

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL INTRODUCES COAL---STEEL JOBS BILL

WASHINGTON D.C. --- WEST VIRGINIA'S FOURTH DISTRICT CONGRESSMAN NICK J. RAHALL, HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THE GROWING NUMBER OF COAL MINERS AND STEEL WORKERS WHO ARE NOW WITHOUT A JOB. THE MEASURE IS ENTITLED: THE COMPREHENSIVE COAL JOB COMPENSATION, PROTECTION AND PROMOTION ACT OF 1982.

"ACROSS THE NATION, MINE WORKERS ARE BEING LAID-OFF," RAHALL STATED, "AND AS STEEL IMPORTS CONTINUE TO WREAK HAVOC ON OUR DOMESTIC ECONOMY, STEELWORKERS LOSE THEIR JOBS--AND COAL MINERS LOSE THEIR JOBS."

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL EXPLAINED THAT, "MY LEGISLATION SEEKS TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM BY CREATING A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WHICH WOULD PROVIDE TRADE READJUSTMENT ALLOWANCES, TRAINING AND JOB SEARCH AND RELOCATION ALLOWANCES SIMILAR TO THOSE CONTAINED IN THE TRADE ACT OF 1974 FOR IMPACTED WORKERS IN THE COAL INDUSTRY."

"THE 35 PERCENT OF STEELWORKERS UNEMPLOYED, WOULD ALSO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THIS PROGRAM," RAHALL POINTED OUT.

"THIS NEW TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR COAL AND STEEL WORKERS," CONGRESSMAN RAHALL WENT ON TO SAY, "WOULD NOT PLACE AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE FUNDED BY REVENUES EQUAL TO THOSE OBTAINED FROM THE TARIFFS THE CUSTOMS SERVICE COLLECTS ON STEEL IMPORTS."

RAHALL SAID, "LAST YEAR, THIS AMOUNT WAS \$11.2 BILLION, AND IT ONLY SEEMS FAIR TO ME THAT IF FOREIGN IMPORTS ARE GOING TO LEAD TO UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES AS HIGH AS THOSE BEING EXPERIENCED IN THE COAL AND STEEL INDUSTRIES, THEN THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH IMPORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO PAY FOR THIS PROGRAM TO HELP AMERICAN WORKERS."

CONGRESSMAN RAHALL'S LEGISLATION WOULD ALSO CREATE A "COAL INDUSTRY FULL EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL", WHICH WOULD CONSIST OF 30 MEMBERS MADE UP OF 10 REPRESENTATIVES FROM LABOR, WITH THE REMAINDER MADE UP OF COAL PRODUCERS, SHIPPERS OF COAL AND STEEL, RECEIVERS OF COAL, BANKERS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS HAVING AN INTEREST IN COMMUNITIES WHOSE ECONOMIES ARE BASED ON COAL.

"THE PURPOSE OF THIS COUNCIL," RAHALL STATED, "WOULD BE TO FURTHER DEFINE THE REASONS BEHIND GROWING COAL INDUSTRY UNEMPLOYMENT AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION."

"THE COUNCIL WOULD ALSO CONSIDER WAYS TO INCREASE THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF COAL FROM AREAS OF HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT ON BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND EXPORT FRONTS," CONGRESSMAN RAHALL SAID.

"COAL MINERS ARE NOT LOOKING FOR HANDOUTS," RAHALL OBSERVED, "THEY ARE ONLY LOOKING FOR A FAIR SHAKE. AT THIS TIME FOREIGN TRADE POLICIES ARE BEING UNJUST TO THE COAL MINER, AND THIS LEGISLATION PROPOSES TO PLACE A MEASURE OF EQUITY IN THE AREA OF TRADE POLICY."

A FACT SHEET ON THE RAHALL COAL-STEEL JOBS BILL IS ATTACHED.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RAHALL COAL JOBS BILL

- ** The bill creates a special Trade Adjustment Assistance program for coal and steel workers who are losing their jobs as a result of steel imports which, among other things, are causing high unemployment in the metallurgical coal industry. Trade Readjustment Allowances would supplement any State Unemployment Insurance received by eligible workers. Training, job search and relocation services and allowances would help impacted workers find new employment.
- ** The bill would not create a new burden on taxpayers since it would be financed by foreign manufacturers in the form of existing customs duties levied on imports of steel products into this country. Last year, \$11.2 billion in such tariffs were collected by the Customs Service.
- ** The Trade Adjustment Assistance provisions of the bill are designed to benefit thousands of metallurgical coal miners who are experiencing unemployment rates of up to 20 percent and steelworkers of which approximately 35 percent are unemployed.
- ** The bill liberalizes the Trade Readjustment Allowance program for coal and steel workers to the same levels established under the Trade Act of 1974 before the program was slashed by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981. New language will insure that all coal miners working in the metallurgical coal industry who have been displaced would be eligible.
- ** The bill changes the training program contained in existing law to make it an entitlement rather than left to the Secretary of Labor's discretion. Also, job search and relocation allowances are increased to \$800 per worker from the existing \$600 per worker in light of the changing economic climate.
- ** The bill creates a "Coal Industry Full Employment Council" working under the Department of Labor to further define reasons for high coal industry unemployment and to suggest actions to reduce coal job loss. The Council would be comprised of representatives of labor, coal producers, shippers and receivers of coal, banking and other financial institutions having a substantial interest in communities whose economies are based on coal and civic organizations whose purposes include the promotion of regional and community development within coal producing areas.
- ** The Council must report to the President and the Congress once a year with recommendations to reduce coal industry unemployment which must be considered by federal agencies with activities affecting coal.
- ** The Council would create a forum for all affected parties to initiate a cooperative effort to reduce industry unemployment.
- ** The President is urged by the bill to enter into negotiations with foreign countries which are major steel exporters with the goal being that they purchase levels of U.S. coal equal to that used in the manufacture of steel products exported.
- ** The Secretary of Commerce must take any actions, primarily through the Foreign Commercial Service, to promote increased foreign purchase of U.S. coal produced in areas of high unemployment.