

DEAR CHAIRMAN SCHUMER AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO PRESENT A VOICE IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 466. I COME BEFORE YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF ALL SURVIVORS AND THE MILLIONS WHOSE VOICES WILL NEVER BE HEARD.

MY NAME IS RENEE FIRESTONE. I AM AN AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR.

I WOULD LIKE TO ADDRESS A SERIOUS SITUATION STILL PLAGUING THE SURVIVORS.

FOR YEARS WE HAVE BEEN TRYING, IN VAIN, TO COLLECT ON INSURANCE POLICIES ISSUED TO OUR FAMILIES PRIOR TO WORLD WAR II, AND WHICH REMAIN, TO DATE, LARGELY UNPAID.

WHEN WE TRIED TO MAKE OUR CLAIMS TO THE INSURANCE COMPANIES, THEY HAD THE AUDACITY TO TELL US WE NEEDED ORIGINAL DOCUMENTATION, OR WE WERE ASKED FOR DEATH CERTIFICATES OF THE PEOPLE TO WHOM POLICIES WERE ISSUED.

WERE THEY INSANE?!! DID THESE INSURANCE COMPANIES REALLY BELIEVE THAT AFTER THE NAZIS STRIPPED US OF OUR FAMILIES, OUR RIGHTS, OUR POSSESSIONS, OUR DIGNITY EVEN THE HAIR ON OUR HEADS, THAT THEY WERE STANDING AT THE DOORS OF THE GAS CHAMBERS WHERE THEY MURDERED MY BELOVED MOTHER, HANDING OUT DEATH CERTIFICATES PROVING THEIR CRIMES?

THIS INSULT WOULD HAVE BEEN BAD ENOUGH. BUT WE SURVIVORS . . . AMERICAN CITIZENS . . . MANY OF WHOM, AFTER EMERGING FROM THE DEPTHS OF HELL, CAME HERE AND SERVED IN THE AMERICAN MILITARY . . . ARE BEING DEPRIVED BY OUR OWN GOVERNMENT OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO SEEK REDRESS FROM THE COURTS AND CLAIM WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS.

**YOU CAN NEVER KNOW, MR. CHAIRMAN, JUST HOW PAINFUL –
AND RETRAUMATIZING – THAT IS TO US SURVIVORS.**

**I HEAR WEEKLY FROM MANY OF MY FELLOW SURVIVORS HOW
HURT AND OUTRAGED THEY ARE THAT THIS IS HAPPENING TO
THEM. IN FACT, THEIR FRUSTRATION FINALLY REACHED A
BREAKING POINT AND OVER THE LAST TWO WEEKS HUNDREDS
OF SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS
SIGNED PETITIONS, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH ARE FROM NEW
YORK AND CALIFORNIA. SIGNERS INCLUDE A NOBEL LAUREATE
AND HIS WIFE, A WELL-KNOWN MEDICAL RESEARCHER, AND THE
PETITIONS HAVE GONE TO OTHER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AS
WELL AS THE MEDIA. THEY WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW WHAT
INJUSTICE HAS BEEN HEAPED ON THEM.**

**IN SPITE OF WHAT WAS PROMISED BY ICHEIC, ALLIANZ,
GENERALI, AXA, AND OTHERS WHO ARE THE SOLE REPOSITORIES
OF THE PROOF OF THESE POLICIES, NEVER RELEASED THE FULL
LISTS OF THE INSURED.**

IN MY CASE, I WAS TOLD THAT MY FATHER'S NAME WAS NOT FOUND.

HOWEVER, MY FIRST COUSIN, FRED JACKSON, WAS THE FIRST SURVIVOR WHO APPLIED TO ICHEIC AND COLLECTED FROM GENERALI BECAUSE HE WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND SOME PAPERS IN HIS HOUSE ON HIS RETURN HOME FROM THE DEATH CAMP.

FRED'S MOTHER . . . WAS MY FATHER'S SISTER. WE LIVED IN THE SAME TOWN WHERE MY FATHER BUILT OUR BEAUTIFUL VILLA (WHICH IS STILL THERE), AND WHERE HE HAD A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS IN THE MAIN CENTER OF OUR TOWN.

MY FATHER WAS THE OLDEST SIBLING AND ADVISOR TO THE WHOLE FAMILY. HE AND MY AUNT WERE VERY CLOSE. THERE IS NO WAY THAT MY AUNT HAD INSURANCE AND MY FATHER DID NOT. WHY WOULD HE ADVISE OTHERS TO GET INSURANCE AND NOT GET IT FOR HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY?

ALL WE ARE ASKING FOR IS TO HAVE OUR RIGHTS RESTORED THROUGH SENATE BILL 466 . . . AND TO BE ABLE TO SEEK THE AID OF OUR COURT SYSTEM TO ENFORCE OUR CLAIMS UNDER THESE INSURANCE POLICIES.

WE ARE NOT BEGGARS OR GREEDY, AS SOME CALL US. OUR FAMILIES PAID FOR THESE POLICIES WITH THE SWEAT OF THEIR BROWS, AND NOW WE ONLY WANT WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY OURS.

SHAMEFULLY, MANY JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS STAND IN OPPOSITION TO THE WILL OF THE SURVIVORS AND THE PASSAGE OF SENATE BILL 466. HOW OBSCENE AND REPUGNANT THAT OUR OWN PEOPLE WOULD DENY THE RIGHTS OF THE SURVIVORS!! AND HOW PAINFUL.

WHERE WERE THESE SAME ORGANIZATIONS WHEN WE AND OUR PARENTS, BROTHERS, SISTERS, AND FRIENDS WERE BEING MURDERED?! DID THEY COME TO OUR AID? HOW DARE THEY NOW OPPOSE US.

I WISH THAT MY DEAR FRIEND CONGRESSMAN TOM LANTOS, THE ORIGINAL CHAMPION OF THIS BILL, WOULD BE HERE WITH US TODAY. I KNOW THAT HIS LOVELY WIFE, ANNETTE, IS HERE. I AM GRATEFUL TO BOTH OF THEM.

AGAIN . . . I AM HERE TODAY TO ASK THIS HONORABLE COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT SENATE BILL 466, AND ENSURE ITS SWIFT IMPLEMENTATION WHILE SOME SURVIVORS ARE STILL ALIVE. WE ARE IN OUR 80's and 90's. HALF OF ALL SURVIVORS IN THIS COUNTRY ARE DESTITUTE. MR. CHAIRMAN, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE IN ORDER TO SERVE JUSTICE AND PRESERVE THE DIGNITY OF THE REMAINING SURVIVORS IN OUR FINAL HOURS.

I THANK THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THIS HONORABLE COMMITTEE FOR YOUR TIME AND FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD.

