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CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452

RAHALL SAYS ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE EXTENDED FOR TEN YEARS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) today told his colleagues on the House floor that Essential Air Service is a program vital to West Virginia. Following Rahall's remarks, the House overwhelmingly approved an amendment extending E.A.S. for ten years.

"E.A.S is of utmost importance to the rural communities of this nation, including many in West Virginia. The authorization for the E.A.S. has been renewed in a timely manner by the House so as to ensure adequate air travel throughout the country," Rahall declared. "In my home State of West Virginia there are five communities whose airports receive E.A.S. assistance. Two, Beckley and Bluefield, are located in my Congressional District and I can personally attest to the vital need for E.A.S. support in these communities. The continuation of air service in southern West Virginia will be in severe jeopardy without reauthorization."

Rahall also said that West Virginia's economy depends on E.A.S. to augment its budding tourism industry and to help lure new businesses to the State.

"My home state continues to suffer from inordinately high levels of unemployment for which we are seeking solutions by broadening our economic base and promoting new businesses in the state," Rahall said. "One of the most promising areas of development is our tourism industry and 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 E.A.S. reauthorization was an amendment to H.R. 2310, the Airport and Airway Improvement Amendments of 1987. Also included in the bill is funding for other programs under the Airport and Airway Trust Fund totaling \$29 billion for the next five fiscal years. This includes air traffic control systems and navigation programs designed to increase the safety and general service of the airline industry.

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