

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

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Washington D.C. --- U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall (D-4th), told a House Committee today that, "Prompt and permanent assistance for disaster victims, must be taken if the public is to believe that the Government is truly concerned about their problems and prepared to move on those problems in a meaningful way."

Rahall made the statement in testimony before the House Committee on Small Business, that is considering legislation introduced by Congressman Rahall which would lower the interest rates on disaster assistance loans.

Congressman Rahall was accompanied to the hearing by five Mingo County residents, who related first-hand accounts of their experiences during the April flood which ravaged southern West Virginia and Kentucky.

The Mingo residents were: Tom Atkins, Bob Applebaum, Emogene Tackett and Sam Kaporales, all of Williamson, and Dan Deaton of Matewan.

Rahall observed, "If anything was worse than the damage and suffering caused by the floods, it was the frustration that resulted as the victims tried to obtain Federal assistance."

Congressman Rahall also voiced displeasure at a comment made in a staff report by the Small Business Committee, that inferred disaster victims requested lower interest rates on loans, after reading numerous news stories. "Not a single person living the flood area had to read a newspaper to realize how bad a situation they were facing. They knew because they were experiencing a major disaster and no one had to tell them what they were going through or what they needed to get back on their feet," Rahall stated.

Congressman Rahall explained his reason for introducing legislation to lower the interest rates on disaster loans, "Lower interest rates will benefit the areas as well as the loan recipients. As more businesses begin full operation again, more people will be able to return to work...lines of the unemployed will decline...and the costs of unemployment checks and other welfare costs will drop."

H.R. 6567, introduced by Congressman Rahall, would lower the interest rates to 3%, from the present rate of 6 5/8%. The measure would also include a forgiveness clause of \$5,000, and provide a maximum grant of \$5,000 for the elderly who live on fixed incomes such as Social Security, Black lung benefits, and Disability insurance.