

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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CONTACT: Jerry Burkot
202-225-3452

Rahall Denounces Loss of Bus Service

Washington, D.C. -- Fourth District Congressman Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV) charged today that the Interstate Commerce Commission did not serve the public interest by allowing Virginia Stage Lines to discontinue service in southern West Virginia.

Speaking at a House Surface Transportation Subcommittee hearing on the Bus Regulatory Reform Act, Rahall stated, "There is a pressing need to strengthen the public interest test in the law. In its present condition, it is nothing but a cruel joke -- with the price of that joke being paid by senior citizens, the impoverished, students, and small businesses without any public transportation alternatives."

The last Virginia Stage Lines bus ran its route between Welch and Huntington, and Logan and Charleston, on September 17, 1984, after the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed an ICC decision allowing discontinuance of this service.

"My view of the bus deregulation act at this point is that both the ICC and the Court threw the public interest test out the window. Indeed, the Court interpreted the public interest as being one and the same as the test of carrier unprofitability", Rep. Rahall said.

Under the law, a bus carrier may discontinue service unless that action would not be consistent with the public interest, or if it would not constitute an unreasonable burden on interstate commerce.

Finding that Virginia Stage Lines was losing money on its West Virginia operations, the ICC and the Court allowed the carrier to discontinue its service despite overwhelming evidence that keeping the buses running was in the public interest.

Rep. Rahall had joined with the West Virginia Public Service Commission in fighting the Virginia Stage Lines abandonment of service before the federal ICC. The dependency of senior citizens and small businesses on the Virginia Stage Lines transportation was his foremost concern.