

NICK J. RAHALL, JR.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 10

Today, I would like to rise in strong support of H.R. 10, the National Development Investment Act. Included in H.R. 10 is authorization for the Appalachian Regional Commission, a program which has been instrumental in eliminating the devastating effects of poverty in Appalachia.

The role of the federal government in the economic development of rural areas, particularly Appalachia, was non-existent before the commitment of President John F. Kennedy to revitalize these regions of the nation. Since 1965, the ARC has continuously promoted much needed economic progress in Appalachia, decreasing the poverty level, boosting the level of income, slashing infant mortality rates and increasing the number of doctors. Furthermore, private sector jobs have shown a marked increase and the level of education now approaches the national average. Progress has been made.

This progress could not have been made without the cooperative effort of government -- on the local, state and federal levels -- working in conjunction with the private sector, which includes many businesses and individuals who are willing to invest in the future of their communities.

However, while dramatic improvements have been made, Appalachia still suffers disproportionate socio-economic hardships. My home state of West Virginia continues to be burdened with the highest unemployment rate in our nation. The people of Appalachia struggle not only for jobs but for the daily necessities others take for granted. The people of Appalachia are poor. There is much that remains to be done.

The contribution of government to the economic development of rural areas is to be commended. But we cannot stop now! The problems still exist. The phase-out funding provided for the ARC in H.R. 10 is imperative for the continued improvement in the quality of Appalachian life. Without these funds, not only will improvements cease, but the positive effects of past progress will be lost to inevitable regression. I urge your support of H.R. 10.