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RAHALL SAYS DISASTER RELIEF AMENDMENT WILL HELP IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) a ranking member of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, said that a bill approved by that panel will greatly aid West Virginians who may be victims of floods and other natural disasters and emergencies.

The legislation, H.R. 2707, the Major Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Amendments of 1987, simplifies procedures for obtaining grants and pursuing appeals. It authorizes the President to provide up to one million dollars for hazard mitigation to reduce the risk of future damage in an area affected by a major disaster, and modifies the definition of a disaster and emergency to differentiate between the two and the types of assistance available. Rahall lauded one provision mandating the federal share given to disaster and emergency victims.

"This bill will set the federal share at 100 % for emergencies and not less than 75% for disasters," Rahall said. "By setting these parameters, we are letting people know that if your home or business is flooded, the government will help you get back on your feet."

The measure also contains provisions that allows the Federal Government to allow forgiveness of repayment in extreme circumstances, improvements in temporary housing, grants and assistance to help reduce the risk of future damage.

"All of these measures will aid the people of West Virginia, especially those in flood prone areas such as the Tug Valley of Mingo County and many of the areas that were devastated in the floods of November 1985," Rahall stated. "Many times when people lose everything, they cannot repay to restore their homes and businesses. Life savings may be wiped away with the topsoil, never to be seen again. By examining each case individually, we can help people recover both economically and emotionally. The main purpose of this bill is to assure consistency in the types of assistance provided while at the same time making that aid more responsive to the needs of communities and individuals."

The measure passed the Committee unanimously and will go to the full House of Representatives for consideration on Thursday, March 17.