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**Butch Lewis Act funds save Central States Pension Fund – and hundreds of thousands of workers’ and retirees’ pensions for the future**

The Pension Rights Center and thousands of retired truck drivers, warehouse workers and spouses across the country are celebrating the approval of an infusion of funds that will keep the Central States Pension Fund going strong for decades to come.

The White House [announced](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/12/08/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-historic-relief-to-protect-hard-earned-pensions-of-hundreds-of-thousands-of-union-workers-and-retirees/) today that the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) approved the Central States Pension Fund’s application for more than $35.8 billion, the largest of the Special Financial Assistance (SFA) grants provided under the Butch Lewis Emergency Pension Plan Relief Act (BLA). The BLA was signed into law by President Biden as part of the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021 to save financially struggling multiemployer plans.

“This is a special and significant milestone,” said Karen Friedman, Executive Director of the Pension Rights Center. “PRC’s advocacy to save multiemployer plans began years ago when it teamed up with Central States’ retirees to start a grassroots campaign to stop cuts to their plan pensions. After many hard-fought years of advocacy against those cuts, the retirees’ efforts were finally rewarded when the BLA was enacted into law. Thanks to the BLA, Central States will have the financial resources to ensure that its 350,000 or more members receive the benefits they earned over their working lives. This is a great victory for the retirees and all workers.”

Congress designed the Butch Lewis Act to protect the pensions of millions of workers and retirees in multiemployer pension plans, which are jointly run by a union and two or more employers. Central States becomes the 40th plan to have its request for funds under the BLA approved by the PBGC, the federal agency tasked under the law to administer BLA funds.

Saving Central States was a key objective of the BLA – since the toppling of such a massive and systemically significant plan would have severely impacted the economies of numerous communities and thrust the PBGC’s multiemployer plan insurance fund into insolvency. Before the BLA became law, the agency had projected that the insurance fund would exhaust its reserves by early 2026.

The substantial amount of funds that Central States will soon receive is expected to keep pension checks flowing to members, retirees and spouses for at least 30 years. If not for the BLA, through a combination of plan and PBGC insurance fund insolvency, they would have lost most or all of their benefits.

For the Central States retirees and spouses, whom the White House said were facing plan pension cuts on average of 60 percent, the PBGC approval of the funds was something to crow about:

“I am beyond thrilled that the PBGC has approved the [SFA] grant for the Central States pension fund,” said Rita Lewis, of Westchester, OH, who became a leader of the grassroots movement after her husband Butch, an acclaimed activist who inspired the new law that was named for him, died while organizing others to resist retiree benefit cuts.

 “We were all facing devastating life-altering cuts,” said Kenneth Stribling, a retired trucker from Milwaukee, “and we became activists to fight against the cuts.” He added that “The Lord answered our cry for help to pass a bill that would keep struggling pension funds solvent. The system worked for us, assuring that millions of workers and retirees will have certainty that their earned retirement benefit will be there for them.” Stribling is the president of the National United Committee to Protect Pensions (NUCPP), the grassroots organization of retiree activists that advocated to inform Congress of the need to protect their pensions.

Mike Walden, a retired truck driver from Cuyahoga Falls, OH, the former president of the NUCCP and a member of the Central States Pension Fund, was facing a pension cut of 55 percent. He was understandably thankful to hear news that the funds had been approved:

*“*Our loyal supporters stood with us as we stood by them. We knew we had to work with all stakeholders to achieve a resolution. We became a stronger team, a loyal team amongst ourselves. We came, we fought, we never gave up, we won.”

Similarly, Cynthia McDaniel, of Appleton City, MO., the activist spouse of Central States member Ted McDaniel, had many people to thank:

*“*We had the fight, the determination and the leadership to see this through. I will always be forever grateful for the great people from the Pension Rights Center, the NUCPP and the powerful pension committees from across this nation with their ‘Never give up” attitude.’”

The PBGC, which is tasked with administering the BLA, has estimated that the law will ultimately provide about $82 billion or more in grants to more than 200 financially struggling plans, covering about 3 million plan members.

PRC continues to help retiree groups and others understand the new law and to monitor its implementation.

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