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Pratt & Whitney Should Remember, Value Families' Loyalty

By Susan Bysiewicz

In 1940, my father Stanley Bysiewicz left our family's farm in Middletown to work on an assembly line at the Hamilton Standard plant in East Hartford. He helped build propellers for the B-24s used to fight the Nazis and Japanese during World War II — a plane he would later serve on as a bombardier during the war. My aunt Rose also did wartime work at the Pratt & Whitney engine factory in Rocky Hill, earning the nickname "the real Rosie the Riveter." My uncle Pete worked as an electrician at Pratt for 40 years and my cousin John has held various positions at Hamilton Sunstrand in Windsor Locks for the last 20 years.

In Connecticut, thousands of families share my family's story — a proud tradition of hard work and fine craftsmanship, building some of the most sophisticated machinery and cutting edge technology known to humankind. Residents have given their working lives in the employ of several of the companies owned by United Technologies, helping this world renowned leader in the defense industry become one of the most profitable corporations in history.

That is why it is so troubling that Pratt is proposing to close its Cheshire jet engine repair facility and potentially some of its East Hartford operations. This would potentially shift more than 1,000 high-skilled, good-wage jobs overseas and result in the loss of more than 6,000 other jobs — mainly from those small businesses that are suppliers to Pratt. So far, corporate leaders have been unwilling to show financial information that would explain to the International Association of Machinists why this is necessary. Is Pratt & Whitney so willing to turn its back on the thousands of Connecticut working families and small businesses responsible for making the jet engine construction and repair facilities in Cheshire and East Hartford so successful and profitable?

Industries such as jet-engine propulsion and aircraft design form a great incentive to keep highly skilled labor and bright young minds coming into Connecticut for years to come. Pratt's pure profit motives to shutter its facilities in Connecticut and move these jobs overseas for cheaper

labor are short-sighted and will wreak havoc on our economy for at least the next 20 years. There is also a clear national security interest in having the United States maintain qualitative technological superiority in military and civilian aerospace engineering and production, and keeping that industry home-grown. This was a philosophy espoused by the late Harry Gray, former United Technologies CEO. It not only helps our manufacturing base in Connecticut, but it also can galvanize our educational systems to turn out the best trained machinists and engineers, making Connecticut a scientific research hub where new discoveries are made.

Lastly, you get what you pay for. The machinists at Pratt & Whitney deserve every penny they are paid; they work hard and manufacture the best jet engines in the world. Their repair work is second to none. It is their dedication and commitment that has gained the company its stellar reputation resulting in many taxpayer-funded defense contracts (and those from private industry). Could Pratt guarantee the safety and reliability of jet engines our military and civilian airlines rely on if the company decides to make those engines and parts overseas for cheaper labor costs?

Last year alone, Pratt earned nearly \$13 billion dollars in revenue. The machinists who made this profit possible should not have to justify their employment. Before the company decides to pull up the stakes at its facilities in Cheshire and East Hartford and lay off more than 1,000 workers, corporate leaders should at least try to negotiate with the International Association of Machinists in good faith to see if costs can be saved some other way. The company should not, for the sake of higher profits, make a move that would significantly add to the ranks of the unemployed, damage Connecticut's aerospace industry and jeopardize the quality of its product and our national security. Pratt & Whitney should show the same commitment to Connecticut's working families that families like mine have shown to the company.

Susan Bysiewicz is Connecticut's Secretary of the State.