

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL OPPOSES CLOSING OF BLACK LUNG OFFICES

WASHINGTON D.C. --- WEST VIRGINIA'S FOURTH DISTRICT CONGRESSMAN NICK J. RAHALL, HAS EXPRESSED HIS STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE CLOSING OF BLACK LUNG FIELD OFFICES IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA, IN A LETTER TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

"AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS STILL A BACKLOG OF CLAIMS TO BE REVIEWED, I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE LABOR DEPARTMENT CAN BE CONSIDERING STAFF REDUCTIONS, CONSOLIDATING OFFICES, OR EVEN THE CLOSING OF OFFICES," RAHALL OBSERVED.

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL INITIALLY CONTACTED THE LABOR DEPARTMENT FOLLOWING REPORTS THAT THE BLUEFIELD BLACK LUNG OFFICE WAS TO BE CLOSED. HOWEVER, IN A RESPONSE TO HIM, RAHALL SAID, "THE LABOR DEPARTMENT INFORMS ME THAT THEY HAVE 'NO DEFINITE PLANS AT THIS TIME TO CLOSE THE BLUEFIELD OFFICE.' HOWEVER, THEY DO SAY THAT, 'ANTICIPATED BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS FOR FISCAL YEARS 82 AND 83, MAY DICTATE CONSOLIDATING AND/OR CLOSING BLACK LUNG FIELD OFFICES AT SOME FUTURE DATE,'" RAHALL POINTED OUT.

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN THAT CONGRESS WAS NOT BEING CONSULTED IN SUCH DECISIONS. "IN 1969 AND IN 1978, CONGRESS PASSED LEGISLATION DEALING WITH THE BLACK LUNG PROGRAM. BUT NOW, EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO POSSIBLY DAMAGE THE PROGRAM--NOT THROUGH LEGISLATION, BUT BY DEPARTMENTAL DILLY-DALLYING, AND I DON'T LIKE IT!" CONGRESSMAN RAHALL CHARGED.

"FURTHERMORE," RAHALL STATED, "I HAVE LET THE LABOR DEPARTMENT KNOW THAT THE LOGAN AND BECKLEY BLACK LUNG OFFICES ARE IMPERATIVE TO THOSE COMMUNITIES AS WELL, AND ANY ATTEMPT TO CLOSE THEM WILL BE MET WITH OPPOSITION ALSO."

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