

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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INVESTIGATION OF MINE SAFETY TO BEGIN: SAYS RAHALL

WASHINGTON D.C. --- AT THE REQUEST OF WEST VIRGINIA'S 4TH DISTRICT CONGRESSMAN NICK J. RAHALL, THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE WILL BEGIN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE MINE INSPECTION ACTIVITIES OF THE MINE SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (MSHA).

RAHALL REQUESTED THE INVESTIGATION AFTER IT WAS LEARNED THAT MSHA WAS NOT COMPLETING THE MANDATED NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS IN UNDERGROUND COAL MINES BECAUSE OF A LACK OF QUALIFIED INSPECTORS.

"I AM PLEASED THAT THE G.A.O. WILL LOOK INTO A SITUATION THAT I FEAR COULD BECOME MUCH WORSE IF IT IS NOT RECTIFIED NOW," SAID CONGRESSMAN RAHALL.

"A TREND IS TAKING PLACE THAT CONCERNS ME," RAHALL POINTED OUT. "THE ADMINISTRATION HAS REDUCED THE MINE INSPECTION FORCE BY 10 PERCENT--WITH LITTLE OR NO REGARD FOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO MUST GO DOWN INTO THE MINES EACH DAY," CONGRESSMAN WENT ON TO SAY.

"IN ADDITION, THE DEATH TOLL IN COAL MINES INCREASED IN 1981, WITH 20 MORE MINERS KILLED IN ACCIDENTS THAN IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR," RAHALL SAID.

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONGRESSIONAL COAL GROUP, STRESSED, "THE FACT THAT MINE INSPECTIONS ARE NOT BEING CARRIED OUT, IS A TRAVESTY OF THE LAW THAT WE IN CONGRESS WORKED HARD TO IMPLEMENT." RAHALL WAS REFERRING TO THE COAL MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT OF 1969 AND THE SUBSEQUENT AMENDMENTS PASSED IN 1977.

"THE NEGLECT BEING SHOWN MINE SAFETY IS PUTTING LIVES IN JEOPARDY," RAHALL CHARGED, "AND THE FACT THAT MORE MINERS DIED LAST YEAR EVEN FURTHER BRINGS INTO QUESTION THE OPERATION OF MSHA."

THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE, WHICH WILL CONDUCT THE INVESTIGATION, HAS THE AUTHORITY TO INVESTIGATE THE PROGRAMS AND OPERATIONS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS ASSIGNED BY THE CONGRESS.

"I ANXIOUSLY AWAIT THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY," RAHALL SAID, "KNOWING THAT MINERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS ACTION."