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CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452

RAHALL ASKS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO RECONSIDER AMENDMENT

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) has requested that the U.S. Department of Transportation reconsider its decision to amend Essential Air Service for Beckley and Bluefield, West Virginia.

In addition to his appeal to Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, Rahall forwarded an appeal to the Department from the Raleigh County Memorial Airport which also asked for Essential Air Service to remain for Beckley and Bluefield.

"The elimination of federal subsidies to the Raleigh and Mercer County Airports would be detrimental to the further development of southern West Virginia," Rahall said. "Economic diversity is on the upswing and many developers look at air service when deciding to locate in an area. Take away the Beckley/Bluefield air service and the people of the region will feel the effects."

Rahall also cites the relocation of an Army Reserve Unit into the Industrial Park which houses the Raleigh County Airport and the Beckley Armed Forces Entrance Examination Station as reasons for maintaining essential service.

"People from many areas who join the military must come to Beckley for examinations," Rahall said. "How are they to get here if the support provided by the Essential Air Service is abandoned? This not only hurts southern West Virginia, but ultimately the security of the United States if our recruits cannot be adequately transported for their initial examinations."