

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 announced that he will take his efforts to improve the reviewing process for black lung claims to the Department of Labor next week.

Rahall will inspect the Department of Labor's Black Lung Division in Washington on March 31, and on April 1 will visit black lung clinics in Raleigh County. Congressman Rahall has requested Under Secretary of Labor Donald Ellsberg to accompany him on this visit. Ellsberg has accepted the Congressman's invitation.

"I am very concerned that the Department of Labor has a back-log of black lung claims numbering 51,200 and dating back to 1973," Rahall stated. "I will demand an explanation from the Department on this situation."

Rahall has introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives, to provide for additional hearing officers in the reviewing and processing of black lung claims.

Congressman Rahall went on to explain his reasons for the trip to Raleigh County. "I want the Under Secretary to see first hand, the day-to-day operation of a black lung clinic and to witness the suffering of those who are inflicted with the disease."

"In talking with my colleagues in the Congress," Rahall observed, "I am convinced that the problems faced by my constituents are similar to the many difficulties faced by others who live and work in coal mining states."

"The fact that we are relying on coal more and more as a way to help meet our domestic energy needs," Rahall pointed out, "serves to highlight the health problems of those who mine coal."

Congressman Rahall cited a recent ABC News survey, which shows coal coming back as an alternative source of energy to many Americans. 64% of those questioned, feel it is very important to build plants that can convert coal to gas and oil. 52% also believe it is highly important to expand underground mining for coal due to the expanding needs.

Specific details on the inspection trip will be released next week.