

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
KENTUCKY, OWENSBORO DIVISION

**Kathryn Knight v. Peabody Energy, Peabody Coal Company,
Peabody Coal Company LLC, Heritage Coal Company, and Peabody
Energy Corporation**

Knight · No. 4:26-CV-00101-BJB-HBB · Decided April 28, 2026

SUMMARY

The magistrate judge recommends approval of an agreed order awarding \$5,285 in attorney fees and cost reimbursement to resolve Kathryn Knight’s action concerning survivor’s benefits under the Black Lung Benefits Act. The recommendation notes that Knight intends to voluntarily dismiss the action after entry of the agreed order and provides notice of the parties’ right to object.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Owensboro Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	H. Brent Brennenstuhl
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, Owensboro Division
DECIDED	April 28, 2026
DOCKET	4:26-CV-00101-BJB-HBB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a magistrate judge's recommendation concerning the parties' proposed agreed order for attorney fees and expenses in an action arising from Black Lung Benefits Act survivor's benefits.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; findings and recommendation of a magistrate judge rather than a final district-court judgment.

TOPICS

- attorney fees
- costs
- administrative law
- agency adjudication
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the court should approve the parties' proposed agreed order requiring defendants to pay \$5,285 for attorney fees and reimbursement of costs.

HOLDINGS

1. The magistrate judge recommended that the district court sign the proposed agreed order providing for payment of \$5,285 in attorney fees and expenses.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The undersigned perceives no reason why the Court should not endorse the parties' agreement for payment of attorney fees and expenses in furtherance of resolving the case in its entirety."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Kathryn Knight, surviving spouse of coal miner Herman Knight, sought survivor's benefits under the Black Lung Benefits Act after her husband died from black lung disease. Although her initial claim was denied, an administrative law judge awarded benefits, and the Benefits Review Board upheld that decision. The Peabody entities later entered a global settlement involving payment to the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund, while Peabody Energy Corporation remained responsible for auxiliary benefits, including attorney fees and additional compensation. Knight and the defendants subsequently pursued an agreed resolution of the attorney-fee and expense issues in this action.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Knight obtained an award of survivor's benefits before an administrative law judge, and the Benefits Review Board affirmed. The responsible Peabody entities appealed to the Sixth Circuit but later dismissed that appeal as part of a global settlement. In this district-court action, the defendants had not filed answers, and Knight submitted a revised agreed order providing for payment of \$5,285 in attorney fees and costs. The magistrate judge recommended that the district court approve and sign the agreed order, after which Knight indicated she would voluntarily dismiss the action.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Thomas v. Arn, 728 F.2d 813 (6th Cir. 1984), aff'd, 474 U.S. 140 (1985)