

News
From _____

CONGRESSMAN

Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COAL HERITAGE SITE DEVELOPMENT FOSTERED BY RAHALL BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. REP. NICK J. RAHALL (D-WV) TODAY INTRODUCED LEGISLATION THAT WILL AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF PROTECTING AND PRESERVING SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST WITH SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL AND HISTORIC VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA'S COAL MINING HERITAGE.

THE LEGISLATION WOULD REQUIRE THE PARK SERVICE TO IDENTIFY THESE SITES, AND THE ROUTES WHICH LINK THEM TOGETHER, AS WELL AS EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP THEY HAVE WITH EXISTING FEDERAL AND STATE PARK UNITS.

UNDER THE LEGISLATION, THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE WOULD WORK WITH COALWAYS (A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED TO EXAMINE THE REGION'S COAL HISTORY POTENTIAL) AND ANY OTHER INTERESTED STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITIES AND WITHIN A ONE-YEAR PERIOD REPORT TO CONGRESS WITH ITS FINDINGS.

"THE BOTTOM LINE OF ALL OF THIS IS THAT I DO NOT BELIEVE WE IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA SHOULD FAIL TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VAST OPPORTUNITIES WHICH EXIST TO EXPAND OUR ECONOMIC BASE THROUGH THE PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE SITES WHICH GAVE RISE TO MUCH OF OUR HISTORY AND THE CULTURAL VALUES WHICH WE HOLD TODAY," RAHALL SAID.

"TO OUR EAST LIES THE NEW RIVER GORGE COUNTRY. TO OUR WEST IS THE OHIO RIVER VALLEY. BETWEEN THESE TWO REGIONS ARE A NUMBER OF STATE PARK UNITS. I BELIEVE THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUMBER OF RECOGNIZED COAL HERITAGE SITES AND POINTS OF INTEREST COMPLETE WITH A CLEARLY DEFINED NETWORK OF ROADS LINKING THEM ALL TOGETHER, IN EFFECT, A COAL HERITAGE TRAIL, WILL PROVIDE A COHESIVE INFRASTRUTURE UPON WHICH WE CAN BUILD FOR THE FUTURE."

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RAHALL NOTED THAT THE ORGANIZATION THAT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BY COALWAYS AND THE ASSISTANCE IT IS GETTING FROM THE EDA WOULD SERVE AS THE NUCLEUS FOR THE PROJECT. "THE COALWAYS STUDY WILL COMPLIMENT THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE EFFORT BY PROVIDING NECESSARY LOCAL INPUT," HE SAID.

"WITH THE DIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THIS ENDEAVOR, FRANKLY, THE STAGE WILL BE SET FOR ME TO TAKE FUTURE ACTIONS TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COAL MINING HERITAGE SITES IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA THROUGH THE CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORIZATION AND APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS," RAHALL STATED.

"OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE IS THE FACT THAT THE PARK SERVICE REPORT REQUIRED BY MY LEGISLATION WILL BE MADE TO A CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHICH I AM A SENIOR MEMBER -- THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INTERIOR AND INSULAR AFFAIRS," SAID RAHALL. "AND, AS THE RANKING DEMOCRAT ON THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE TO WHICH THIS BILL WAS REFERRED, I AM IN A GOOD POSITION TO ENSURE ITS CONSIDERATION."