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Rahall Announces Coal-to-Liquid Forum in West Virginia

Washington, D.C. - A featured speaker at the U.S. Air Force's inaugural energy summit this morning, U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today announced that he will participate in a follow-up conference this summer in southern West Virginia to boost the development of state-of-the-art coal-to-liquids (CTL) production plants with a newly formed national CTL coalition and the U.S. Defense Department.

As the Defense Department's largest user of fuels - leading the pack at 2.5 billion gallons consumed annually - the Air Force has agreed to participate in the conference, designed to bring "bright minds together to help forge the Nation's collective coal-to-liquids future."

"Few, if any, issues are of greater consequence to war and peace, and to our economic stability and domestic security, than the availability of a sufficient supply of reasonably priced energy," Rep. Rahall told the summit. "There are many possibilities out there - wind turbines, solar panels, ethanol - but they certainly do not solve our military's great and pressing energy challenges. From a practical standpoint, it is abundantly evident that the answer lies in coal, America's most promising fuel of the future."

Coal remains the most abundant fossil fuel in the U.S., and throughout the world. Legislation introduced in Congress - including the Rahall-backed H.R. 370, the Coal-to-Liquid Fuel Promotion Act of 2007 - would help promote coal-to-liquids technology to fast-track our Nation's efforts to wean ourselves off foreign oil. Other nations, such as South Africa, China, India and Indonesia, have recognized the dilemma of relying on foreign sources of oil, and are aggressively pursuing coal liquefaction.

"The time is ripe to bring the National CTL Coalition and the Defense Department together for a meeting of the minds. The long-range planning needs of our national defense demand significant certainties that stable fuel supplies will be available, and that America will not be held captive by foreign regimes, reigned over by dictators hostile to our Country," Rahall said.

Coal-to-liquid technology creates a type of clean-burning, high-performing synthetic fuel through various conversion processes, which involve gasifying and liquefying the coal for use in existing engines. The Air Force has already been searching for ways to reduce its consumption of oil through coal liquefaction. It has met success in testing liquid coal in a B-52 and is planning more tests on

other planes, while working to interest commercial airliners to establish a broader consumer base for liquefied coal fuels.

Rahall applauded the military's efforts, saying, "Consumption on a wider scale would ensure stability for the market, holding down costs for the military and all Americans."

H.R. 370 would help to solidify these efforts by providing loan guarantees through the Department of Energy to help spur private investment in the development of large-scale liquefaction plants. As well, it would provide authorization for the development of infrastructure, such as pipelines and other storage for the fuel, to support this emerging industry. The legislation would also provide funding authority to support the ongoing work of the Air Force to test coal-derived fuels in its aircraft.

"Clearly, coal really is America's most promising fuel of the future - and the more we invest in it, the greater an energy asset this natural resource will prove to be. Combine that with our Nation's level of inventiveness, and without question, American know-how can lead the world in solving our energy challenges," Rahall said.

The summit is being planned for mid-August in Beckley, WV.