

U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 16, 1990

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RAHALL: WEST VIRGINIA FIRST, BEFORE FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- U.S. Rep Nick Rahall (D-WV), who has never voted for a foreign aid bill in his fourteen years in Congress, has introduced legislation which will see that billions of dollars in surplus property, that was being squandered by foreign governments, will be offered to states first.

That was the way the law was once written. In 1949, the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act was passed which stated that any excess property, not used by a federal agency, would then be offered to the states. This became an invaluable way for states to acquire quality equipment at no cost. They in turn were able to reinvest in the economy of their states whether it be education, health, or a host of other programs.

Then in 1986, a little known amendment to the Defense Department Authorization Act was passed which gives the secretary of Defense the authority to make available to foreign governments any of its "nonlethal" excess property for "humanitarian relief purposes". The Humanitarian Assistance Program, commonly known as HAP, was then set up, and the states were virtually cut out of the process.

Rahall's bill, H.R. 4026, would see to it that the discretionary power of the Secretary of Defense to give excess property from federal agencies to foreign governments would stop. Materials would be offered to states first.

"West Virginians paid for these materials. They should be the ones to benefit from them," said Rahall. "The Defense Department has used these materials to aid countries, and they have not even bothered to see if they were being used properly, much less at all. We deserve first crack at this surplus. At a time when West Virginia is being told domestic assistance programs must be cut, child care must be cut, infrastructure must be cut, the Defense Department is sending foreign governments on a shopping spree with our charge card."

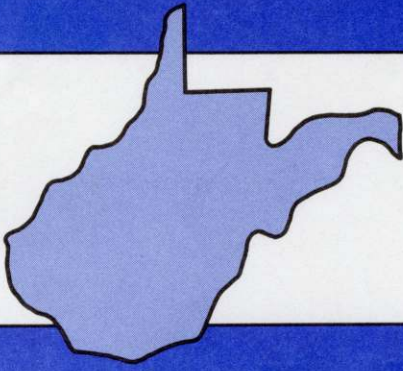
Rahall, along with his introduction of the legislation has also called on the Government Accounting Office, the watchdog agency of the federal government, to investigate into the allegation that no records were being kept on the billions of dollars worth of equipment that was being sent abroad.

"The State Department, which was required by law to track materials that the Defense Department sent to foreign governments, has not been doing their job. They have no idea how much material is being sent overseas or if it is being used effectively," said Rahall.

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Rahall's bill is currently before the Subcommittee on Government Activities and Transportation, which is under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Government Operations. The Congressman will be working directly with Chairwoman Cardiss Collins (D-IL) and the Minority counsel.

"With all the troop cuts and base closings that will occur within the next couple of years, there is going to be a great deal of excess equipment that will be up for grabs," said Rahall. "Now, I do not say that we should ignore the struggling democracies that are emerging around the world, but I am saying that we need to have a voice for the people of West Virginia, for the American people, who deserve as much assistance as any foreign government. I intend to be that voice."



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