

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL ANNOUNCES NEW COAL IMPORT MEASURE

Charleston, W.Va. - Warning that increased amounts of imported coal constitutes a new threat to coalfield employment, U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) before the annual meeting of the West Virginia U.M.W.A. COMPAC today announced a new legislative initiative to combat the infiltration into the U.S. by foreign coal.

"As we continue to wrestle with those adversities which the membership of the U.M.W.A. face on an almost daily basis, such as improving health and safety conditions in the mines and striving for a more secure working environment, we must not be unmindful of those new threats to the integrity of the American coal miner," Rahall said. "Foremost among these new threats is the infiltration of foreign coal in increasing amounts into our country."

Rahall, who has been leading Congressional efforts for the enactment of legislation to impose a tariff on imported coal, charged that America's energy and employment interests were being undermined due to certain U.S. corporate complicity in foreign coal mining activities. According to the congressman, his new proposal seeks to address this situation.

"In the American West lie vast reserves of Federal coal which are the subject of great interest by some of the same companies engaged in the mining and importation of foreign coal into the U.S. and those companies considering such actions. The legislation I plan to introduce would simply deny any company a Federal coal lease if it is engaged in the production and/or importation of foreign coal into the U.S.," Rahall explained. "I believe this will be a powerful incentive for these companies to desist with their efforts to develop foreign coal reserves in direct competition with domestic production."

Rahall said his new proposal is based on the premise that Federal coal is owned by the citizens of the U.S. and leasing decisions should take into account the public interest. The public interest, he said, is not served by companies engaged in producing and importing foreign coal into the U.S.

"I call this my 'fish or cut bait' coal import bill," Rahall told the mineworkers. "It says to those companies who want to produce Federal coal but who also want to produce foreign coal, either 'fish' and be an American coal producer and employ Americans in your mines, or 'cut bait,' the people's coal will not be available to you."

Noting that both his coal tariff bill and his new proposal will face opposition by powerful special interests, Rahall said such opposition was nothing new to the working men and women of West Virginia's coalfields.

"We do not bow easily to adversity. We are the children of Paint Creek, of Cabin Creek and of Blair Mountain," the Congressman stated.