



U.S. Congressman

**Nick Rahall***WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MAY 28, 1992CONTACT: JIM ZOIA  
(202) 226-7761**HOUSE PASSES NATIONAL ENERGY BILL**  
*Rahall Coalfield Provisions Approved*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** -- A bevy of provisions authored by U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), including a long-term extension of the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program, were passed by the House of Representatives yesterday evening as part of a massive energy bill.

The Rahall proposals seek to enhance coal use while providing for greater health, safety and environmental protections for coal miners and people who reside in the coalfields.

"These provisions are premised on the fact that vast deposits of coal, oil and natural gas remain relatively untapped in this country. They also embrace the concept that responsible energy development in an environmentally and socially responsible manner is possible," Rahall stated.

During debate on the bill Rahall beat back an attempt by Western Republicans to strike the Abandoned Mine Reclamation extension from the bill. Rahall's provision in the legislation would authorize the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program--the coal industry's version of Superfund--through the year 2010 in order to finish the restoration of \$1.6 billion worth of high-priority abandoned mine sites located primarily in the Appalachian Region. The program is financed by a fee assessed on every ton of mined coal.

In a heated debate Rahall maintained that the problems associated with abandoned coal mines in the Appalachian Region deserve a national solution.

"The issue involved considerations of accountability and social responsibility," Rahall stated. "The question we must ask is who has benefitted from the exploitation of our coal resources? Has it been only West Virginians or Pennsylvanians? The answer is no. The Nation as a whole has benefitted from the extraction of coal from the Midwestern and the Appalachian States -- coal which fueled the Industrial Revolution and today continues to provide a stable source of fuel to produce electricity for much of the country."

According to Rahall, House passage of the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program provision provides a platform "to address the justifiable concerns of retired coal miners over their health care" during conference with the Senate. The House and Senate have passed different versions of energy legislation and they must now be reconciled. Rahall intends to continue his efforts to divert some Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund monies to shore-up the UMWA Health Funds.

Rahall was also successful in obtaining approval of his amendments to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act aimed at settling controversies over subsidence protections.

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**"There is no free ride in energy development," he said during debate. "Yes, let us mine coal. At the same time, if that coal mining causes damages to someone's home, this amendment says that person should be compensated."**

**Rahall added: "And what of those who mine coal. Do they not deserve to see advances made in health and safety technologies? This amendment says they do. It says that we should make it a priority to reduce the causes of black lung disease by devising new and innovative mining equipment and techniques."**

**Other Rahall sponsored provisions of the bill would: Promote the remining of abandoned coal mine lands with the triple benefit of obtaining additional coal production, reducing the need to mine on undisturbed lands and providing for needed reclamation; initiate a program aimed at using metallurgical grade coals located in McDowell, Wyoming and Raleigh Counties in electric utility boilers; remove obstacles to the extraction of coalbed methane in the Appalachian Region; and provide financing to combat coal fires.**

*Rahall authored provisions in the Energy Bill:*

**Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program.**

This section would insure continued success in mitigating health, safety and environmental threats associated with abandoned coal mine lands by extending the authority to collect reclamation fees through the year 2010.

**Health, Safety and Mining Technology Research Program.**

This section would establish a program to provide direction, and better define the objectives, of the Bureau of Mines' Health, Safety and Mining Technology Program in order to improve the health and safety of the Nation's miners.

**Surface Mining Act Implementation.**

This section would provide for greater stability in the surface mining act program by settling controversies over subsidence protections and valid existing rights. It would also reduce redundancies between OSM and Bureau of Mines research and streamline a program aimed at extinguishing coal fires.

**Metallurgical Coal Development.**

This section would establish a program to develop techniques that will lead to the greater and more efficient utilization of the Nation's vast low-sulfur metallurgical coal resources.

**Coalbed Methane Development.**

The program under this section is aimed at mitigating impediments to the extraction and utilization of pipeline-quality methane from coalbeds.

**Coal Remining.**

The provisions of this section seek to make coal available that otherwise would be bypassed by providing incentives for industry to extract and reprocess, in an environmentally sound manner, coal that remains in abandoned mine lands.

**Acquired Federal Land Mineral Receipts Management.**

This section would provide for the more equitable and efficient disbursement of the state share of mineral lease receipts from eastern federal lands.