

*For
Bill
Staff*

news from ... Congressman Nick Rahall

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House Passes Rahall Amendment Adds \$4.5 Million to Clear Black Lung Backlog

Washington, D.C. -- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed an amendment offered by Rep. Nick Rahall on behalf of the West Virginia delegation to add almost \$4.5 Million to the Black Lung Disability Fund in administrative expenses.

"I offered this amendment to the Department of Labor Appropriations bill because this was an ideal opportunity to begin to eliminate the massive backlog of Black Lung cases, particularly at the Administrative Law Judge level," Rep. Rahall explained. "The 11th hour recommendation of the Secretary of Labor to add this funding was a major factor in garnering bipartisan support for my amendment."

"Secretary Brock has recommended that \$4.449 Million be added for Fiscal Year 1986 to eliminate this backlog," the Fourth District Democrat stated on the floor of the House in support of his amendment. "Of this amount, \$3.523 Million is for increased staff at the Office of Administrative Law Judges and \$926,000 is for increased staff in the Department's Solicitor's office."

"According to Secretary Brock, this proposal calls for an Office of Administrative Law Judge disposition level of 8,500 cases in each of the next four years... The Office of Management and Budget has given its general approval to this recommendation," Rep. Rahall added.

Rahall also commended the West Virginia delegation for taking the lead in efforts to resolve this problem, as well as Secretary Brock and the Labor Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Bill Natcher (D-KY) for their assistance and support.

"I am pleased that the House has taken this action today to help the people of West Virginia to receive their due compensation. Many have waited up to ten years or more for justice from the Department of Labor. Some have died awaiting a disposition of their claim. It is my hope that through the action taken by the House today, we can begin to make this backlog nothing more than a bad memory, for justice delayed is, indeed, justice denied," Rep. Rahall observed.

The Labor Appropriations bill, H.R. 3424, will now go to the Senate for consideration.