

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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W.VA. COAL PROGRAM SUBJECT OF CONGRESSIONAL SCRUTINY

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- West Virginia's coal regulatory program will be the subject of a congressional hearing held in Logan next week.

U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) said today the Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, which he chairs, will be in Logan on Monday, April 25, to examine the surface coal mining regulatory program with specific focus on the current environment within West Virginia for illegal mining activities, the potential for future abuses of this nature, and the status of out-of-state coal operators who are unable to obtain mining permits in other states but are seeking mining permits in West Virginia.

"Frankly, the purpose of the hearing is to send a very clear message that wildcat operations are not welcomed in West Virginia. I view this as a preemptive strike. I will not stand idle and watch West Virginia lose primacy over its coal program to the courts and the federal government," Rahall stated.

Rahall noted that a result of illegal mining and other failings in Kentucky, under a so-called settlement agreement devised by environmental organizations, in effect, the regulatory program there is now being administered by the federal government.

"Because of this situation, I fear that some of the characters whose illegal activities gave rise to the Kentucky settlement agreement are beginning to move into our State. One of two of them have already gained public attention," Rahall noted.

The congressman said that illegal mining not only harms the environment and the health and safety of our citizens, but is done to the detriment of the vast majority of law abiding coal producers of West Virginia who are paying the full cost of complying with the law.

The hearing will be held at the R.R. Willis Vocational School in Logan starting at 1 p.m. on Monday, April 25, 1988.