



U.S. Congressman
Nick Rahall
WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS

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CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226-7761

RAHALL REMINING BILL ADVANCED IN THE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Comprehensive legislation to facilitate the mining and reclamation of abandoned coal mine lands was favorably reported by the House Mining Subcommittee today, Chairman Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) said.

"This initiative represents the second element in my two-pronged legislative assault on the health, safety and environmental threats posed by abandoned coal mine lands," Rahall stated.

Late last year the House of Representatives passed Rahall sponsored legislation to extend the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund for a 15-year period. The purpose of the Fund is to foster the reclamation of mined lands left in an abandoned and inadequate reclamation status prior to the date of enactment of the federal Surface Mining Act in 1977. However, Rahall believes that even with the extension, all of the high-priority abandoned mine sites in West Virginia and other Appalachian Region states will not be reclaimed.

The purpose of the bill, the "Coalfield Environment Enhancement Act of 1990," is to promote the "remining" of abandoned coal mine lands rather than lands which have never been disturbed. "Through remining," Rahall said, "we will be able to obtain the reclamation of these areas and mitigate the health, safety and environmental hazards they present to coalfield residents."

Under the legislation, incentives would be provided to the coal industry to engage in the remining of abandoned coal mine lands, and consequently, to reclaim the sites. These incentives largely deal with providing protections from liability for events or conditions that may be encountered during a remining operation that were not anticipated in the reclamation plan, and, date certain release of an operator's surety bond. These incentives would be made possible due to the establishment of State Remining Insurance Funds that would assume the liability for addressing unanticipated events or conditions, and for any continuing reclamation measures that may be required after the release of an operator's bond. The legislation would also provide for several modified reclamation standards for coal remining operations.

"Environmental protection is assured under this bill," Rahall said. "Coalfield residents deserve a clean and safe environment and I believe the government has a responsibility to provide the means to accomplish that end."

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