

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 1, 1980

CONTACT: MICHAEL SERPE
202-225-3452

WASHINGTON D.C. --- WEST VIRGINIA'S FOURTH DISTRICT
CONGRESSMAN NICK J. RAHALL HAS JOINED THE PUSH TO AMEND THE BLACK LUNG BENEFITS ACT, AND SHIFT THE PAYMENT OF CERTAIN CLAIMS FROM COAL OPERATORS TO THE BLACK LUNG DISABILITY TRUST FUND.

"THIS ACTION," RAHALL POINTED OUT, "WILL ELIMINATE LENGTHY PROTESTS THAT HAVE OFTEN DELAYED BENEFITS TO ALMOST 8,000 BLACK LUNG VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES."

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL IS CO-SPONSORING THE BILL, HR 7745, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED BY CONGRESSMAN CARL D. PERKINS OF KENTUCKY.

THE MEASURE IS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA.

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL STATED, "THIS BILL WILL ADVANCE THE CUT-OFF DATE FOR CLAIMS TO BE PAID BY THE BLACK LUNG TRUST FUND FROM JANUARY, 1970 TO JULY, 1973."

RAHALL WENT ON TO EXPLAIN, "THIS IS A FAIR AND EQUITABLE CHANGE IN THE LAW, SINCE COAL OPERATORS COULD NOT HAVE ANTICIPATED PRE-1973 LIABILITY WHEN THE 1977 AMENDMENTS TO THE BLACK LUNG LAW WERE DEBATED."

THE CONGRESSMAN STRESSED, "THE ENACTMENT OF HR 7745, WILL IN NO WAY RESULT IN ADDITIONAL TAX EXPENDITURES OR FEDERAL LIABILITIES FOR BLACK LUNG BENEFITS. INSTEAD OF BEING PAID DIRECTLY BY THE OPERATOR, THE BENEFITS FOR PRE-1973 CLAIMS WOULD BE PAID BY THE OPERATOR-FUNDED DISABILITY TRUST FUND."

"THE LIABILITY WOULD STILL REMAIN WITH THE OPERATORS," RAHALL NOTED, "BUT IT WOULD SPREAD THE RISK PROPORTIONATELY THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRY."

THE MEASURE HAS BEEN REFERRED TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR, WHICH IS CHAIRED BY CONGRESSMAN PERKINS.

"I HOPE WE CAN HAVE SWIFT APPROVAL OF THIS BILL," RAHALL ADDED.