

News  
From \_\_\_\_\_

CONGRESSMAN

# Nick Rahall

WEST VIRGINIA-4th DISTRICT

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## Rahall Garners Republican Support For ARC Bills

WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.), during two days of committee hearings being held on his bills to fund and speed the completion of the Appalachian Corridor and to maintain the Appalachian Regional Commission, received an endorsement from the ranking minority member of the Subcommittee on Economic Development. In receiving testimony, Rep. Bob McEwen (R-Ohio), a member of the subcommittee, expressed his strong support for the passage of Rahall's legislation. Rahall's campaign to complete the corridor system by the end of this century continues to attract growing bipartisan support.

"I am encouraged by the support I am receiving from the other side of the aisle in the House. The Appalachian corridor system is a vital lifeline for West Virginia's future as well as many other states in Appalachia. I would hope the White House will take note of the Republican support these bills are enjoying" Rahall said. The Bush administration has never called for the dismantling of the ARC as President Reagan had in each year of his administration.

Also very supportive of the bills was Mr. Larry Lane representing the McDowell County, West Virginia public schools. Mr. Lane illustrated the effectiveness of two ARC projects in McDowell County schools in which he has been involved, dropout prevention and a basic skills reading program.

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STATEMENT OF NICK J. RAHALL, II  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
MAY 23, 1989

Mr. Chairman, I would like to commend you for holding this set of hearings to receive testimony regarding the reauthorization of the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration, two programs of vital importance to my home state of West Virginia. As all of us here today know, this subcommittee, our full committee and yes, even the full House of Representatives, over the past eight years have consistently approved legislation to reauthorize the ARC and EDA, despite opposition by the administration and inaction on the part of the other body. It is my hope that by beginning the reauthorization process so early on this Congress, and with the able leadership provided by you and Chairman Anderson, action this Congress on the ARC and EDA might extend beyond the House.

I would like to begin by thanking those who will be offering testimony over the next two days for appearing before us -- your insights are critical to the shaping of sound, relevant reauthorizing legislation. I look forward to hearing your comments.

Of the many pieces of legislation referred to this subcommittee which are the subjects of these hearings, I am especially interested in two bills which I, along with the other members of the West Virginia delegation, have introduced, H.R. 1166 and H.R. 1167.

H.R. 1166 simply reauthorizes the ARC at a level of \$185 million annually for five years. Of that amount, each year \$144 million would be dedicated to the Appalachian corridor system; the remaining funds would go toward the ARC's other important programs.



There is no question in my mind as to the importance of maintaining the ARC at an adequate funding level in the future. Since 1965, this program has had an enormous, positive impact on Appalachia, and I believe that the continuation of it is crucial to the economic revitalization of this Region. For while much has been accomplished in the Region with the assistance of the ARC, much remains to be done. Many in Appalachia continue to struggle against lingering poverty and high unemployment. The high school dropout rate remains unacceptably high, and many of the area's unemployed are functionally illiterate. There are grave shortages of health care services and the infant mortality rate is frightening, especially in rural areas such as those in southern West Virginia.

Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased that legislation you have introduced, H.R. 2015 -- which I might add I have cosponsored -- authorizes the ARC at the \$185 million annual level contained in my bill, although only for three years. Frankly, this is a modest authorization level for a program that has proved so very successful over the years and which I feel is a model federal/state partnership.

The second bill I mentioned, H.R. 1167, would authorize the use of \$287 million each year for five years from the Highway Trust Fund surplus for use in the construction of the Appalachian corridors. As you know, the 3000 mile Appalachian Corridor System is only two-thirds complete: approximately 1000 miles of the total system remain unfinished. Obviously these roads are crucial to new economic development in the Region. However, at current funding levels, the construction of the corridor system will not be finished until at least 2065. One only has to travel in my home State to realize the importance of the timely completion of these highways. Corridor G, which runs from Charleston to the state line at Williamson, will eventually

be 80 miles in length. Two segments of the road, totalling 19 miles, remain incomplete and at current levels of funding will not be finished for another 25 years. These two segments are needed to link Corridor G with Logan and Williamson, two vital communities in southern West Virginia.

Under the formula set by H.R. 1167, the trust fund allocation would be in addition to the annual federal highway allocation currently received by the states. However, states would have to make some tough choices in order to take advantage of the program. While 20 percent of a state's annual funding would come from the ARC, the state would be required to put in 20 percent of its own funding, in addition to 20 percent from its annual highway trust fund allocation. The remaining 40 percent of the formula would be made up of a trust fund matching bonus, a 2-1 match triggered by the funds committed from a state's annual federal highway allocation. It is important to note that participation in this program would not be mandatory for the Appalachian states. Because it calls for hard choices between corridor completion and other highway needs, some states may elect to forgo the program.

I urge the subcommittee members to take a hard look at this proposal, which I feel is a sound, equitable approach to completing the corridor system -- designated as a federal priority for 25 years -- in a timely manner. With the completion of the federal interstate highway system slated for the early 1990s, now is the time to begin shaping the future of our highway program. This bill is a good start.

Mr. Chairman, realizing the lengthy schedule before us, I will end my statement here. I welcome any comments on the legislation I have introduced and I would like to reiterate my strong support for both the ARC and EDA. I again commend you for holding these important hearings. Thank you.