



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

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**HOUSE PANEL APPROVES LABOR HISTORY MEASURE
RAHALL SAYS UMWA AND AFL-CIO AFFILIATION TIMELY FACTOR**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Following on the heels of the United Mine Workers of America decision to affiliate with the AFL-CIO, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) announced that a House Subcommittee today approved legislation aimed at establishing units of the National Park System recognizing American Labor History.

"After nearly half a century of self-imposed exile from the American Federation of Labor, the UMWA's decision yesterday to reaffiliate makes this legislation timely and extremely significant," Rahall said during consideration of the measure by the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands.

The bill directs the Interior Department to prepare and transmit to the Congress a "National Historic Landmark Theme Study on American Labor History" identifying sites, buildings and structures that best illustrate or commemorate American labor history. Based on the study, Congress would consider the establishment of new park units.

In his remarks on the bill, Rahall stipulated that the study is to give due consideration to West Virginia and the UMWA. "Our very culture was shaped to a large degree by the epic struggles and adversities faced by the men and woman who worked in the coal mines during the early part of this century, and their efforts toward unionization," he said. "The labor disturbances of that era between the United Mine Workers of America and the coal industry -- at places with names like Paint Creek, Cabin Creek, the Matewan Massacre in 1920, and the battle at Blair Mountain the following year when the President of the United States sent troops in to quell a miners' revolt -- are of national significance."

According to Rahall: "For it was at these places that the 'line in the sand' was drawn. Where the demand that human dignity, and decency, be recognized in the workplace could no longer be ignored. It is, as such, of the utmost importance that the physical vestiges of that era not be lost to future generations."

The bill, H.R. 2949, will be considered by the full Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in the near future.