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SENATORS HEAR HOW CENTRAL STATES PROPOSAL WOULD DEVASTATE FAMILIES

Teamsters' Widow Tells Committee How Cuts Will Alter Lives

(WASHINGTON) – The Teamsters today hailed the Senate Finance Committee for holding a hearing looking into the need to reform multiemployer pension plans like the Central States Pension Fund, which has proposed slashing the benefits of retirees by as much as 70 percent.

Lawmakers heard the story of Ohio resident Rita Lewis, whose husband Butch was a 40-year truck driver for USF Holland and a leader of the Retired Teamsters of Southwest Ohio Pension Committee. Butch Lewis, facing a 40 percent pension reduction himself, fought to stop these unfair retirement cuts for months before he tragically died of a stress-induced massive stroke last New Year's Eve.

But Mrs. Lewis also detailed the struggles of countless other retired Teamsters who are facing financial ruin if these retirement cuts are implemented. Many would lose their homes, not be able to cover their prescription drug costs and struggle to make ends meet if the Treasury Department were to approve Central States' application in May.

Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa said these true-life stories make it clear what is at stake with these proposed pension cuts and he urged lawmakers to fix the problem so the 270,000 affected people will be able to live their golden years with dignity.

"These people gave up higher pay and vacation time while they worked so they could build a nest egg for retirement," Hoffa said. "They planned for their future and now are being penalized for it. A promise is a promise. Authorities must stop Central States from implementing this devastating plan."

John Murphy, an IBT International Vice President and Secretary-Treasurer of Local 122, said if the Treasury Department looks closely at Central States' numbers, it can't allow the proposal to move forward. He also said lawmakers must overturn the Multiemployer Pension Reform Act (MPRA) included in an omnibus appropriations bill in late 2014 that allows such dire pension cuts to be made.

"Congress needs to reach a bipartisan consensus that repeals MPRA and reinstates pension law protections in place for four decades," Murphy said. "I was pleased to hear that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle understand changes are needed to help improve retirement security."

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women throughout the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. Visit www.teamster.org for more information. Follow us on Twitter @Teamsters and "like" us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/teamsters.