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EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL PASSES HOUSE

WASHINGTON, DC -- U. S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) today supported the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill, which passed the House of Representatives. Rahall is pleased that the House passed the bill because "it provides funds which will support projects of interest to all West Virginians."

The bill provides \$1.2 billion to the Veterans Affairs Department, \$340 million of which will be directed to provide better medical care and facilities for veterans across the country. In recent months, veterans have actually been turned away from hospitals for essential treatment because of serious funding shortfalls. "It is an outrage that the brave men and women who served our country in the armed forces have been subjected to this indignity," Rahall said. Today's bill will rectify this situation by ensuring that money will be available for all veterans' medical needs.

In addition, \$6.6 million will be provided for the Essential Air Service program, which serves rural communities. As a result of today's vote, federal assistance will continue to be provided for airports in Beckley, Clarksburg, Elkins, Bluefield, and Morgantown. "Without this additional funding, these communities would be left to fend for themselves without air service," Rahall said.

The Federal Aviation Administration has also been required by the bill to renegotiate a grant agreement for the Logan County Airport. This provision will provide funds to cover additional project costs for proposed construction, allowing the airport to expand services to the region.

Finally, the Guaranteed Student Loan Program will receive \$892 million, and will use this money to meet interest subsidy payments, which will allow students to continue financing their college educations at affordable interest rates. Congressman Rahall pointed out that while West Virginia leads the nation in the percentage of its high school students who eventually graduate, it trails behind most other states in the percentage of those graduates who go on to college. According to Rahall, "this provision of the bill will make higher education more attractive and affordable to those students who need it most."