



WYTV Mahoning Valley Ohio

## Delphi Retirees Testify Locally to Congress

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Hundreds of Delphi salaried retirees sat in the auditorium of Canfield High School Tuesday, hoping a field hearing of the U.S. House Financial Services Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee would bring them one step closer to justice.

"In many ways they represent the great recession that has been brought to our doorstep," said Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher.

Fisher, along with members of Congress and numerous Delphi salaried retirees, spoke to the subcommittee regarding Delphi's pension plan since the company filed bankruptcy. A major complaint among all witnesses was that UAW and Delphi hourly retirees' benefits were maintained, while the salaried employees pensions were cut.

Congressman Chris Lee (R-NY) said the retirees deserve action and investigation as to why this unfair and unjust action was made. There are 20,000 families immediately affected by this issue, he added.

"It's an issue of fairness," Lee said. "Nobody's looking for anything special; they're looking for fairness."

Valley Congressman Charlie Wilson (D-St. Clairsville) said Delphi retirees in his district have been hit hard. Wilson cited the intertwined history of Delphi and GM as a large factor in this issue.

When GM was forced into bankruptcy in 2009 promises were broken and lives were shattered, he said. He added that this is not the first time this happened:

"You worked hard for benefits you saw crumble before your eyes, Wilson said. "...The steel industry is the same type of horror story."

Valley Congressman Tim Ryan (D-Niles) said it was wrong for Delphi to aggressively push workers into

early retirement after the company filed for bankruptcy. The youngest workers were promised the most and are seeing the biggest cuts, he added.

"The direct impact is enormous," Ryan said. "I've spoken to numerous retirees and their families have been devastated."

He added that the losses will flow to everyone in the region.

Bruce Gump, Delphi retiree, said he worked for General Motors for 23 years and Delphi for 10 years as a senior engineer before he was involuntarily terminated. He was assured that his pension was cared for, he said.

"To the executives of the company and the United States Treasury Auto Task Force, we were nothing but a commodity to be thrown out like yesterday's trash," Gump said. "And so our government determined we did not have enough commercial value or political power to deserve any protection during the treasury orchestrated bankruptcy."

Gump said what may be more devastating than losing a pension he was promised is what not restoring the pension would do to the economy. Billions of national and millions of state tax dollars will be lost, on top of expensive bankruptcies and foreclosures, he said.

Mary Ann Hudzic is in the same situation as Gump. She also said that through bankruptcy, she and others were assured their pensions were securely funded.

That turned out to not be the case. After GM filed for bankruptcy, the government, with tax-payer dollars, decided who would and would not be allowed to retain their retirement benefits, she said. She said she's not unhappy for those in the UAW who have received their full pension, many are her friends, but she is perplexed as to why she was treated differently.

"It was decided that I, and those like me, had no commercial value," Hudzic said. "My dedication and years of loyal service were irrelevant to those companies, but worse, irrelevant to our own government who agreed I had no commercial value."

During a tearful statement, she discussed the medical issues she and her self-employed husband face-- he is a pain patient and she has reactions to certain medical supplies. The cost of much-needed treatments can be up to three times higher than normal procedures and are often not covered by insurance.

She compared this situation to the collapse of the local steel industry decades ago. It is inhumane, she said, to rip away pensions when those people are unable to replace income.

She and her counterparts have written thousands of letters and emails and made endless phone calls to solve this problem. This is their third hearing in nine months, and Hudzic's looking for action, she said.

We did nothing to be deserve to be robbed of our hopes, our dreams, our futures," she said. "Mr. Chairman [Dennis Moore], I sincerely request that this is the hearing to end all hearings."