



U.S. Congressman

**Nick Rahall**

*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**RAHALL CALLS TOLSIA HIGHWAY A PUBLIC SAFETY THREAT**  
***Diversion of Coal Traffic From Railroads to Trucks is Culprit***

**BECKLEY, WV --** The public safety is being jeopardized by the massive amount of long-haul coal truck traffic traversing the 44-mile stretch of Route 52, known as the Tolsia Highway, between Kenova and Crum in Wayne County, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) charged today. Rahall called on the region's railroads to assume a greater amount of the coal traffic to alleviate the situation.

"The fundamental cause of the problem is the diversion of a great deal of coal traffic from the railroads, to trucks, for haulage along the Tolsia Highway to the Big Sandy River dock terminals," Rahall said. "We are faced with a crisis situation, and conditions will only be aggravated as demand for Logan County and Mingo County low-sulfur coal continues to escalate."

In letters to both the C&O and the N&W Railroad companies, Rahall wrote: "It appears that the rate structures being maintained by the railroads in southern West Virginia are causing coal producers in Logan and Mingo Counties to avoid using rail transportation at any cost, even, I might add, when railroad loading facilities are actually located in the immediate vicinity of the mines."

The consequences of the situation, he said, are truck hauls of unprecedented proportions--an incredible 60 miles or more--from the mines to the river. Rahall noted that through the maintenance of uncompetitive rail coal rates the railroads, albeit unwittingly, are contributing to the public safety hazard being experienced on the Tolsia Highway.

"You should be advised that the public is outraged by the threat posed to their safety from the combination of bad roads and intensive coal truck traffic. And for my part, I firmly believe they deserve satisfaction. While the roads must be improved, no amount of upgrading will fully alleviate the situation unless the railroad begins to accommodate a greater share of the coal traffic," Rahall wrote in urging the railroads to immediately review their southern West Virginia rate structure.

He concluded: "The demand for southern West Virginia coal presents a great many opportunities, but the economic benefits to the region will be diminished unless actions are taken now to alleviate the concern of the public."

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