

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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WASHINGTON D.C. --- "The Black Lung Bill should be able to be signed into law by the President, within the next few weeks," Fourth District Congressman Nick J. Rahall, (D-WV), said. The measure, HR 4544, contains major reform provisions that will greatly benefit black lung victims.

Last week, the House of Representatives approved legislation that set up the financing mechanism for the trust fund, from which benefits will be paid. A tax levied on coal will provide the necessary money for the trust fund.

Congressman Rahall pointed out that the Department of Labor will send teams of selected staff members to explain the new law and answer questions about the filing and processing of black lung benefits claims. These seminars should begin about three weeks after the President signs the measure into law.

Rahall said, "At my request information seminars will probably be held in Beckley, Huntington, Logan, Princeton, Mullens and Welch." The Congressman went on to say that, "I may also hold Town Hall meetings on the new Black Lung Bill."

In discussing the major provisions of the Black Lung Reform Act, Congressman Rahall said, "Under the new law, Federal black lung benefits will no longer be cut because of the receipt of State, non-black lung related workmen's compensation. This is known as the 'off-set' provision, and I see this as a major step forward in assisting black lung victims."

Rahall also explained that, "All previously denied claims will be reviewed again in light of the new law, and denied claimants will be able to update their files with any new medical evidence."

Congressman Rahall said that under the Black Lung Reform Act, a new system to decentralize the administrative aspect of the Black Lung program. "The new Black Lung Reform Act provides for the creation of seven new District Offices to help victims with their claims. One of these offices will be located in Huntington, with another office in Parkersburg," Rahall pointed out. "With these District Offices, the time to process a black lung claim will be reduced to 90 days, where in the past it took well over 9 months."

Rahall, a sponsor of the Black Lung Reform Act, was an avid supporter of the measure among his colleagues.