

August 28, 2019

The Honorable Patrick Pizzella  
Acting Secretary  
United States Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210-0001

Dear Acting Secretary Pizzella,

I write regarding a particularly troubling situation affecting a significant number of coal miners and their families in my home state of Kentucky. Several weeks ago, Blackjewel LLC, a coal company with nearly 1,700 employees nationwide, filed for bankruptcy. Their workers, many of which reside in Kentucky, now not only have to grapple with the sudden reality of no longer being able to provide for their families, but many of them have also discovered that their employer failed to pay their earned wages for nearly three weeks of work. This gross incompetence and failure to pay these hard workers has left them stranded, with little recourse and few options to rectify this wrong.

The Department's legal support of coal workers in successfully winning a temporary restraining order to halt shipments of coal from Blackjewel until wages are paid was a positive development. Your consistent communication with my office on this matter is appreciated and I look forward to our continued collaboration to help these workers from the Commonwealth.

In particular, I want to express my full support for National Dislocated Worker Grant funding under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act for which my constituents may be eligible. While the Blackjewel bankruptcy has affected 1,100 coal workers in Central Appalachia, the impact on the small community of Harlan County, Kentucky has been significant. I ask the Department to do everything in its power to support Kentucky's impacted workers through this difficult and uncertain time. Any assistance I can provide the Department in connecting with the proper state and local officials, I will provide.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to your response, which I will share with the pertinent state and local entities.

Sincerely,



MITCH McCONNELL  
UNITED STATES SENATOR

MM/qs