



U.S. Congressman

Nick Rahall*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 23, 1994CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 225-9989**RAHALL SAYS WORKER TRAINING AND SAFETY
CRITICAL TO ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP
Summit Meeting On Issue Held In Beckley**

Beckley, WV -- Advancements in cleaning up hazardous materials sites must go hand-in-hand with increased worker training, was the message U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) sent to a summit meeting of government, labor and management representatives gathered today at the National Mine Safety and Health Academy.

"The public investment in environmental restoration projects is ill-served if we cannot protect, to the fullest extent possible, the health and safety of the worker," Rahall stated.

Hosted by the International Union of Operating Engineers, the meeting is being held to address the need for training individuals to work safely and efficiently in the field of environmental cleanup.

Rahall said it was fitting that the meeting was being conducted at the National Mine Safety and Health Academy; a facility built to train mine safety inspectors to help safeguard the lives of coal miners and improve their working environment.

"Today, this facility is serving to advance a new generation of trainers, to help safeguard the health and safety of those employed as operating engineers and who are engaged in hazardous waste clean-up," he noted.

In his remarks, Rahall pledged to seek an increased authorization in a Superfund program administered by the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences that provides grants for worker training programs.

Legislation to reauthorize the Superfund law has just cleared one House committee and will soon be considered by the Committee on Public Works and Transportation of which Rahall is a member.

"We must keep in mind that as greater financial resources are brought to bear to address our Nation's pressing need to engage in environmental restoration, and as new technologies are employed in this endeavor, the threat posed by contamination to the workers rises proportionately," he stated.

Rahall also observed that there is a dovetailing of interests between job creation and environmental clean-up initiatives. As an example, he cited the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program which has served to finance the reclamation of many orphaned coal mine lands in southern West Virginia.

He also said this is why he supports a strong reauthorization of the Clean Water Act; which is currently pending before the Public Works and Transportation Committee. "It is this legislation that will provide the Federal assistance so necessary for constructing wastewater treatment facilities, and to further advance our National goal of fishable and swimmable waters," Rahall concluded.

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