



U.S. Congressman  
**Nick Rahall**  
*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RAHALL TAKES AIM AT RURAL WATER NEEDS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV), who has been working toward reform of the wastewater treatment funding system, today testified before the Water Resources Subcommittee and told them of the water plight in rural America:

"A survey conducted in February of this year revealed more than 40 communities in West Virginia are still dumping raw sewage in to State waterways in violation of federal law," said Rahall. "Local officials said they didn't have the money for improvements. Residents of Whitesville, West Virginia said the water tastes funny, it smells of chlorine, and its illegal."

Rahall has introduced legislation that would attempt to amend the Clean Water Act, as that legislation seeks reauthorization this year. His legislation, H.R. 916, would reauthorize the grant program under title II, and the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) would be left in place.

The General Accounting Office, the watchdog agency of the federal government, backed up Rahall's remarks. "West Virginia has identified 2,267 miles of waterways contaminated with sewage, but state officials in charge of the SRF Program maintain that many of the communities discharging into these waters would not be able to repay SRF loans," said Richard L. Hembra, Director of the Environmental Protection Issues Division.

Rahall's bill would offer a two-pronged approach to rural water needs. It would provide grants to the poorest of communities and those in the most dire need. However, communities that are more affluent, would be required to use the revolving loan fund, or a combination of both, to the extent that they can afford repayment.

"As it stands now, all communities are under the SRF," said Rahall. "Many of our poorest communities cannot even afford the interest on water treatment loans, much less the principle. And I just don't feel that the American people should have to be indebted to the federal government for clean water."

Rep. Rahall is a ranking Member of the Public Works and Transportation Committee. He is also a Member of the Water Resources Subcommittee.

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