

News
From _____

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL TAKES AIM AT EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Beckley, W. Va. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) announced today that when the House of Representatives considers legislation to reauthorize the programs of the U.S. Export-Import Bank on Tuesday, he will seek to amend the Bill to prohibit bank assistance to foreign projects which would produce commodities for export to the U.S. resulting in a net employment loss.

"The Export-Import Bank has been engaged in a number of transactions with foreign entities which clearly violate the public interest," Rahall charged. "There is no justification for the Export-Import Bank to be fostering the development of foreign projects which produce commodities that are subsequently exported to the U.S. in direct and often unfair competition with our own domestic industries and workers. I think the American people are fed up with this type of short-sighted foreign policy that contributes to the loss of jobs and employment opportunities in this country."

Rahall has been particularly concerned with an Export-Import Bank assistance package of over \$850 million to Colombia for the development of the El Cerrejon coal mine in that country. In its first fully operational year, the Colombian project has been responsible for contracts with U.S. electric utilities amounting to well over \$514 million worth of imported coal.

"The Export-Import Bank played a cruel joke on the American taxpayer and especially on the coal miners of the Appalachian Region when it approved the El Cerrejon transaction. But it has not been a laughing matter in the coalfields of West Virginia, and our day of vengeance has come," Rahall stated.

The Rahall amendment is aimed at preventing the Export-Import Bank from involvement in future projects similar to the El Cerrejon coal mine. According to Rahall, coal is not the only commodity to have suffered under current Export-Import Bank policies. The Bank has also provided support for steel mills in Brazil and copper mines in Chile and Mexico among others, which have in turn flooded the U.S. market with subsidized exports.

In a letter to members of the House of Representatives, United Mine Workers of America President Richard Trumka urged support of the Rahall amendment stating it is "an important step to restore coal field jobs and growth in the U.S. coal industry." In another letter, the AFL-CIO stated: "Congressman Rahall's amendment would insure that the activities of the Export-Import Bank would not promote imports to the U.S., thereby intensifying the trade crises currently facing the U.S."