

News
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Nick Rahall

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RAHALL SEES FIGHTING CHANCE FOR METALLURGICAL COAL

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) said today that he sees new hope for southern West Virginia's ailing metallurgical coal industry in light of the U.S. Department of Energy's selection of a Weirton Steel Corporation project as a recipient of federal Clean Coal Technology funding. Weirton was named as one of the nine projects chosen out of 51 submissions for federal assistance to demonstrate a new generation of environmentally clean coal projects.

"One of the major reasons the southern West Virginia metallurgical coalfields have been devastated is because domestic steelmakers have not replaced their coke producing capability," Rahall pointed out. "With existing technology the industry is ~~able~~ ^{unable} to comply with stringent environmental requirements governing coke oven emissions. This has led to an increase of coke imports into this country and further job losses and mine closings in southern West Virginia."

Metallurgical coal is an essential ingredient in most steelmaking processes and has traditionally been used to make coke in order to produce pig iron. The Weirton Steel project proposes to bypass the need to make coke from metallurgical coal and would comply with all environmental regulations. The project is to be constructed at Weirton, West Virginia.

Rahall's Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources coonducted a hearing last November on the viability of the metallurgical coal industry to emphasize to the Department of Energy the urgency of funding at least one project such as the Weirton proposal. All other projects selected by D.O.E. for Clean Coal Technology funding relate to electric utility applications.

"During my Subcommittee hearing last November I issued a challenge to America's steelmakers," Rahall said. "Tha challenge was: How to keep American coal in American steel. Weirton has responded to that challenge and it is heartening to see a West Virginia company work to help the metallurgical coal miners of this great state."