

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

gerry great

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR A.M. RELEASE ON
SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1988

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RAHALL FAVORS CREATION OF VA CABINET POSITION

BECKLEY, W.VA. - Speaking before the Mid-Winter Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in his hometown, U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) this morning reiterated his support for the elevation of the Veterans Administration to a Cabinet level department in the Executive Branch.

"The movement to elevate the status of the Veterans Administration into a full fledged cabinet-level department is one which is long overdue," Rahall told those assembled. "It is one which I am proud to say, that I have supported since its introduction in the Congress last year."

Rahall stressed that those in government must remember and realize that were it not for the American veterans, freedom and democracy as we know it would not exist. He said that under the current system, the Veterans Administration does not get the attention it deserves. He said that the 78 million Americans eligible for benefits from the Veterans Administration deserve better representation in the executive branch of government.

"Currently, the VA is under the thumb of the President's Office of Management and Budget, along with a myriad of other programs," Rahall stated. "I feel, as do you, that Veterans Affairs tend to get lost in the shuffle at that level. As my colleague, the Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Sonny Montgomery of Mississippi, put it: Veterans programs are too important to be left to the midlevel decision makers at O.M.B."

Rahall also briefed the audience on the status of projects at the Beckley and Huntington Veterans Administration Medical Centers. At the present time the Congressman said both projects are at the discretion of the Veterans Administration for funding and he believes both will receive favorable consideration. Rahall testified before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the House Appropriations Committee in favor of the projects which will aid Veterans in West Virginia by expansion of facilities which will result in increased services to those using the clinics.

"The VA's five year plan includes a funding level of \$15.7 million for the clinical addition at the Beckley VAMC. The VA plans to begin funding this in fiscal year 1989, and I will continue to press the VA to uphold this commitment," Rahall said. "The expansion of the Huntington VAMC looks very promising. It is very high on the priority list at the VA so when the decision is made to prioritize and fund the various projects, Huntington will be right near the top of the list."

Rahall also spoke of action in the first session of the 100th Congress that aids Veterans including furthering employment and educational opportunities; certain benefits to Veterans and survivors who participated in atmospheric nuclear tests, or the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; improved housing programs, improved overall health care and a cost-of-living adjustment to Veterans and their dependents.