



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 2, 1990

CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226-7761

RAHALL SAYS ACTION OVERDUE ON BLACK LUNG LEGISLATION

BECKLEY, WV -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) and 17 other House Members are requesting that action begin immediately on pending black lung reform legislation.

"The hearings have been held, the investigations are completed, it is time to move some bills," Rahall said.

In a letter to Subcommittee on Labor Standards Chairman Austin Murphy, whose panel has jurisdiction over black lung legislation, the 18 House Members stated: "We appreciate the oversight hearings you have held on this issue, but we urge you to begin action on the legislative remedies that have been offered. Thousands of miners or their widows are being victimized by this program that was intended to bring them relief."

Rahall believes that the time-consuming adjudication process for black lung benefit claims, the extremely low approval rate, the inability of claimants to find legal representation, the denial of benefits to widowers, and government attempts to seek repayment of benefits paid under claims that are appealed years after the initial payment was made all point to the pressing need for legislative reform of the program.

"This program was originally envisioned by Congress as being a fairly straightforward program. Yet, through years of administrative maneuverings aggravated by some extremely harmful judicial interpretations, there can be no denial of the fact that black lung proceedings before the Labor Department today are extremely adversarial in nature against the claimant. This type of philosophy certainly does not represent the statutory commitment we made to compensate coal miners and their families," Rahall said.

- 30 -