

News  
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CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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## RAHALL SAYS HOUSE PASSED MEASURE TO AID WEST VIRGINIA AIRPORTS

WASHINGTON - The U.S. House of Representatives today passed a conference report that will preserve the Essential Air Service Program, fund airport expansions and upgrade the nation's air traffic control system. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) a member of the House/Senate Conference that structured the report, said that it will help West Virginia's airports.

"The Essential Air Program provides assistance to airports in Beckley, Bluefield, Morgantown, Elkins and Clarksburg," Rahall stated. "To these airports and many other rural airports around the nation, E.A.S. is not only important, it is essential, just as its title states. These community airports are a critical component for further promotion and expansion of West Virginia's tourism industry and an important factor in attracting other businesses we so desperately need in our state."

The conference-reported bill provides a ten year extension of E.A.S.

The legislation also includes a provision which makes smaller airports eligible as "primary airports," and therefore eligible for a minimum of \$300,000 per year for capital improvements.

"Airports in Beckley, Morgantown, Clarksburg and Lewisburg will be classified as primary airports," Rahall commented. "At the current time, three state airports, in Charleston, Huntington and Parkersburg, are given such designation."

The conference report authorizes funds from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund for a five-year period to fund airport expansion and noise reduction. Also included are provisions to modernize and expand the air traffic control system.

"It is very important that we upgrade our air traffic control system to handle the increased number of flights," Rahall said. "This legislation calls not only for technical upgrading, but also 1,000 additional air traffic controllers."

Funding for the expansion projects will be provided from the 17 year old trust fund which receives revenue from a ticket tax, a general aviation fuel tax, and other fees.

The report passed the House 410-1 and will go to the President for his signature upon adoption by the Senate.