

news from ... **Congressman
Nick Rahall**

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Washington, D.C. -- Fourth District Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) today announced that he has secured an agreement from the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Dan Rostenkowski, to work towards a compromise on the 50% black lung excise tax increase contained in the House-passed budget reconciliation bill.

Rahall has been working with members of the House/Senate conference committee which has been meeting on the budget bill but has reached no resolution on the controversial black lung tax proposal. "This is a major breakthrough," said Rahall. "Through my agreement with Chairman Rostenkowski, I believe we can now avoid the disastrous impact on coalfield employment that would occur if the industry was saddled with the proposed 50% tax increase."

The compromise, proposed by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association and the United Mine Workers of America, and supported by Rahall would increase the black lung tax by 10%, rather than the House-passed 50%, with a one shot, five year forgiveness of interest the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund would have to pay. The ten percent increase would provide surpluses after covering benefits due and administrative costs and provide for the fund's solvency by the year 1998.

"With the strong support of the coal industry, the UMWA, and now, Chairman Rostenkowski's acquiescence, I believe that this coalition can work to attempt to break this impasse," Rahall concluded.