



U.S. Congressman

Nick Rahall*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MARCH 9, 1994CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 225-9989**RAHALL MEASURE WOULD ESTABLISH
WEST VIRGINIA NATIONAL COAL HERITAGE AREA**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Following through on the findings of a recent National Park Service study, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) has introduced the "West Virginia National Coal Heritage Area Act of 1994". Rahall said the purpose of the measure is to facilitate the preservation of the historic and cultural resources associated with the coal mining heritage of southern West Virginia.

"I believe it is incumbent upon this generation to ensure that what does remain is not lost to further decay," Rahall stated in introducing the bill. "For these old mining camps, company stores, tipples and related structures are an integral and important part of our heritage and the lessons learned from them should not be forgotten or lost to future generations."

Earlier this year, the National Park Service completed a study entitled A Coal Mining Heritage Study: Southern West Virginia which found that in southern West Virginia "the relationship among different elements of the past and present in the coal mining region form a distinctive landscape of national interest."

Under the Rahall bill, the Secretary of the Interior would be authorized to enter into an agreement with the Governor of the State of West Virginia, acting through the Division of Culture and History and the Division of Tourism and Parks, through which Federal assistance would be provided for a number of initiatives. Among them:

**** The preservation, restoration, and maintenance of buildings, structures, facilities, sites and points of interest for public use that possess cultural, historical and architectural values associated with the coal mining heritage of the Area.**

**** The coordination of activities by Federal, State and local governments and private businesses and organizations in order to further historic preservation and compatible economic revitalization.**

**** The development of guidelines and standards for projects for the preservation and restoration of historic properties, including interpretive methods, that will further historic preservation in the region.**

Under the Heritage Area approach, Rahall said that local units of government and non-profit organizations rather than the Federal government would take the lead in implementing coal heritage measures. The primary role of the Federal government would be to provide financial assistance and to facilitate the coordination of proposed activities.

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"The coal mining history of southern West Virginia is indeed a story of struggle, of human sacrifice and of occurrences which have left their mark on the history of the Nation as a whole," Rahall stated.

In reference to the Matewan Massacre and the Battle of Blair Mountain, he noted that: "The events which took place are part of West Virginia's heritage, and a part of America's heritage. A history that played not only an essential role in the formation of our culture and values, but to the industrialization of the United States."

The bill would also authorize a study pursuant to the National Trails System Act to determine the feasibility of establishing a "Miners' March National Historic Trail" on "the route from Lens Creek near Marmet to Blair Mountain in West Virginia traveled by coal miners dramatizing the need for social justice between August 20, 1921, and September 4, 1921, during what is commonly known as the Battle of Blair Mountain."

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