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RAHALL FIGHTS TO PRESERVE ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE FOR BECKLEY AND BLUEFIELD

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) a member of the House/Senate Conference Committee on a bill pertaining to air service, fought today to preserve Essential Air Service that aids airports in Beckley, Bluefield, and three other West Virginia cities.

Rahall, a senior member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, called for the ten year extension of E.A.S. that is included in the House version of the bill and said the program is vital to West Virginia's economic diversification and development.

"In the rural areas of this nation, E.A.S. is not important, it is essential, just as its title states," Rahall said. "I can personally attest to the vital need for E.A.S. support in two communities in my district. The continuation of adequate air service in Beckley and Bluefield, West Virginia will be in severe jeopardy without reauthorization."

Rahall continued by stating that one of the state's budding industries, tourism, relies heavily on E.A.S.

"One of the most promising areas of development in West Virginia is our tourism industry," Rahall said. "These community airports are a critical component for further promotion and expansion of that industry. Adequate air service is also an important factor in attracting other businesses which we in West Virginia so desperately need."

The airports in West Virginia receiving E.A.S. assistance are in Beckley, Bluefield, Morgantown, Elkins and Clarksburg.

A House/Senate conference committee is continuing to iron out differences in H.R. 2310, the Airport and Airway Improvement Act of 1987. A resolution is expected to be reached in the near future.