



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****CONTACT: STEPHEN SPINA****THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1989****PHONE: (202) 225-3452****RAHALL SUPPORTS HUD, VA FUNDING LEVELS**

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- In remarks made on the House floor, Congressman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) Wednesday urged his colleagues to approve the Conference Report on H.R. 2916, the Fiscal Year 1990 appropriations bill for VA, HUD, and other independent agencies. "Money called for in this bill will aid, house, and help people who are striving every day just to survive," said Rahall.

\$29.3 billion has been earmarked specifically for the Veterans Administration, including \$11.4 billion for Veterans' medical care, a full \$551 million over the fiscal year 1989 funding level. This money will help the VA hospitals in Beckley and Huntington to treat more patients, purchase much needed supplies and equipment, and provide for homeless programs for veterans as authorized by the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act.

In addition, the conference report specifically provides for \$10.5 million in new activation money for the clinical addition project at the Huntington VA Medical Center, of which \$3.7 million is specifically earmarked for 51 new staff positions that will be created. Also, the conference report urges the VA to purchase approximately 13.5 acres of land adjacent to the Beckley VA Medical Center at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

Huntington and Beckley will also be eligible to receive a portion of the \$15.4 billion that has been appropriated for veterans' service connected compensation payments and pensions. Of that amount, \$413.7 million will go to major construction projects and \$111.9 million for minor construction projects.

"A great number of my constituents have served their country," said Rahall. "And it is my duty as their representative to see that they receive the full share of benefits to which they are entitled. These men and women have given selflessly of themselves and they deserve the finest facilities available."

Also of great importance to West Virginia is the \$286.5 million contained in the report for HUD programs to assist the homeless. These funds are 127% more than the funds appropriated last year, and will help approximately 9,000 people who require assistance and the 3,000 who need shelter in West Virginia every year. A number of housing programs were also funded in the report. \$11.5 billion for various housing programs, which was 20% higher than the FY 1989 level and \$1.7 billion more than the level requested by the Administration.

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"In these times of fiscal restraint we must be conscious of our responsibility to reduce the deficit; however, compassion for those less fortunate must never take second place. We need to provide sufficient funding to the pressing problem of homelessness. If for nothing else, then to simply correct the wrong doing of HUD," said Rahall.

Also earmarked in the report is a total of \$2.9 billion for the Community Development Block Grant, a program that supplies much needed development assistance to towns and cities throughout West Virginia and the nation.

"At a time when we should be promoting economic growth to increase our tax base, increasing employment, increasing our share in the world market, and ultimately working to decrease the dual deficits, it seems to me that programs like CDBG are the kinds we should be supporting," said Rahall.

Finally, \$2 billion has also been earmarked for the Environmental Protection Agency for construction grants. What makes this of particular importance to the fourth district and especially counties like McDowell, is that this money will help fund the planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment facilities. More and more, small towns are finding it harder to comply with the Clean Water Act because of outdated facilities and a lack of funds available to improve them. The funding provided by this measure for the sewer grant program is critical for many small communities in West Virginia.

STATEMENT OF NICK J. RAHALL, II
SUPPORT FOR THE CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2916, VA, HUD AND INDEPENDENT
AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS, FY90
OCTOBER 24, 1989

Mr. Chairman. I rise in strong support of the conference report on H.R. 2916, the FY 1990 appropriations bill for VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies. Many of the programs funded in this \$65.1 billion measure are of great importance to my home state of West Virginia, and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few of them.

The conference report appropriates \$29.3 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, including \$11.4 billion for veterans' medical care, which is \$551 million over the FY 1989 funding level. These funds will allow VA hospitals to treat more patients, purchase much needed supplies and equipment, and provide for homeless programs for veterans as authorized by the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. [This amount specifically provides for \$10.5 million in new activation money for clinical addition project at the Huntington VA facility. The breakdown for these funds is as follows: \$5.5 million in equipment, \$1.3 million for general expenses such as supplies, and \$3.7 million to pay for 51 new medical center staff members. Also, the conference report urges the VA to purchase approximately 13.5 acres of land adjacent to the Beckley VA Medical Center at an estimated cost of \$100,000.]

In addition, \$15.4 billion is appropriated for veterans' service connected compensation payments and pensions. The measure also includes \$413.7 million for major construction projects and \$111.9 million for minor construction projects. The VA will determine how the money appropriated for minor construction projects will be allocated. Veterans' Affairs Medical Center Hospitals, such as those in Beckley and Huntington, will be eligible to receive funds.

Also of great importance to West Virginia is the \$286.5 million contained in the conference report for HUD programs to assist the homeless. This funding level is \$160 million (127%) more than the FY 1989 level and is money well spent. According to the most recent data, 9,224 homeless individuals received services to meet basic needs in West Virginia, with 2,655 such individuals receiving shelter in FY 1987. While it is difficult to estimate the total number of homeless in this country, or even in West Virginia, it is clear that that number is significant. While it is doubtful that the funds in this bill will solve the homeless problem, they will go far toward alleviating the homelessness in the United States. I am confident that West Virginia and other states will use this increased funding to the fullest extent possible.

Directly related to the efforts to solve the homeless problem are the housing programs contained in the conference report. The agreement provides a total of \$11.5 billion for various housing programs which is approximately 20% higher than the FY 1989 appropriations level, and \$1.7 billion more than the level requested by the Administration. I think it is very important that we continue to work to see that affordable housing is available for people on low income. This is the best preventative measure the federal government can take to stop homelessness before it happens.

The agreement also provides a total of \$2.9 billion in FY 1990 for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program which is approximately equal to the level provided for FY 1989. This program supplies much needed development assistance to towns and cities throughout West Virginia and the nation. While I am pleased that this program has not suffered drastic cuts in this agreement, it is my hope that we will provide significantly more funding for community development programs in the future. At a time when we should be promoting economic growth to increase our tax base, increase employment, increase our share of the world market, and ultimately working to decrease the dual deficits, it seems to me we should be more strongly supporting programs like CDBG, which help to accomplish these goals.

Finally, also of great importance to West Virginia is the \$2 billion appropriated for construction grants under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This program provides much needed assistance to municipal, state and interstate agencies to aid in the planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment facilities. I am pleased to note that this is 69% more than the Administration requested. Adequate funding is especially important this year since this is the last year that funds are authorized for wastewater treatment construction grants. In the future, funding for such construction will be transferred to state revolving funds. These funds are also important because many communities in West Virginia are struggling to comply with the secondary sewage treatment standards mandated by the Clean Water Act. The funding provided by this measure for the sewer grants program is critical for these and other communities throughout the nation, which simply do not have the financial resources to meet the sewage treatment requirements on their own.

While I generally believe that we should be putting more resources into revitalizing our communities and enhancing our competitiveness, this agreement provides reasonable increases in such programs over last year's levels. I urge my colleagues to support passage of the agreement.

Section I

COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEE ACTION

APPROVED BY SUBCOMMITTEE

DENOUNCE EUROPEAN BROADCASTING DIRECTIVE -- H.Res. 257, approved October 12 by the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade denounces the directive recently issued by the European Community that restricts the access of foreign-made television programs to the European market.

VETERANS' HEALTH PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM -- H.R. 3199, approved October 12 by the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education, Training, and Employment, establishes a discretionary assistance program under the Montgomery GI Bill for selected Reserve participants who major in a health care profession and who agree to work for the Veterans' Affairs Department for a limited time.

VETERANS EDUCATION PROGRAM AMENDMENTS -- H.R. 3390, approved October 12 by the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education, Training, and Employment, makes a variety of changes to veterans education program, and expands the VA work study program to include VA administrative work as work study under the program.

FCC AUTHORIZATION -- H.R. 3265, approved October 12 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, authorizes \$110 million in FY 1990 and \$121 million in FY 1991 for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

TELECOMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION AUTHORIZATION -- H.R. 3310, approved October 12 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, authorizes approximately \$15 million in each of fiscal years 1990 and 1991 for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT -- H.R. 2273, approved October 12 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, requires telephone companies to establish within three years a comprehensive network of operators to help hearing-impaired people communicate over the telephone.

DEADLINE FOR ARKANSAS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS -- H.R. 2964, approved October 11 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power, authorizes the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to grant an additional six-year extension of the deadlines by which construction must begin on three hydroelectric projects in Arkansas.

SOUTHEAST RADIOACTIVE WASTE COMPACT -- H.R. 2642, approved October 11 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power, grants congressional consent to amendments to the Southeast Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Compact (an agreement among the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama).

FERC DEADLINE EXTENSION FOR WASHINGTON HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT -- H.R. 3021, approved October 11 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Power, authorizes the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to grant an additional six-year extension of the deadline by which construction must begin on a hydroelectric project in Washington State.

HAZARDOUS WASTE REDUCTION -- H.R. 1457, approved October 11 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Transportation and Hazardous Materials, encourages industries to reduce the amount of hazardous waste they produce and to recycle or treat whatever waste is generated, establishes an Office of Waste Reduction and a waste reduction information clearinghouse at the Environmental Protection Agency, and authorizes matching grants to state waste reduction programs.

CLEAN AIR ACT AMENDMENTS -- H.R. 3030, approved October 12 by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, extends deadlines for polluted areas to meet standards for ozone (the main ingredient of smog), carbon monoxide, and particulates by up to 20 years, and prescribes new control requirements for these areas; requires that all cars sold in the United States meet current California tailpipe emissions standards; extends the required life of pollution control equipment on cars; requires automakers to certify by 1997 that they have the capacity to produce 1 million cars that run on alternative fuels; requires reductions in utility emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, which cause acid rain; and requires the Environmental Protection Agency to establish controls on emissions of 190 toxic pollutants.

ORDERED REPORTED

AID TO POLAND AND HUNGARY -- H.R. 3042, ordered reported October 11 by the Foreign Affairs Committee authorizes \$837 million in economic, agricultural, environmental and other assistance to Poland and Hungary.

AID TO POLAND AND HUNGARY -- H.R. 3042, ordered reported October 11 by the Ways and Means Committee provides trade benefits to Poland under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).

ANTI-TERRORISM AND ARMS EXPORTS AMENDMENTS -- H.R. 91, ordered reported October 11 by the Foreign Affairs Committee makes changes to current law to tighten controls on arms exports and improve efforts to combat international terrorism.

SUMMARY OF PROVISIONS OF H.R. 3390

Section 1. Information to Assist Veterans Receiving Education Benefits

This section would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) to prepare a detailed document describing the benefits, procedures, requirements and other pertinent information regarding educational assistance programs administered by the DVA. This document would be sent to individuals when they first apply for DVA education benefits and annually thereafter, as long as they continue to receive DVA education benefits. The document would also be provided annually to education and training institutions and, upon request, to other individuals involved in DVA education programs, including military education personnel.

The Commission to Assess Veterans' Education Policy (CAVEP) suggested in their report that "...more effective use of GI Bill benefits would result if individuals seeking to use their benefits were advised of the intricacies of the program and of their rights and responsibilities at the outset of their training." A detailed, comprehensive document, as required under H.R. 3390, would be a practical, cost-effective method of ensuring that individuals seeking to train under DVA education programs would have the information necessary to ensure the efficient operation and integrity of these programs.

Section 2. Reporting Requirement and Fee

Under current law, the DVA annually pays a "reporting fee" to educational institutions and training establishments to help defray the costs of processing reports and certifications required to be submitted to the DVA for veterans and eligible persons. The annual fee is determined by multiplying \$7 by the number of individuals receiving benefits under programs of education administered by the DVA. Veterans training under the vocational rehabilitation program for service-connected disabled veterans (Chapter 31, title 38, USC) are not, however, now included in that tally. Section 2 of H.R. 3390 would include these individuals when calculating the amount of the reporting fee to be paid to schools and training institutions.

Section 3. Work Study

As provided under section 1685 of title 38, USC, the DVA operates a work-study program for full-time students training under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30, title 38, USC), vocational rehabilitation (Chapter 31, title 38, USC), VEAP (Chapter 32, title 38, USC), and the Vietnam Era GI Bill (Chapter 34, title 38, USC). Under this program, veteran-students who perform work generally related to the administration of education and other DVA programs may receive minimum-wage payments for up

to 250 hours of employment during a semester or other enrollment period. This is a popular program that has greatly assisted veterans and the DVA.

Section 3 of the bill would amend the work-study program in three ways. First, it was pointed out to the Subcommittee that because veterans are restricted to a maximum of 250 hours of employment per semester or other enrollment period, veterans attending an institution on a semester basis do not have the opportunity to work as many hours as those attending school on a quarter system. Accordingly, H.R. 3390 would provide that veterans may work up to a maximum of 20 hours per week, thus eliminating the inequity that currently exists. Section 3 would also permit all eligible students attending school on at least a half-time basis to participate in the work-study program and would also make survivors and dependents training under Chapter 35, title 38, USC, eligible for work study. The Education Commission and the DVA have stated that the Department needs to attract more students into the program, and these two provisions would assist in that effort.

Section 4. Accepting School Certification for Renewal of Educational Benefits After Unsatisfactory Progress

Section 4 would permit the DVA to accept a school's certification for renewal of an individual's educational benefits following termination for unsatisfactory conduct or progress. Under current law, the Department must find that the cause of the problem has been removed and the program of education is suitable to the veteran's aptitudes, interests, and abilities before resuming payment of education benefits. This procedure, according to the DVA, generally provides little additional pertinent information regarding the veteran and adds substantially to the time required to process these claims and award benefits. Accordingly, section 4 would enable the DVA to provide benefits more quickly and still have the information necessary to ensure an individual's eligibility for the benefits.

Section 5. Technical and Clerical Amendments

This section would make minor corrections and clarify certain issues relative to educational assistance programs administered by the DVA.