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CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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## RAHALL CONFEREES AGREE ON AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) says a House-Senate conference has agreed on the major elements of a \$22 billion multi-year extension of the Federal funding for airport expansion, air traffic control facilities and noise reduction. Rahall is a conferee on the measure.

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

"Under the provision, airports in Beckley, Morgantown, Clarksburg and Lewisburg will be classified as primary airports," Rahall stated. "Currently in West Virginia the Tri-State Airport in Huntington, Yeager Airport in Charleston and the Wood County Airport in Parkersburg are given such designation."

Rahall said the proposal would authorize funds from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund for a five-year period to fund airport expansion and noise reduction. The facilities and equipment program to modernize the air traffic control system would be funded for three years.

"It is very important that we upgrade our air traffic control system to handle the increased number of flights. If not, we are asking for a disaster of great proportion," Rahall said. "One section of the agreement calls for the Federal Aviation Administration to hire an additional 1,000 air traffic controllers. This is an essential move to enhance the safety of our air travelers."

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

Rahall also added that the conference agreed to a ten year extension of the Essential Air Service Program (E.A.S.) to small communities that lost service following deregulation. Airports in Beckley, Bluefield, Morgantown, Clarksburg and Elkins currently receive E.A.S. support.

The conference agreement is expected to be moved to the House floor for action as soon as the tax provisions are completed by the House Committee on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee.

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