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RAHALL TESTIFIES ON CAPITOL HILL FOR WEST VIRGINIA VETERANS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) testifying before a Congressional Appropriations Subcommittee, told colleagues and the nation that Congress must act now to provide adequate funding to meet the immediate shortfall facing Veterans Administration Medical Centers (VAMC).

Appearing before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD and Independent Agencies, Rahall stated, "Almost all of this country's 172 VAMC's are combatting staff shortages, terminated services and curtailment of needed construction and renovation. Most alarming though, is the fact that Veterans are being turned away from VA centers for treatment. We must stop this injustice. If this shortfall of funding is not corrected, it will have a devastating affect not only on the two VAMCs in my district, but on centers across our nation."

The two VAMCs in Rahall's district are located in Huntington and Beckley. In both locations, the centers are vital parts of the community and serve as secondary care centers providing acute medical, surgical inpatient care and intermediate inpatient care. The Huntington facility, with 180 beds, is one of the first constructed by the VA. It serves nine counties in West Virginia. The Beckley center serves eleven West Virginia counties and has 174 beds. Together, these centers provide care to approximately 200,000 Veterans.

"The VA medical programs are suffering a shortage in program funding this fiscal year of more than \$625 million," Rahall stated. "We cannot let this go uncorrected. We owe our veterans their fair share. They have risked their lives and made immense sacrifices for this great country of our's, and it is our obligation to see that their commitment is honored."