

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL'S MINING COMMITTEE TO SEEK INCREASED HEALTH & SAFETY FUNDS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-W.Va.) vowed today in a hearing of his Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources to overturn the Reagan Administration's proposed budget reductions in health and safety technology research, mining research and university mining school funding.

"Men and women are dying in alarming rates in the nation's mines. Accidents occur daily due to roof and wall falls, electric accidents and haulage hazards. In addition, the dreaded danger of black lung disease continues to stalk the tunnels and shafts of our underground mines," Rahall stated during the hearing. "Over 5,000 miles of streams and rivers in the Appalachian Region are being threatened by acid mine drainage and land subsidence may affect over 8 million acres of land, an area one-half the size of West Virginia. Nevertheless, research into mitigating these problems is being proposed for draconian reductions by the administration."

Rahall said his subcommittee will recommend increased budget authority for research to mitigate fires and explosions in coal mines, reduce the incidence and severity of black lung disease, accelerate efforts to produce a self-contained-self-rescuer unit that is small and light enough to be wearable on a miner's belt, improve the detection of methane in mines and reduce the occurrences of accidents from electrical hazards. The subcommittee will also recommend increased funding to combat acid mine drainage and subsidence problems.

Chairman Rahall also expressed concern over the decline in qualified mining professionals graduating from colleges and universities.

"The U.S. is fast approaching a point of no return with respect to mining and minerals education," Rahall said. "The nation continues to be overly dependent upon foreign and often politically volatile sources for many strategic and critical minerals. If the U.S. is to wean itself of this dependency, which threatens our very national security, efforts must be made today to educate students in the mining and minerals field so that a body of trained professionals will be available in the future to address this pressing situation."