



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

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HOUSE MINING PANEL RECOMMENDS BIG BOOST IN MINE SAFETY FUNDING
RAHALL SEEKS TO ENHANCE MINE SAFETY RESEARCH EFFORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) said today his Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources will be recommending a 37% increase amounting to \$20 million over the President's budget request for mine health and safety technology programs at the U.S. Bureau of Mines. The Administration's budget would provide only \$38 million for these programs in fiscal year 1991.

"The Subcommittee simply cannot condone the continued and blatant disregard shown by these budget submissions for research which seek to enhance the health and safety of the Nation's miners," Rahall said. "This lack of health and safety emphasis is in contrast to the Administration's goal, as announced recently by the administrator of the Mine Safety and Health Administration, of a fatality-free year in the Nation's mines by the end of this century."

Among the programs targeted for increased funding by the Rahall panel are those which involve devising technologies to control respirable dust, provide for better mine ventilation, avoid catastrophic failures in mine roof and walls, noise control and research aimed at reducing back injuries (the single largest type of mining industry injury).

"Recent innovations in mining methods such as extended dimension longwalls and deep cut mining have illustrated the inability to predict the impact of new systems on the health and safety of miners. For example, as longwall dimensions increase, effected are the ability of miners to escape, dust exposure, ground stability, methane liberation, ventilation and other mine parameters. A major research effort is needed to provide the means to evaluate the effects of such changes before adverse health and safety situations are experienced in the Nation's mines," Rahall said.

The recommendations made by the Rahall panel will be considered next week by the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Under the Congressional Budget Act, they will then be incorporated into the fiscal year 1991 budget resolution that will be acted on later this year.