

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.-W.V.), HAS VOICED HIS STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION'S DECISION TO CLOSE 3,132 VA HOSPITAL BEDS THIS YEAR.

IN A LETTER TO NATIONAL COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF JOHN WASYLIK OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS, RAHALL POINTED OUT THAT "THROUGH MY MANY VISITS TO VETERANS' FACILITIES IN BOTH BECKLEY AND IN HUNTINGTON, I BELIEVE ANY REDUCTIONS IN HOSPITAL SERVICE FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS IS HIGHLY UNJUSTIFIED."

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL EXPLAINED THE VA HOSPITAL SYSTEM HAS A REJECTION RATE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY OF 18%. "THIS FIGURE MEANS ALMOST TWO OUT OF EVERY 10 VETERANS WHO NEED HOSPITAL CARE WILL NOT RECEIVE IT BECAUSE THE FACILITIES ARE NOT AVAILABLE," RAHALL SAID.

"TWENTY VA HOSPITALS HAVE A REJECTION RATE IN EXCESS OF 31%," THE CONGRESSMAN CONTINUED, "AND INCLUDED IN THAT IS BUFFALO, NEW YORK'S, VA FACILITY, WITH A REJECTION RATE OF 51.7%--WHICH MEANS THAT ONE OUT OF EVERY TWO VETERANS IS TURNED AWAY.

"IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO ME THAT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, IN ITS EFFORT TO CUT COSTS, WOULD DO SO AT THE EXPENSE OF THOSE FINE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE FOUGHT SO THIS NATION MAY BE FREE," CONGRESSMAN RAHALL SAID.

RAHALL ADDED THAT, "BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF THE PROPOSED CUT BACKS THIS YEAR IN THE NUMBER OF HOSPITAL BEDS AVAILABLE TO VETERANS, COUPLED WITH THE ANTICIPATED CUT BACK OF 5,000 BEDS IN THE FUTURE, IN LESS THAN 12 YEARS THE VA WILL HAVE CLOSED THE EQUIVALENT OF 46 500-BED GENERAL HOSPITALS."

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IN CONCLUSION, CONGRESSMAN RAHALL SAID, "I AGREE THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD AND MUST CUT COSTS WHEREVER POSSIBLE,
BUT WHEN IT COMES TO SERVICES FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS--MANY
OF WHOM ARE ALSO SENIOR CITIZENS--I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK TO
SEE THAT THESE TWO GROUPS OF AMERICANS RECEIVE ALL THE
ASSISTANCE THEY NEED AND DESERVE."