

CONGRESSMAN

News  
From \_\_\_\_\_

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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RAHALL OUTRAGED AT ADMINISTRATION'S ASSAULT ON BLACK LUNG BENEFITS,  
WILL LEAD THE OPPOSITION IN 100TH CONGRESS

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) today expressed his outrage at the President's attempts to target black lung recipients and vowed that he would lead the fight against the Administration as the 100th Congress got under way today.

Rahall has learned that the Reagan Administration is planning a massive assault on the black lung program. While Administration officials are not releasing specific proposals, among the changes being contemplated are the elimination of the fiscal year 1988 COLA for black lung coupled with a 50% reduction in any COLA offered in future years; the rounding of all benefit payments to the next lowest dollar; a reduction in the number of black lung beneficiaries per household from four to two persons; and including the benefits as fully taxable income.

"I find these proposals outrageous and I am prepared to fight the President tooth-and-nail on this," Rahall vowed. "It is inconceivable that the President wants to bleed the disabled coal miners of this nation of their well-deserved compensation. With the economy of West Virginia in such bad shape, our retired miners simply would not be able to make ends meet should these proposals be enacted."

The President is also again calling for a 50% increase in the black lung excise tax paid by coal producers despite the fact that Congress only agreed to a 10% increase last year. "We were able to defeat the Administration's proposal last year because we found that the Black Lung Trust Fund's solvency could be assured with only a 10% rather than a 50% excise tax increase," Rahall said. "The President is evidently not seeking another tax increase for the benefit of the black lung program, but rather as a means for increasing federal revenues."

"This is the ultimate irony of this Administration. While the President continues to insist that he is opposed to any increase in taxes, at the same time he is proposing tax increases under the guise of user fees and excise taxes. A tax is a tax by any name," Rahall noted.