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April 21st 2006, 300 plus workers at Meridian Automotives here in South East Ohio were locked out of their job. Some people had worked there over 30 years. Most right out of high school. There were many married couples who both lost their job at Meridian. Many of us had family working in this factory. I myself had 7 relatives who worked at Meridian Automotives. We worked 6 days a week mandatory and the maintenance crew 7 days a week. We were all dedicated workers and responsible workers who took pride in their job. April 21st 2006 changed all that. Immediately our lives changed when the company bussed in immigrants to do our job, some were found to be illegal. We stood on the picket line for the better part of two years and along the way many tragic events would unfold. Pretty much all of us began to lose our self worth. The pride we had in working 6 days a week and providing a living for our loved ones was now starting to die off. After about a year on the picket line a beloved Union brother took all he could take and ended his life with a gun. None of us seen this coming especially from this man. Families started to lose their homes within the first year. Depression set in with many of our Union brothers and sisters. Pretty much everyone lost their health care unless provided by a spouse not working at Meridian. To this date many of the workers have not found work and the ones in their 50's and 60's may never find a job in this area or affordable health care. Some of the people who lost their job at Meridian now work as far away as Cincinnati and for some the coal mines of West Virginia. How a company can pack up and leave while ruining the lives of so many people is beyond me. I believe our society have seen it so many times that it really never sinks in until it happens to them. Most people in our area don't even feel we matter at all in this part of the state. The local cable companies force us to watch WV news and we are treated by our state as if we are a part of WV. We need the help from our leaders to change that. We need broad band in our area so people can search the job sites and educate themselves on what they could be doing in our area and the surrounding area. Many of us have family right here in South East OHIO and don't want to move to the city just to have high speed internet and more job opportunities. We need jobs here in our part of the state and we need it now. Many of our Union brothers and sisters have gained employment at the local wal mart cutting their pay in most cases less than half of what they were earning at Meridian Automotives by the hour. Many of us were educated right here in the Appalachians and for many of us we are behind the times when it comes to joining today's work force. We live in the richest country in the world but right in the heart of it all are the Appalachians where I have witnessed the destruction of over 300 lives. We need help here and we need it now. One thing that should've happened from the start was for our leaders to have set up a grief counseling program to help people deal with such major changes in their lives. Companies to be held accountable for their actions

and for the fall out from their actions. We are the heartland and we want to work. We need jobs in our area and we need them now. We need affordable health care and someone to help us with our bills so we can go to school and get the education we need to survive in today's world. I don't want to see anyone else lose their home or even worse lose their life because of this. We are asking for your help here in the Appalachians of OHIO. We need work and we need our self worth back. We want to work, we know what it takes to survive and we need your help to regain our belief system in not only ourselves but in you our leaders and our elected officials. Bring our area up to date with broadband and bring businesses to our area . We believe we can do anything but we do need your help getting started again.