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RAHALL, BECKLEY LEADERS FORM GOVERNMENT CENTER TASK FORCE

Beckley, W. Va. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV) today announced the formation of a task force to formulate a strategy to locate a government office complex in the City of Beckley. Rahall envisions a complex to house federal, state & local government offices in one centralized location.

"I suggested this approach to Mr. Leslie Gates, Executive Director of Beckley Renaissance, Inc., and I am pleased that at the Renaissance meeting yesterday, there appeared to be well-rounded support in Beckley to pursue this idea," Rahall said. "I think the group we have formed will have the resources, abilities, and commitment to bring this to fruition. I want to commend Leslie Gates for all of his fine work and initiative in the project thus far."

The committee will be composed of Rep. Nick Rahall; Leslie Gates; C. Elton "Buck" Byron, Jr. and William Wooton, Raleigh County Bar Association; Charles Davis, Chamber of Commerce; Sam Hindman, Beckley Newspapers, Inc.; Frank "Bucky" Harkins, Jr., Bank of Raleigh; Charles Shoemaker, Mayor of Beckley; and representatives from the offices of U.S. Sens. Robert C. Byrd and Jay Rockefeller.

"I plan to organize a meeting of all federal agencies involved in this proposal, with their real estate representatives, to meet with the committee in the next month or so," Rahall said. "It is extremely important that these agencies, individually and collectively, agree with this concept, as agency input will be essential. Federal agency moves can be very complex, and certainly the input of the local employees of the respective agencies will be pivotal."

Rahall reiterated his strong support for the proposal. "I do believe the City of Beckley can greatly benefit from this proposal, and it is most conducive with what Beckley Renaissance, Inc. has established as its goals," Rahall observed. "With the Federal, State and local governments all working hand in hand, the economic impact on the City can be quite broad in terms of development, and I see this project as yet another cog in the ever-turning economic development wheel. Each time we add another project the wheel grows stronger, and is able to attract and support greater development and larger projects."