

# RAHALL Report

A.R.C.

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Chairman, since the earliest years of the 20th-century events periodically made Americans aware that Appalachia was a region apart, isolated from the rest of the country due to its rough terrain, suffering from the ravages of floods, prone to erratic swings in the coal industry, and subject to severe economic and population shifts than in the rest of the Nation.

By the early 1960's, conditions in Appalachia had reached desperate proportions as major floods and the boom and bust cycle of the coal industry took its toll in human suffering. Despite efforts of religious leaders, public officials, universities, and business groups in the region to alleviate the many socioeconomic problems, little permanent change was accomplished until President Kennedy appointed the President's Appalachian Regional Commission to "prepare a comprehensive action program for the economic development of the Appalachian region."

Today, we have before us legislation to reauthorize the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 and the Economic Development Act of 1965. Today, we have the rare opportunity to use some hindsight during our deliberation of H.R. 6100; we have the ability to judge time-tested programs contained in this bill.

Using even these most stringent of criteria, I stand here today to say that without a doubt, the Appalachian Regional Commission is a program that has worked. During the past 17 years, the ARC has demonstrated the capability to facilitate cooperation among all levels of government and the private sector. It has pioneered new approaches in extending health care in doctor-short areas and has linked the region to the rest of the Nation through a system of highways.

Mr. Chairman, the Appalachian region encompasses 397 counties in 13 States stretching from southern New York to northern Mississippi. The population in this region is over 20 million. And facts stand as testimony to how the ARC program has helped these people. Since the ARC highway program began, 430,000 jobs have been made possible due to this modern transportation network. Before ARC, only 25 percent of Appalachian youth were getting vocational training; today the Commission has made possible 705 vocational/technical education facilities and now 52 percent of the 11th and 12th graders in the region are getting such training. ARC has stimulated the development of almost 20,000 housing units. In the area of health care, the ARC has fought tuberculosis, infectious diseases, and infant mortality and today, primary health care facilities are within reach of most people in the region.

In my congressional district alone, 62 projects totaling \$10.5 million have been approved including primary health care, long-term care, emergency services and the construction and equipping of hospitals; 25 vocational education projects have been funded at over \$7 million; 15 water and sewer and waste treatment projects have received over \$3.8 million and 7 solid waste projects have received \$1.5 million. In all, 181 nonhighway area development projects in my district have received a total of \$35.5 million in ARC funds. Largely because of these programs, the gap in per capita personal income in my district and the Nation has been narrowed. People living in poverty have decreased from 40 percent of the total population in 1960 to 16 percent in 1976. The decline in population of nearly 13 percent between 1960 and 1970 has been arrested and there has been a gain of slightly over 11 percent by 1980. Jobs have been created and the unemployment rate, once three times the national average, is now one-third more than the national rate.

Yet, while these facts and figures are testimony to a successful program, let us not fool ourselves. There are still distressing gaps between Appalachia and the rest of the Nation. In my district, for example, the poverty rate is still 25 percent more than the national rate. There are only 119 doctors per 100,000 population; only two-thirds of the national figure of 170 per 100,000 population. Highway projects, such as Corridor G running from Charleston to north of Pikeville, are uncompleted and are crucial to the transportation of coal.

West Virginia, and the region, have made progress but we can ill afford to lose this sound base by an abrupt halt to the ARC program. The bill before us today is a phaseout program encompassing the recommendations of the Appalachian Governors. It is a good program, and one taking into account the economic situation of today. I commend the distinguished chairmen of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Mr. OBERSTAR, and of the full Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Mr. HOWARD, for their diligent efforts on behalf of the people of Appalachia. We have walked through parts of Appalachia together, heard from the local people and visited many of the ARC programs. While Chairman OBERSTAR is from a non-Appalachian State, his interest in ARC and his recognition of its importance signifies the importance the development of this region has to the rest of the Nation.