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RAHALL TESTIFIES ON BEHALF OF HUNTINGTON VA HOSPITAL

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) testified today before an Appropriations Subcommittee asking that funds be appropriated for the Huntington Veterans' Administration Medical Center. Appearing before the Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, the Congressman explained the vital role the VAMC plays in the Huntington area.

If approved, the Huntington Center would receive \$47.5 million for the project. Rahall previously testified before the Veterans Affairs Committee and that panel included the Huntington project in its medical facility construction projects for fiscal year 1988.

"That Committee sent the resolution recommending \$43.4 million for the Huntington VAMC clinical addition to the Speaker on April 23," Rahall stated. "As the representative of Huntington, I have seen first-hand the need for this expansion project and to urge that the funds be included in fiscal year '88 appropriation legislation."

The \$4.1 million dollar difference would come from the Parking Fund which is under the jurisdiction of the Appropriations Committee.

Although the center is located in the Huntington vicinity, Rahall testified that the hospital serves a much larger area.

"The Medical Center serves 144,000 veterans throughout nine counties in West Virginia, eight counties in Ohio and eleven counties in Kentucky," Rahall said. "The population of this area is primarily rural and is slightly older than the national average. It is also important to note that this area has the highest percentage of unemployment in the nation and the rural areas do not enjoy adequate medical facilities."

The Huntington project will consist of a 173,000 square foot addition plus renovation of approximately 57,000 square feet of existing space. The renovations will also consist of asbestos removal, replacement of air-conditioning systems, the installation of a sprinkler system and construction of a 500 car parking garage.