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CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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## RAHALL JOINS FIGHT AGAINST PAC ELECTION DOMINATION

Washington, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) has joined in sponsoring legislation to control the mounting costs of Congressional campaigns by reducing the role played by Political Action Committees (PACs) in financing campaigns.

"The rising expense of mounting a Congressional campaign can be traced in part to the growth of political action committees," Rep. Rahall said. "PAC spending is on a runaway course. In the 1974 election, 608 PACs contributed \$12.5 million to Congressional candidates. During the most recent election cycle, 4100 PACs are estimated to have given more than \$140 million to Congressional candidates."

"This trend is deeply troubling in that the increase in PAC receipts has been accompanied by a relative decrease in contributions from individual citizens. In fact, individual contributions dropped from three-fourths of total receipts in 1974 to less than half in 1984," Rahall added.

The Comprehensive Campaign Finance Act proposes a system of public financing similar to the matching fund system used in the Presidential primaries. This system is financed through an increase in the current voluntary taxpayer check-off box on individual tax returns, the source of public financing currently provided in Presidential elections. If participating candidates agree to abide by various spending limits, specifically an overall \$350,000 ceiling, they may receive up to \$100,000 in matching funds for all in-state, individual contributions of \$100 or less.

"Unlike all other campaign finance proposals, our bill provides that a PAC may only contribute up to \$500,000 to all federal candidates in an election cycle," Rahall pointed out. "This provision would force the top spending PACs to curb their spending and place some limits on their ever-expanding role in the legislative process. Since present law limits the total amount an individual can give to all candidates, it certainly makes sense that interest groups should face a similar cap on spending."

The legislation also provides candidates with matching funds equal to the amount that is spent in independent advertising against them or for their opponents. "Unlike other campaign reform legislation, this bill does not propose providing candidates with an equal amount of air time utilized by independent committees," Rahall noted. "Such a provision would deter broadcasters from airing any independent political advertising. Moreover, matching funds spent on broadcast time ignores the fact that much political advertising appears in newspapers and in direct mail solicitations."

"I feel that we need to address the problem of the individual small contributor losing influence to group interests. This is inherently damaging to the legislative process," Rahall said. "Congress should reflect the will of the people. At the same time, I do recognize the role of PACs and have no intention of abolishing their right to organize and participate in our political system."