

Remarks by U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall, II
Realizing the Vision of America's Energy Future Through Liquid Coal
Coal-to-Liquid Coalition Conference
Glade Springs Resort, West Virginia
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As the representative for the people of the third congressional district of West Virginia, I welcome you all here tonight. I am proud that the "Coal to Liquids Coalition" conference is being held here in southern West Virginia, where the people have long earned their livelihoods in the struggle to produce the fuel which once powered the Industrial Revolution and is today powering the Technological Revolution.

For generations, we have known the true value and the vast potential that exists in coal. And so it is appropriate that we have come here, in this place, to talk about a national agenda for coal-to-liquid fuels. Coal has always been and forever will be inextricably linked to West Virginia. We can find it in our history and our heritage and in our hills.

I have a vision – a vision of the day when every NASCAR race will be fueled by CTL. The day when the words "powered by liquid coal" will be emblazoned across the hood of Jeff Gordon's "supped up" Chevy.

I envision the day when CTL will be the fuel of choice for U.S. Airways and American Airlines, to the dismay of Air France. And I envision the day when Amtrak will run trains all over this land – to coin a phrase from Martin Luther King – from the red clay hills of Georgia to the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, on Fischer Tropsch fuels. I have a dream.

This dream, our dream, is befitting of a nation that has long been a leader in innovation.

This is not the coal of old that spewed black smoke untempered by clean technologies. Not the coal that fills the stockings of spoiled and naughty children. Yet some today want us to believe in yesterday.

I speak of the coal of a modern age. A coal transformed into an efficient, clean-running liquid fuel that will power our cars and our planes, our ships and our trains. A coal that will forge a future in which our nation is no longer beholden to dangerous oil-producing foreign powers. A coal that will help shelter our hard working families from the price wars waged in the boardrooms of huge multinational oil conglomerates.

To our friends in the environmental community, and we are all environmentalists, we are not working at cross-purposes. To be economically successful, the CTL industry must also be environmentally successful. We know that. They know that. Our goals are the same.

But today, while the world nears peak oil capacity...

While approximately one-third of transportation fuel used in South Africa is derived from coal...

While China, India and Indonesia are all racing to control their own energy destinies by pursuing coal-to-liquid plants...

America is lagging behind, dragging its feet.

This is not the way America.

Thankfully, there are those who see the wisdom of investing in new technologies and better ways of harnessing the power of America's most abundant natural energy resource – coal. Among these is the Department of Defense.

DOD, to its credit, is working to jump-start a domestic industry that can provide clean fuel to the military from secure domestic resources. And central to that wise and commendable effort is coal.

Even now, as part of that effort, the Air Force is successfully testing new fuels in its aircraft and expects to certify its entire fleet as CTL compatible by the year 2011.

By providing the means to prevent our troops from being mired again and again in unstable foreign sands, under the control of oil-wielding despots, coal-to-liquids may prove to be one of the most effective weapons in the Pentagon's preemptive arsenal. We have an opportunity to help.

Over the next 24 hours, we will meet and talk with some of the nation's most energetic proponents of, and well-versed experts in, coal-to-liquids. We have the chance, through CTL, to set a new and better course to secure for our nation a greater energy independence.

That is our vision, our dream, for America's energy future. May this conference light our way and lead us to its realization.