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RAHALL GOES TO BAT FOR BECKLEY VA CENTER

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) said the passage of the Veterans Administration medical construction request by the Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, will be of great aid to the Beckley Veterans Administration Medical Center. In testimony submitted to the subcommittee, Rahall stated that funding has been authorized by the Veterans Affairs Committee and is necessary to provide quality health care to veterans in Southern West Virginia.

"I am very pleased to report that the Veterans Affairs Committee has included \$15.7 million in their authorization resolution for fiscal year 1989 for a much needed expansion project," Rahall said.

Rahall testified that the Beckley VAMC, constructed in 1950, is a 174-bed acute medical and surgical center, with a 42-bed nursing home care unit. He added that veterans from a wide region utilize the facility which provides primary and secondary care in addition to certain specialty areas.

"There are approximately 57,000 veterans with potential access to the Beckley facility," Rahall stated. "These veterans come from eleven counties in West Virginia and one in Virginia. It is clear how important the services provided by the Beckley VAMC are to the veterans of Southern West Virginia and even Southwestern Virginia."

The Beckley VAMC was home to a program known as the "Beckley Plan." Under this arrangement, community specialists were called in to care for veterans in the Beckley VAMC. The plan was phased out in 1987 and currently the VA staff is on the rise.

"Since the phasing out of the Beckley Plan, the center has hired a cardiologist, a urologist, an oncologist and a psychiatrist," Rahall said. "Two more specialists, a nephrologist and another oncologist, are expected to be recruited this year."

Rahall also testified that the center has opened a new Behavior Science Facility, which has served 2,000 patients since its opening.

"The Behavior Science Facility is expected to have approximately 6,000 outpatient visits annually," Rahall said. "Although this facility represents a giant step toward providing for outpatient psychiatric care, an additional need still exists to provide acute inpatient psychiatric care to veterans in the Beckley area."