

BRB No. 11-0719 BLA

LOVERINE RIDER)	
(Widow of DOYLE RIDER))	
)	
Claimant-Respondent)	
)	
v.)	
)	
DANTE COAL COMPANY)	
)	DATE ISSUED: 06/07/2012
Employer-Petitioner)	
)	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF WORKERS')	
COMPENSATION PROGRAMS, UNITED)	
STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR)	
)	
Party-in-Interest)	DECISION and ORDER

Appeal of the Decision and Order Awarding Benefits of Richard A. Morgan, Administrative Law Judge, United States Department of Labor.

Douglas A. Smoot (Jackson Kelly PLLC), Charleston, West Virginia, for employer.

Jonathan Rolfe (M. Patricia Smith, Solicitor of Labor; Rae Ellen James, Associate Solicitor; Michael J. Rutledge, Counsel for Administrative Litigation and Legal Advice), Washington, D.C., for the Director, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, United States Department of Labor.

Before: SMITH, McGRANERY, and HALL, Administrative Appeals Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Employer appeals the Decision and Order Awarding Benefits (2011-BLA-5205) of Administrative Law Judge Richard A. Morgan rendered on a claim filed pursuant to the provisions of the Black Lung Benefits Act, 30 U.S.C. §§901-944 (2006), *amended by* Pub. L. No. 111-148, §1556, 124 Stat. 119 (2010) (to be codified at 30 U.S.C.

§§921(c)(4) and 932(l)) (the Act). This case involves a survivor's claim filed on July 6, 2010.¹ Director's Exhibit 2.

On March 23, 2010, amendments to the Act, affecting claims filed after January 1, 2005, were enacted. The amendments, in pertinent part, revive Section 932(l) of the Act, which provides that a survivor of a miner who was eligible to receive benefits at the time of his or her death is automatically entitled to survivor's benefits without having to establish that the miner's death was due to pneumoconiosis. 30 U.S.C. §932(l).

On April 26, 2011, the Director, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (the Director), moved for a summary decision, asserting that, pursuant to amended Section 932(l), claimant was automatically entitled to benefits as a matter of law, and that there was no genuine issue as to any material fact concerning her entitlement. Employer responded, arguing that amended Section 932(l) should not be applied. The Director replied, reasserting that claimant is entitled to benefits.

In a Decision and Order dated July 1, 2011, the administrative law judge found that claimant satisfied the eligibility criteria for automatic entitlement to benefits pursuant to amended Section 932(l). Accordingly, the administrative law judge awarded benefits.

On appeal, employer challenges the administrative law judge's application of amended Section 932(l) to this case. Claimant and the Director respond in support of the administrative law judge's award of benefits.

The Board's scope of review is defined by statute. The administrative law judge's Decision and Order must be affirmed if it is rational, supported by substantial evidence, and in accordance with applicable law.² 33 U.S.C. §921(b)(3), as incorporated by 30 U.S.C. §932(a); *O'Keefe v. Smith, Hinchman and Grylls Associates, Inc.*, 380 U.S. 359 (1965).

Employer argues that retroactive application of amended Section 932(l) is unconstitutional, as a violation of employer's due process rights and as an unlawful taking of employer's property, in violation of the Fifth Amendment to the United States

¹ Claimant is the widow of the miner, who died on June 2, 2010. Director's Exhibit 4. At the time of his death, the miner was receiving federal black lung benefits pursuant to an award on his lifetime claim. Director's Exhibit 1.

² The record reflects that the miner's last coal mine employment was in West Virginia. Director's Exhibit 1. Accordingly, the Board will apply the law of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. *See Shupe v. Director, OWCP*, 12 BLR 1-200, 1-202 (1989) (en banc).

Constitution. Employer also contends that the operative date for determining eligibility under amended Section 932(l) is the date the miner's claim was filed, not the date the survivor's claim was filed. The arguments employer makes are virtually identical to the ones that the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit recently rejected. *W. Va. CWP Fund v. Stacy*, 671 F.3d 378, 383-89 (4th Cir. 2011), *aff'g Stacy v. Olga Coal Co.*, 24 BLR 1-207 (2010); *see also B&G Constr. Co. v. Director, OWCP [Campbell]*, 662 F.3d 233, 254-63 (3d Cir. 2011). For the reasons set forth in *Stacy*, we reject employer's arguments. We further reject employer's request that we remand this case to the administrative law judge so that it can submit evidence concerning the economic impact of the amendments. *See Stacy*, 671 F.3d at 387; Employer's Brief at 19. Finally, we reject employer's request that this case be held in abeyance pending resolution of the legal challenges to Public Law No. 111-148. *See Stacy*, 671 F.3d at 383 n.2; *Mathews v. United Pocahontas Coal Co.*, 24 BLR 1-193, 1-201 (2010), *recon. denied*, BRB No. 09-0666 BLA (Apr. 14, 2011) (Order), *appeal docketed*, No. 11-1620 (4th Cir. June 13, 2011) (unpub.).

In this case, claimant satisfied her burden to establish each fact necessary to demonstrate her entitlement under amended Section 932(l): That she filed her claim after January 1, 2005; that she is an eligible survivor of the miner; that her claim was pending on March 23, 2010; and that the miner had been held eligible to receive benefits at the time of his death. Therefore, we affirm the administrative law judge's determination that claimant is derivatively entitled to benefits pursuant to amended Section 932(l) of the Act. 30 U.S.C. §932(l).

Accordingly, the administrative law judge's Decision and Order Awarding Benefits is affirmed.

SO ORDERED.

ROY P. SMITH
Administrative Appeals Judge

REGINA C. McGRANERY
Administrative Appeals Judge

BETTY JEAN HALL
Administrative Appeals Judge