

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 8, 1988CONTACT: JERRY BURKOT
202-225-3452**RAHALL SEEKS CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR W.VA. TOURISM EFFORTS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) today urged his fellow members of Congress to join him in boosting tourism in West Virginia and all over the nation. Rahall asked for their support in realizing the vast tourism potential in our state.

In an address to the Executive Board of the House Travel and Tourism Caucus, Rahall spoke of the many tourism-related initiatives that he has undertaken to enhance the West Virginia tourism industry. "With the changing nature of the coal industry in West Virginia, tourism has become our ace in the hole," Rahall told his colleagues. "Currently a \$1.2 Billion industry, we in West Virginia are attempting to tap this potential even further by putting the natural beauty of our state to work for the people."

Rahall related the ongoing efforts to preserve the coal mining heritage of the state through Coalways, Inc., a non-profit group that is spearheading this effort. Rahall is a member of the Coalways Board of Directors. "I have gotten through the House Interior Committee legislation that would fund a National Park Service feasibility study to gauge the benefits of restoring an old coal town and preserving many artifacts and historic sites that tell the story of this rich coal heritage," Rahall said. "I envision something in the nature of a coal heritage trail traversing southern West Virginia."

Rahall also spoke of the tourist magnetism of the New River Gorge and the enormous potential it holds for the state. "The New River, the world's second oldest river, is truly a sight to behold, yet at this point can only be viewed while rafting down the river, or from its lower banks," Rahall pointed out. "A year ago, I was able to include funding in the highway bill for the New River Parkway, which will enable the spectacular view of the New River Gorge to be viewed from the road, while at the same time providing a natural link between two major interstates, I-64 and I-77."

"The spin-off potential in terms of jobs, motel, restaurants, shops and other services is very promising," Rahall added.

Rahall cited the close cooperation and mutual interests of the people of West Virginia and the Caucus as key to the success of his efforts in the House. "The passage of my legislation to provide federal protection to several West Virginia rivers, as well as the fast track enjoyed by my bill to enhance the hunting and fishing opportunities in the state would not be possible without the support of my colleagues, and I look forward to continuing to work with them in promoting the state of West Virginia," Rahall said.