

**U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II**  
**Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Official Biography**  
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U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II, a West Virginia native who represents his state's Third Congressional district, has served on the House Natural Resources Committee for 34 years - his entire tenure in Congress. After serving as the Committee's ranking member for six years, Rahall was selected to serve as the Committee's Chairman for the 110th Congress and 111th Congress. Since taking the helm of the Committee in 2007, Rahall has worked diligently to strike an appropriate balance between the job-providing, economy-boosting development of America's natural resources and their wise conservation.

First elected in 1976, Chairman Rahall is currently serving his 17th term in the House of Representatives, and is recognized as the youngest elected longest serving member in the history of the House. He has received national recognition for his strong dedication to protecting and preserving our nation's environment, while continuing to provide employment and tourism opportunities for our citizens.

An outspoken proponent of the National Park Service, in 2009, Rahall helped shepherd into law [P.L. 111-11] a legislative package containing over 160 individual measures, which added new wilderness designations, wild and scenic rivers, NPS units, hiking trails, heritage areas, water projects, and historic preservation initiatives. Included in the package was legislation authored by Rahall – the “Wild Monongahela Act: A National Legacy for West Virginia's Special Places” – that designated as wilderness over 37,000 acres of federal land within the Monongahela National Forest in his home State of West Virginia.

A leader in the effort to end royalty holidays and giveaways to big oil companies who have reaped record profits while American taxpayers are forced to pay skyrocketing gas prices, Rahall has used his Chairmanship to conduct extensive oversight of allegations of mismanagement within the Minerals Management Service's royalty collection program. Chairman Rahall has continued his commitment to conducting the necessary oversight of these issues, as well as ensuring continued accountability and integrity at the Department of the Interior.

Rahall is a longtime champion of protecting landmark environmental and public participation laws, such as the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which gives the American people the right to know about and participate in proposed federal actions. Rahall has led the Committee in multiple visibility-raising oversight hearings on the endangered species program, which revealed political tampering within the ranks of the Interior Department.

He has also long been a Congressional leader on mining-related issues. In 1985, Rahall assumed the chairmanship of the House Subcommittee on Mining and Natural Resources, a position he held until 1993. As Subcommittee Chairman, Rep. Rahall transformed what had been a moribund panel into one engaged in the aggressive oversight and reform of many of the Nation's antiquated federal mining laws to bring them in line with public interest.

During this period, Rahall also led the enactment of legislation overhauling the federal onshore oil and gas and geothermal stream leasing systems, seeking to fulfill stewardship responsibilities in an environmentally and fiscally responsible manner. In 2006, Rahall worked to ensure passage of legislation that extended authorization of the Abandoned Mine Lands program, one of his long-running priorities.

A quest he has pursued for over 20 years, Rahall has led efforts in the House to secure passage of legislation to reform the antiquated Hardrock Mining Law of 1872. Legislation introduced by Rahall would provide a new framework to guide in the mining of valuable hardrock minerals, such as gold, silver and copper, on federal lands. For the past 138 years, the law has allowed these minerals to be extracted with no royalty paid to the American people - unlike oil and gas and coal developers.

Additionally, he is the author of 1978 legislation establishing the New River Gorge National River as a unit of the National Park System in southern West Virginia. Ten years later, he gained enactment of legislation to designate the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River, in the process creating the largest network of federally protected rivers in the eastern United States. These efforts have helped to promote these scenic rivers as a place for public enjoyment, employment, and tourism, as well as ensure that these areas are carefully maintained for future generations to enjoy.

Numerous national organizations have recognized Rahall for his work. He is the recipient of the National Parks Conservation Association's prestigious 2008 "William Penn Mott, Jr., Park Leadership Award"; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's 2009 Patriot Award, for his work in facilitating a visitor center at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.; the International Fund for Animal Welfare's 2007 "U.S. Animal Action Award"; the Ansel Adams Award from the Wilderness Society in 2004; and the Mountaineer Conservation Leadership Award from the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition on Earth Day 2005.

A 33rd degree Mason, Rep. Rahall is a life member of the National Rifle Association, Elks, Moose, and the NAACP, and was made an honorary member of the United Mine Workers of America in 2003. Before his election to Congress, Rahall served as staff assistant to U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, and also made a career as a businessman. Chairman Rahall has three children: Rebecca, Nick Joe, III, and Suzanne Nicole, married to S.Sgt. U.S. Navy Chris Brown. He has one granddaughter, Madison Kaylee, and is married to the former Melinda Ross of Ashland, Kentucky.