

Good afternoon. My name is Pamela Rucki, and I'm the executive director of CASA - that sounds for Court Appointed Special Advocates -- for the 6th Judicial District. We provide services for abused and neglected children. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the coal industry for all the loyalty and support they have given us since our conception in 1999. We have been blessed enough to receive support through sponsorships, cash donations, as well as donations of employees' time to help ensure our success at any event that we chose to partake in. My hope today is that we can educate on how much the economic crisis and the financial burden is causing stress on our community. We have witnessed devastation from individuals who have lost their jobs and watched as corporations that supported our community shut their doors. Please understand, when the economy struggles, our family structure struggles. This is when nonprofits see our highest numbers. Our agency is seeing higher rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, depression, suicide rates, abuse, neglect in our communities due to layoffs. The severity of our cases is already increasing, and the stress levels continues to elevate. The need for our services only increases; yet the financial support decreases. This is a huge issue for all of us. Please do not mistake that, just because you do not live in Wyoming, that it will not affect you because it will. The individuals that utilize our services currently do this at no cost to themselves. These children, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents are not just a number or statistic. They are families. They are our community and our future. The children in this country are often told they can do anything. They can be doctors, attorneys, ranchers, teachers, even President. So my question. If our funding goes away, but our numbers increase in the families that need this system and CASA closes its doors, who is going to stand next to our 236 children currently deemed abused and neglected and tell them they no longer have an advocate or a voice fighting for a chance for their circumstances to be different in this, when the economy crashed and resources went away? Please keep that in mind. Thank you for your time.