

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Vms
Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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HOUSE PASSES RAHALL COAL HERITAGE BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TODAY PASSED LEGISLATION DIRECTING THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO EXAMINE SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST WITH SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL AND HISTORIC VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA'S COAL MINING HERITAGE. THE MEASURE IS SPONSORED BY U.S. REP. NICK J. RAHALL (D-WV).

"THE COAL MINING HISTORY OF THIS REGION IS A STORY OF STRUGGLE, OF HUMAN SACRIFICE AND OF OCCURRENCES WHICH HAVE LEFT THEIR MARK ON THE HISTORY OF THE NATION AS A WHOLE," RAHALL STATED.

"YET, THERE ARE FEW VESTIGES OF THIS ERA REMAINING AND I BELIEVE IT IS INCUMBENT UPON THIS GENERATION TO ENSURE THAT WHAT DOES REMAIN IS NOT LOST TO FURTHER DECAY. FOR THESE OLD MINING CAMPS AND OTHER RELICS OF THAT TIME ARE AN INTEGRAL AND IMPORTANT PART OF OUR HERITAGE AND THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THEM SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN OR LOST TO FUTURE GENERATIONS."

THE MEASURE, WHICH PASSED BY VOICE VOTE, DIRECTS THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF PROTECTING AND PRESERVING SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL, HISTORIC, AND NATURAL RESOURCES ASSOCIATED WITH THE COAL MINING HERITAGE OF SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA. ALONG WITH IDENTIFYING SPECIFIC SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST, THE STUDY IS TO INDICATE WHETHER THEY ARE OF STATE, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL CULTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST.

THE STUDY IS TO ALSO EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST WITH OTHER NATURAL, SCENIC, RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA THAT ARE MANAGED BY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCIES.

THESE RESOURCES INCLUDE STATE PARKS AND FORESTS, NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM UNITS SUCH AS THE NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER, RECREATIONAL LAKES MANAGED BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, AND HISTORIC LANDMARKS.

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AS PART OF THE STUDY, A VEHICULAR TOUR ROUTE IS TO BE IDENTIFIED LINKING THE COAL HERITAGE SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST WITH THESE OTHER STATE AND FEDERALLY MANAGED AREAS.

RAHALL SAID THAT IN FORMULATING THE STUDY THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE IS TO CONSULT WITH OTHER INTERESTED FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND AUTHORITIES AS WELL AS INTERESTED NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. ONE SUCH ORGANIZATION RAHALL HAS BEEN WORKING WITH HAS BEEN FORMED UNDER THE NAME COALWAYS.

THE ELEVEN COUNTIES THAT ARE THE SUBJECT OF THE STUDY ARE CABELL, WAYNE, MINGO, LOGAN, McDOWELL, WYOMING, RALEIGH, MERCER, BOONE, FAYETTE AND SUMMERS.

ACCORDING TO RAHALL, THE LEGISLATION REQUIRES THE SUBMISSION OF A REPORT CONTAINING THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY TO THE CONGRESS WITHIN ONE YEAR AFTER THE DATE OF ENACTMENT. THE BILL WILL NOW BE PENDING BEFORE THE SENATE FOR ITS CONSIDERATION.