertain future. My wife is dying, we have mounting medical bills, and the stress is now impacting my health. I was recently diagnosed with an enlarged heart. This is due to high blood pressure and stress. My heart is working overtime just to keep up. My wife is worried I may end up like Butch Lewis, one of the co-founders of this movement, whose death inspired the legislation named after him.

Let me be clear, my story is unique but I am like any other retiree impacted by the possibility of a benefit reduction. Life didn't stop when our letters arrived. We all endure life's storms; illness, deaths, and physical and mental health challenges. Now we all have the added burden of traveling through our golden years with an uncertain financial future. A future that had been promised to us throughout our working years.

I am supporting the Butch Lewis Act, which seems like the right solution. I am asking you today to think and pray on what is the right thing to do for thousands of faithful, hard-working actives and retirees, many of whom have served our country in the military.

My wife would have liked to be here today but she only has a few good days between chemo cycles. She is however my rock, she fully supports me in this work and wants you to know how crucial your decision will be for millions of Americans. Her heart is here with me and will be forever.

In closing, I want to thank the Joint Select Committee members for agreeing to find a solution to this pension crisis. This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of fairness, of keeping promises to

working Americans who did everything right – and are simply asking you to preserve what is due to us.

Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.