

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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Washington D.C. --- U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall (D-4th), has introduced legislation that protects disaster victims from having their S.S.I. benefits (Supplemental Security Income), either reduced or terminated.

Congressman Rahall said, "What we have here is a perfect example of the Federal Government giving assistance with one hand, and taking it away with another."

Rahall explained that under present law, "Federal disaster assistance is considered unearned income for those flood victims who receive S.S.I. benefits, and any increase in income results in a reduced S.S.I. payment."

Rahall's bill would exempt disaster assistance compensation as unearned income for 9 months after S.S.I. recipients obtained disaster assistance. "The purpose of the legislation," Rahall pointed out, "is to allow disaster victims sufficient time to replace or repair damaged property without being penalized."

"We are talking about low-income aged, the blind, and the disabled people who receive S.S.I.," Rahall stated, "and these individuals should not have to suffer further by having the government take away benefits they are legally entitled to, because they are flood victims."

Rahall went on to say, "America is a humane nation. We have repeatedly helped others in time of tragedy, whether they live in the United States or elsewhere in the world, but I can yet understand some of the reasoning behind bureaucratic decisions that are of no benefit to those who need help the most."

After contacting the Social Security Administration, Rahall learned that his bill will present no significant administrative problems. "Temporary legislation was enacted after the Teton Dam disaster in Idaho last year which exempted victims from reduced S.S.I. benefits. My bill will make permanent this action to coincide with the declaration of a Federal disaster," Rahall said.

Congressman Rahall said he expected the measure to be referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means for action. "I am confident that the Committee will recognize the great need for this legislation and act accordingly," Rahall concluded.