

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington D.C. --- Fourth District Congressman Nick J. Rahall, (D-WV), said today that he was very pleased with the action taken by the House-Senate Conference Committee to break the deadlock over the Black Lung Reform Act of 1977.

"It seems now that black lung victims throughout this country will soon be able to receive the benefits they deserve, after years of service in the coal mines," Rahall stated. "They have waited all too long for this legislation to become a reality, and I feel I can safely say that the Black Lung reform act of 1977 will be signed into law before the end of the year."

Rahall pointed out that, "The only point of debate, remains the financing of the black lung trust fund. A funding mechanism has been proposed that is based on a 50¢ per ton tax on deep-mined coal, and a 25¢ per ton tax on strip-mined coal." This provision still faces action by both the House and the Senate.

Congressman Rahall observed that final action on the trust fund can be concluded in a matter of days. "It is my understanding that both House and Senate Committees that must approve the trust fund provision, have expressed their desire to see the measure receive quick approval." Rahall pointed out that the funding mechanism is to be attached to legislation presently scheduled for action by Congress in the coming week. "This action will definately expedite final passage of the black lung bill," Rahall stated.

In regards to the basic benefit provisions of the black lung bill, Congressman Rahall said, "Most important of all, the black lung bill will contain the reforms desired by all those who are concerned with the plight of black lung victims. And I for one will look forward to the time when the families and survivors of black lung victims will receive the benefits they have justly deserved for many years."